

צפנה ונגבה, וקדמה וימה

אבנר רמו

In the Book of Genesis we read:

ויתן אברהם את-כל-אשר-לו ליצחק.
ולבני הפילגשים אשר לאברהם, נתן אברהם מתנות; וישלחם מעל יצחק בנו בעודנו חי קדמה,
אל-ארץ קדם.

“And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.

And to the sons of the concubines, that Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts; and he sent them away from Isaac his son, while he was still alive, eastward, to [the] east country” (Gen 25:5-6).

The understanding here of the Greek (and the English) translators indicate that **קדם** (*qedem*) means “east” (see also: Gen 2:8; 10:30; 11:2; 12:8; 13:11; 29:1; Num 23:7; 34:11; Jud 6:3, 33; 7:12; 8:10, 11; Zec 14:4; Ps 68:34; Job 1:3), and **קדמה** (*qedmah*) means: “eastward” or “toward the east” (see also: Gen 13:14; Lev 16:14; Num 35:5; 1 Ki 7:39; 17:3; 2 Ki 13:17; Eze 48:4, 5, 27; 2 Ch 4:10).



We read in the Book of Genesis:

שא נא עיניך וראה מן-המקום אשר-אתה שם-צפנה ונגבה, וקדמה וימה.
“Lift up now eyes eyes, and look from the place where you are there, northward and
southward and eastward and westward” (Gen 13:14; see also: Gen 28:14).

These verses indicate that that by adding the letter ה (h) at the end of words describing the four cardinal geographical directions: **צפון** (*tsaphon*) - “North”; **נגב** (*negev*) - “South”; **קדם** (*qedem*) - “East”; and **ים** (*yam*) - “west”, we obtain Hebrew words meaning “toward” these directions, as in English: “northward”, southward”, “eastward”, and “westward.”

In the Book of Exodus we read: **ולצלע המשכן השנית, לפאת צפון, עשרים קרש** - “And for the **second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, twenty boards**” (Ex 26:20; see also: Gen 27:11; 36:25; 38:11; Eze 48:16; 48:30).

Yet in the Book of Joshua we find: **וגבול לפאת צפונה, מלשון הים, מקצה הירדן** - “And the **border of the north side** was from the bay of the sea at the end of the Jordan” (Jos 15:5; see also: Jos 18:12; Eze 47:15).

However, the comparison between these verses and the understanding of the Greek (and the English) translators suggest that here **צפונה** is a letter-insertion error of **צפון** - “north.”

In the Book of Ezekiel we read: **ופאת-נגב חמש חמש () מאות וארבעת אלפים** - “and **the south side** four thousand and five hundred” (Eze 48:16).

Yet in the Book of Joshua we find: **ופאת-נגבה מקצה קרית יערים** - “**And the south side** was from the edge of Kiriath-jearim” (Jos 18:15).

However, the comparison between these verses and the understanding of the English (but not the Greek) translators suggest that **ופאת-נגבה** is a letter-insertion error of **ופאת-נגב** - “and the south side.”

In the Book of Canticles we read: **עורי צפון ובואי תימן** - “Awake, O north; and come, [you] south” (Cant 4:16; see also: Zec 6:6; Job 39:26).

The understanding of the Greek (and the English) translators of these verses indicate that **תימן** (*theiman*) is another Hebrew word for the term “South”, and the reading in the Book of Deuteronomy: **עלה ראש הפסגה ושא עיניך ימה וצפנה ותימנה ומזרחה-וראה בעיניך** - “Get up to the top of (the) Pisgah, and lift up your eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and see with your eyes” (Deu 3:27; see also: Num 2:10; 3:29; 10:6), suggests that by adding **ה** (h) at the end of the word **תימן** we get **תימנה** (*theimanah*) meaning: “southward.” It is not unlikely that late scribes inserted the words **תימן** and **תימנה** to explain the meaning of **נגב** as: “south” and of **נגבה** as: “southward.”

Yet in the Book of Exodus we find:

ויעש את-הקרשים למשכן: עשרים קרשים, לפאת נגב תימנה.
“And he made the boards for the tabernacle; twenty boards for the **south side southward**” (Ex 36:23; see also: Ex 27:9; 38:9; Eze 47:19; 48:28).

However, it is suggested that **לפאת נגב תימנה** is a letter-insertion error of: **לפאת נגב תימן** - “to the south side.”

We also find in the Book of Exodus:

ועשית את-הקרשים למשכן, עשרים קרש, לפאת נגבה תימנה.
“And thou shall make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards **for the south side southward**” (Ex 26:18).

However, the comparison to verse Ex 36::23 suggests that **לפאת נגבה תימנה** is a letter-insertion error of **לפאת נגב תימן** – “For the south side.”

Similarly, we read seventeen verses later:

ושמת את-השלחן מחוץ לפרכת, ואת-המנרה נכח השלחן על צלע המשכן תימנה; והשלחן-תתן על-צלע צפון.

“And you shall set the table outside the veil, and the candlestick against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south side; and you shall put the table on the north side” (Ex 26:35).

However, the logic of this verse suggests that here **צלע המשכן תימנה** is a letter-insertion error of: **צלע המשכן תימן** - “the south side of the tabernacle.”

Similarly, we read in the Book of Ezekiel:

ויהי דבר-יהוה אלי לאמר.

בן-אדם, שים פניך דרך תימנה, והטף אל-דרום; והנבא אל-יער השדה נגב.

“And the word of *YHWH* came to me, saying:

Son of man, set your face [to the] road southward, and preach to [the] South, and prophesy against the forest of the field [in the] South” (Eze 21:1-2).

However, in all likelihood in this verse we have the three Hebrew words for the term “south”, and therefore here **דרך תימנה** is a letter-insertion error of: **דרך תימן** - “south road.”

In the Book of Exodus we read: **ורחב החצר לפאת-ים** - “And the width of the court to the west side” (Ex 27:12; see also: Ex 38:12; Jos 18:14); Eze 47:20).

In the Book of Ezekiel we read: **מפאת-ים ימה** - “from the west side westward” (Eze 45:7).

These verses indicate again that **ים** (*yam*) means “west” and **ימה** (*yamah*) means: “wetward.”

Yet in the Book of Ezekiel we also find: **פאת-ימה** - “west side” (Eze 48:2; see also: Eze 48:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 16, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27).

However, the understanding of the English (but not the Greek) translators indicate that they believed that **פאת-ימה** is a letter-insertion error of: **פאת-ים** – “west side.”