

Word Play (Are We Having Pun yet?)

A good wordplay catches the eye and often communicates an effective message with wit and humor. The names of companies such as “Cane and Able Mobility Healthcare,” or “Curl Up and Dye,” the name of a beauty salon or a plumbing company slogan “We’re #1 in the # 2 business, capture people’s attention, while at the same time effectively communicating what their business is about. Wordplay, or *Paronomasia*, is a term that covers several areas of linguistic artistry. Puns are also favorite devices for communicating ideas with wit and humor. Remember: “You can tune a guitar, but you can’t tuna fish. Unless you play bass.”

The challenge is that biblical authors incorporate word play in Hebrew or Greek and it is not always easy to detect in our Bibles.

Names

Personal/Place names play on meaning of words- Nabal = Fool, Samuel = heard of God, Onesimus = useful

Sound alike word play

Genesis 1-3

Man is made from the ground (*adam* from the *adamah*) English equivalents= human from the humus/ Saul from the soil / Clay from the clay. We are true “earthlings!”

Naked/crafty/ashamed (*arom* vs *arum* vs *erom*) (if you are in the shower you are naked if you are in front of someone without your clothes on you are naked!)

Jeremiah 1:11-12 “What do you see Jeremiah?” The young prophet responds, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” The Lord responds, “I am watching over my word to perform it”. In Hebrew the word for almond tree is *shaged*, while the word for watching is *shoqed*. Since the almond tree was the first tree to bud in spring, the point of the wordplay is that God’s word will soon come to pass.

Matt 16: Peter (petros) Rock (petra) “you are Rocky and upon this boulder I will build my church” Matt 16:18

Sarcasm

Tower of Babel Gen 11 Bricks (*laban*) Confuse (*nabal*). God is turning their bricks into confusion. In a story about the scrambling of language, there is an example of the very letters of words being scrambled to come to a new meaning!

Judges 3 Ehud and Eglon (calf) secret message and Ehud made sure Eglon got the point!

1 Sam 1-4 We are told on two occasions that Eli has a weight problem. In 1 Samuel 2:29 the Lord accuses Eli and his sons of making themselves “fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel.” Later when Eli dies, the narrator tells us that Eli broke his neck when he fell backwards off his seat because he was old and heavy. The word heavy in Hebrew is *kabed*. It is from the same root as the Hebrew word for honor which is *kabod*. The story of Eli emphasizes that he has not honored the Lord (1 Sam 2:30). Eli’s heaviness is directly related to the lack of honor that he has shown for God because it is his consumption of the stolen meat from the sacrifices that has contributed to his weight problem

Micah 1:10-15 names several places in Judah: Beth-le-aphrah, Shaphir, Zaanan, Beth-ezel, Maroth, Lachish, Moresheth-gath, Achzib, and Mareshah but Micah mocks each one in his prophecy For example The name “Beth-le-aphrah” means “town of dust” — so Micah here says “in Beth-le-aphrah roll yourselves in the dust.”. The English equivalent could be Philadelphia If Micah were writing to it he might say “well the city of brotherly love (Philadelphia) has become the city of brotherly shove”

Gal 5:12 Paul tells the Judiazers who are requiring circumcision of Gentiles I wish they would keep on cutting!

Whys and So what’s:

- Allows readers to make connections comparisons that you might not see if it were not for the pun
- Sometimes they are meant to “sting a little” irony or cutting sarcastic humor. Subversive
- Sometimes God just likes to inject a little humor into a situation!