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Cultural Unit Green in the Old Testament

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Abstract

The paper describes and analyzes the full presence of green in the Old Testament—in Hebrew and translations. The approach is interdisciplinary, which includes: the treatment of colour as a cultural unit, according to the idea of Umberto Eco; lexical and contextual semantics; examining Basic Colour Terms (BCT—adjective, noun, verb), Prototype Terms (PT—all plants), Rivals Terms of Prototypes (RT), e.g. raven, shadow, ebony, etc.; Terms for the Basic Features of the Prototypes (TBFP—fresh, humid, juicy, lush, damp, humid, moist, wet, flowering, blossoming); translation as a criterion and semiotic value; semio-osmosis as a process that aims equivalence of translations, regardless of the different world views of Hebrew and other languages; semio-osmosis and accommodation; cultural and linguistic context; the interplay of old information (topic/theme)—new information (focus/rheme); context meanings and symbolism of grass; translation of PT and TBFP, e.g. fresh tree; grass & herbs; grass & freshness, vegetables, leafy as green; and biblical specialization of PT and TBFP, e.g. fresh tree (Hebrew).

Keywords: Hebrew, translations, colour, cultural unit, semio-osmosis

1. Cultural Unit and Colour Terms

The semiotic thinking of Umberto Eco (1996 [1985]) gives the possibility to treat colours, including Basic Colour Terms (BCT), Prototype Terms (PT—Rosch, 1972, 1973; Wierzbicka, 1990, e.g. darkness, coals), Rivals Terms of Prototypes (RT), e.g raven, shadow, ebony, apple of the eye), and Terms for the Basic Features of the Prototypes (TBFP, e.g. obscurity), as cultural units.

When one utters a colour term one is not directly pointing to a state of the world (process of
reference), but, on the contrary, one is connecting or correlating that term with a cultural unit or concept. The utterance of the term is determined, obviously, by a given sensation, but the transformation of the sensory stimuli into a percept is in some way determined by the semiotic relationship between the linguistic expression and the meaning or content culturally correlated to it. (Eco, 1985, p. 160)

2. Basic Colour Terms (BCT)

2.1 Lexical meaning and first appearance

In Genesis 1:30, one observes the remarkable appearance of the word יִרְכָּה (יִרְכָּה) [יִרְכָּה]. For me, it is a BCT because it is used with herb (KJV), plant (NAS, NIV) (see Brenner, 1982, p. 100). I agree with all arguments of Brenner, and I treat it as a BCT.


[...] in the majority of the cases (6 times) יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] / יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] appear as the first component of a syntagm, be it יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] / יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] (Gen. 1:30, 9:3), יִרְכָּא יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] (יִרְכָּא) יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] (Num. 22:4), יִרְכָּא / יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] [יִרְכָּא] [יִרְכָּא] [יִרְכָּא] (2 Ki. 19:26 = Isa. 37:27; Ps. 37:2). In the two remaining passages—Ex. 10:15 and Isa. 15:6 - יִרְכָּא appears on its own, but the notion of ‘plant’ is supplied by the context (יִרְכָּא יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] [יִרְכָּא] in the former) and the parallelism (יִרְכָּא יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] [יִרְכָּא] [יִרְכָּא] [יִרְכָּא] in the latter). Logically (if not syntactically) the nucleus of the syntagm in all cases but Num. 22:4 is not יִרְכָּא which is the first component, but יִרְכָּא or יִרְכָּא, while יִרְכָּא functions as an attributive of qualifier.

Briefly, the most frequent use of יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] in the Old Testament is an attributive to words like plants, field, tree. The word is usually incorporated in a Noun Phrase. The substantive use of יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] shows the semantics of ‘plants’ or ‘illness on human’s skin or walls of the houses’.

If יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] is used independently, it is a substantive in semantics and means ‘plants’ or ‘vegetation’. The substantivisation is possible for two reasons: 1. In Hebrew there is conversion just as in English. 2. The context provides steadily the meaning of ‘plants’. In Exodus 10:15 and Isaiah 15:6 יִרְכָּא [יִרְכָּא] means ‘plants’ in a contact context with field, tree, grass, and yard.

For Clines (1998, p. 32) it is a noun—grass, plants.

According to BW the root produces green, greenness, herbs, herbage, green thing, mildew, paleness, lividity, greenish, pale green. Today authors prefer to use the green-yellow region, ‘Grün-und Gelbtöne’ (Dieckmann-von Büna, 2008) following Kay’s newer versions of the evolutorial sequence schema, e.g Kay and Maffi (1999).

Three authors believe that this word is not a BCT—Gradwohl (1963), Bulakh (2006),

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Hartley’s (2010, pp. 127-133) review of Semitic languages demonstrates the pan-Semitic character of the root with meanings of green, grass, foliage, green plant, greenery, greenish, pale, yellow, and gold.

The etymology of Indo-European languages shows the same phenomenon—the BCT for green also means grass, greenery, green plant, pale, yellow, and golden (Фасмер, 1986, Vol. 2, p. 92). Old Greek χλόρος [hloros] shows the same semantic spectrum, which actually resembles different shades and colours and practical uses of olive oil—from green through pale to yellow plus a wide range of meanings.

Recognizing the word יֵרֶק [iērek] as a BCT leads to two conclusions in the terms of Berlin and Kay (1969). The first one is that the Hebrew in the Old Testament is not a document testifying the evolution of Ancient Hebrew. The second one is that the text is a product of a careful selection of each word, at least because the psychologically and culturally universal colours—black, white and red—were first used long after the BCT for green had.

Pale, yellowish, greenish face and mildew are regular meanings. In Bulgarian pale, yellowish, greenish for face are in use as synonyms.


The frequency of the derivative from the root is not quite high—about 18 times.

2.2 Cultural and linguistic context

Without deep knowledge and respect for Jewish culture and Semitic languages, we can make the wrong conclusions.

The translations of יֵרֶק/יַרְאָק [iērek/iarak] are with the corresponding BCT for green. An exception is the usual translation as yellow of יַרְאָקח [ierakakh] in Psalm 68:13.

Massey-Gillespie (1994) supports the opinion that the diminutive יַרְאָק [ierakakh] in Psalm 68:13 with translation yellow is a proof that every derivative from the root of יֵרֶק [iērek] denotes yellow.

Psalm 68:14/13

Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow יַרְאָק ח, gold. (KJV)

Even while you sleep among the campfires, the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver, its feathers with shining gold. (NIV)

When you lie down among the sheepfolds, You are like the wings of a dove covered with silver, And its pinions with glistening gold. (NAS)

έαν κοιμηθῆτε ἀνά μέσον τῶν κλήρων πτέρυγες περιστερᾶς περιηγαμώμεναι καὶ τὰ
Massey-Gillespie (1994) argues that the Greek χλορός [hlorös] does not always mean green, and it is a correct statement. This is the Septuagint translation. But it is the same in Semitic languages—the BCT for green refers to yellow, pale, and gold. In the case of the dove from Psalm 68:13, we know that the plumage of the dove in normal light could have green feathers. The psalm is Biblical poetry and silver and gold are appropriate for a poetic style. The basic meaning of the word translated as gold [harùtz] is sharp, diligent, a cut, thing cut, and sharp instrument. Gold is used with poetic meaning in Zech 9:3; Prov 3:14 etc. In Hebrew there are few standard words for gold and jewelry—[zahàv], [paz], [kètem].

Massey-Gillespie (1994) is right when he states the influence of the Septuagint:

The LXX ‘may be mostly to blame for this persistent misunderstanding of ἵλιν. […] The LXX of Psalm 68 may be the text that is mistranslated; the LXX may be in fact translating ἱλιν (yellow) or (pale). (p. 10)

Greek χλορός does not always mean green, just as the Semitic ἵλιν. Thus, LXX made the right choice in the Greek and Jewish texts and contexts.

As far as one of the four colourful horses in Revelation 6:1-8 is defined as χλορός it will be discussed separately as a colour compound in the Old and New Testaments in The symbol of four colour horses (Zech. 6:2-3 & Rev. 6:1-8).

3. Translation as a Criterion and Semiotic Value. Semio-Osmosis

The BCT green is more frequent in the translations than in the Hebrew text.

In sum the forms [ierek], [iäràk], [iarkà] and the diminutive [ierakràk] occur 11 times in Hebrew. The BCT for green appears (with tiny differences) about 30 times in the translations. Against these 30 uses in Hebrew the highest frequency is for the word fresh [raanàn], most often—11 times—it is an attribute to tree. Fresh tree [etz raanàn] is a constant/fixed term in contexts of idolatry. If fresh [raanàn] is an element in a different context, it is an attribute to olive and/or leaf. There is one exception—in Song 1:16 fresh [raanàn] has positive contextual semantics ‘young and passionate love’:

Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green. (KJV)
How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming! And our bed is verdant (NIV)

Synonymous of [raanàn], also translated with green, is אֲדַמִּים [av]. Other Hebrew words that are translated by green are grass, vegetation, and lawn/meadow. There are several uses of vegetable garden, but vegetable in that combination of words is [ierek] while only in Daniel vegetable (2 uses) has a root which forms grain and seed.
In translations, *fresh* [רָאָן] (12 times) + 2 times *fresh* [יָבָא] are used to refer to *green*. The asymmetry is striking—in Hebrew the BCT for green is used 11 times, including 3 diminutives, while *fresh* referring to *green* is used 14 times in translations.

In the translations *fresh* [רָאָן] (12 times) + 2 times *fresh* [יָבָא] are used to refer to green more frequently than the Hebrew BCT *green* (11 times), including 3 BCT diminutives, which reduces the presence of green on account of yellow and white. Simple logic indicates that diminutives arise from non-diminutives, which means that non-diminutive forms appear earlier in the language. Diminutives signify slighter or smaller degree of their root meaning. Hebrew diminutives are formed by reduplication, i.e., the word is longer and more difficult to pronounce, while in English the change of meaning is through making words shorter. The standard meaning of a diminutive indicates a small object (noun) or a lower quality (adjective). Biblical diminutives for green indicate simply oscillation between green, yellow and pale as in Leviticus 13:49; 14:37.

If we add the ‘green’ translations of *grass*, *leaf* and *meadow*, many more uses of the BCT *green* are registered in translations than in the Hebrew original. Is this a mistake? Does this change the meaning, the sense and the content of the holy text? In my opinion, no.

First, Hebrew and Indo-European languages have different worldviews. Second, it appears that in Jewish mentality a very important role is played by the logic of the relationship Man-God, and the matrix of one of commandments: You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain (Exodus 20:7). Just as the original name of one God, Jehovah is replaced with a substitute Heavens [שָׁמַיִם], here the BCT is replaced with *fresh* (from two different roots), *humid*, *humidity* (from two different roots), *leaf*, *grass*, *vegetation*, *verdant*, *to bloom*, and *to renew*. Of course, they bring additional values to green, and have a specialized constant/fixed use, e.g. *green tree* (actually *fresh tree*) accompanies denunciation in idolatry. But the opposite is also true—*renew*, *fresh*, *freshness* are non-colour meanings of green in the Norm for Free Word-Associations (Almalech, 2011, pp. 22-23, 160-186). This means that overcoming battles and walls of interlanguage asymmetry and different world views, the meaning is saved and kept through the language of colour. The language of colour contains not only the routine meanings of the BCTs, but also the terms of the prototypes (*grass*, *all plants*, and *leaf*) and the terms of the essential qualities of the prototype (*fresh*, *renew*, *bloom*, *life*, and *live*).

A very interesting example is Job 29:20, for which most of the English translations use *fresh* (*NIV; NKV, etc.*) to indicate the Hebrew *renew*. Others prefer a full symmetry—*renew* (ISV), *new* (NAS).

My glory will remain *fresh in me*, the bow ever new in my hand. (NIV)
My glory is *fresh within me*, And my bow is renewed in my hand. (NKJ)
My glory *renews for me* and my bow is as good as new in my hand. (ISV)
My glory is *ever new with me*, And my bow is renewed in my hand. (NAS)
The Bulgarian Protestant translation uses the BCT *green* to express the Hebrew *renew* in Job 29:20. The same translation uses *green* to replace the Hebrew *wet* [ratov] in Job 8:16. Again, this translation uses *green* to denote the Hebrew *wet* [lah] *sticks* in Genesis 30-37, just as this happens in the KJV.

Twenty-two centuries before the Bulgarian translation, the Septuagint translators took the same decision for Job 29:20—τυρακί νην χλωρα’ v καϊ καρυί νην (‘And Jacob took him rods of *green* poplar’).

The universality of the prototypes and their most typical qualities overcome battles that are created by inter-linguistic asymmetry and different worldviews.

This process can be called semiotic osmosis.

Osmosis is the spontaneous net movement of solvent molecules through a semi-permeable membarne into a region of higher solute concentration, in the direction that tends to equalize the solute concentrations on the two sides (Wikipedia—Osmosis).

This metaphor is appropriate because the translators try to equalize the sense of the two languages. The inter-linguistic asymmetry and the different worldviews are in the role of a membrane—sometimes they are semi-permeable, sometimes non-permeable, and sometimes freely permeable.

The ultimate effect of semiotic osmosis is that it keeps the original meaning, according to cultural habits and linguistic parameters.

The universality of the prototypes and their most typical qualities overcome the lack of a common encyclopedia for the readers/listeners. The process is intricate from a cognitive perspective—the prototypes and their most typical qualities are visual, tactile and social experiential phenomena. For example, we experience that plants die in winter but they become green every spring. This knowledge triggers the meanings of green as ‘life’ and ‘eternity’, mutual for many different cultures; it is necessary to touch a young stick of wood to know that it is moist, damp and fresh.

Tokens are acoustic vehicles, which have a notional value, in which visual, tactile and social and cultural experience and knowledge are incorporated.

Sometimes the Hebrew original offers metaphorical expressions for which it seems semio-osmosis does not help and is virtually non-existent. Actually, even in this semio-osmosis a colour language exists, helping to preserve the original richness. At first glance, translations generally change the original message. *Green* is involved in the replacement of the Hebrew expression.

In 2 Ki. 4:39, ‘one went out into the field to gather herbs’. There are no herbs in Hebrew. Instead, the word *lights* נרָץ [oròrt] stands there. The Septuagint presents a wise decision by the transcription of the Hebrew word—αριωθ [ariòt]. Actually, does the person go to the field to gather lights or just to have a walk, or to breathe fresh air? The herbs, which are lights, are poisonous. How is it possible that the light is a poison? The person collects the herbs, and returning to the place where Prophet Elisha is preparing soup for his pupils, he puts the poisonous herbs (lights!) in the soup. The English translations replace the Hebrew *lights* with *herbs* but the Bulgarian Protestant translation
uses the word зеленище (‘green thing’, ‘green plant’), which is a derivative from зелено (‘green’). Prophet Elisha makes a miracle and neutralizes the poison. 2 Kings 4:39 narrates the life and miracles of Prophet Elisha, the successor of Elijah. Obviously, the author of the text had something in mind, when using the plural from light [or] to express the intentions of the person who collects the poisonous wild vine.

2Kings 4:39
And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not. (KJV)

One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs and found a wild vine. He gathered some of its gourds and filled the fold of his cloak. When he returned, he cut them up into the pot of stew, though no one knew what they were. (NIV)
Then one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, for they did not know what they were. (NAS)
So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were. (NKJ)
καὶ ἔξηκεν εἰς εἰς τὸν ἄγρον συλλέξας αριῳθ καὶ εἴρεν ἄμπελον ἐν τῷ ἄγρῳ καὶ συνέλεξεν ἀπ’ αὐτῆς τολύπην ἄγριαν τλῆρες τὸ ἰμάτιον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἑνέβαλεν εἰς τὸν λέβητα τοῦ ἐψέματος ὃτι οὐκ ἔγνωσαν (LXT)

The Septuagint transcription of the Hebrew word leaves a semantic enigma and the subsequent translations remove this enigma by exhausting the significance and meaning gleaned from the context, replacing the original lexical meaning lights by inserting the word herb, and in the Bulgarian case ‘green thing’. Actually, the meaning ‘poison’ is a kernel non-colour meaning documented in the Norm for Free Word-Associations of the BCT green. We can say that the semio-osmosis here is weak because the original word lights brings completely different content and basis for speculations. Translations simplify the original message, but represent the steady cultural significance of the prototype (PT) and the BCT green.

Translations alert us to two significant semiotic phenomena. The first one is the role of the prototypes and their most typical qualities in the semio-osmosis of colour language that provides a sense loyal to the original, or a sense that provides steady meaning within the culture of the target language. The second phenomenon is the influence of the context on the semantics of a single token.

Ultimately, this wholeness and complexity is an example of what constitutes a cultural unit (in our case Green).
4. Contextual Semantics of BCT

When a word becomes part of a sentence, context and discourse, normatively speaking, the sentence must remove ambiguity till one meaning is singled out. This process has different dimensions, although the semantics of the sentence remains unexplained up to the last bit. One token can be subject but also object or in adverbial use. Word order superimposes its rules and the same word can be subject or object—(i) The dog chases the cat, (ii) The cat chases the dog. Syntactically this is one structure, but referentially and semantically we have two different situations. The transformation of Passivation changes the syntactic structure but not the Semantic role (Fillmore, 1968) of a word—(i) The student reads the textbook, (ii) The textbook is read by the student. A word acquires a Semantic Role - it can be encoded as Agent, Patient, Force, Instrument, Experiencer, etc. Cohesion and Coherence provide connectedness in discourse, e.g. types of cohesion—Reference, Substitution, Ellipsis, Conjunction, Lexical Cohesion, etc.

Last but not least, the translation of a sacred text, written thousands of years ago, carries culture, rituals and habits which are not always clear to the modern reader, despite all scientific efforts to get closer to an adequate understanding, knowledge and rationalization of antiquity.

Cultural and linguo-semiotic aspects of the context are another important element of the cultural unit Green.

Context semantics of the Hebrew BCT green
1. Gen. 1:30 [ierek esev] green herb ‘for food’ → ‘life’
2. Gen. 9:3 [ierek esev] green herb—God blessed Noah and his sons ‘for food’ → ‘life’
3. Ex. 10:15 [ierek ha-etz] ‘and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt’ green is life: → ‘death of green by punishment’ → ‘catastrophe’, ‘disaster’, ‘death’
5. Lev. 14:37 [irakrak] ‘illness on buildings’
6. Num. 22:4 [ierek ha-sade] ‘green of field’ translated as grass of the field → ‘fear’ of Moab by multiplicity of Jewish tribes
7. & 8. 2 Ki. 19:26 = Isa. 37:27 [ierek deshe] green herb – death of green → people of Chanaan were ‘dismayed’, ‘confounded’ of God’s deeds → ‘transitoriness of man’s existence’
8. Psa. 37:2 [ierek deshe] ‘green grass’—evil people will soon wither → ephemeral nature of grass as a symbol of the ‘transitoriness of man’s existence’ → ‘victory over evil people’
10. Isa. 15:6 [ierek lo haia] there is no green thing—punishment of Moav → ‘death of green by punishment’ → ‘catastrophy’, ‘disaster’, ‘death’
11. Job 39:8 [kol iarok] ‘every green thing’—‘God as commander of life and earth’

Context semantics of the Hebrew BCT green, and its derivatives
The list of contextual meanings points to several major directions of comment—green as a cultural unit with emphasis on the complexity of semio-osmosis.

The review of the facts enriches our knowledge of the cultural significance of green in the climatic conditions of the Middle East and the competition between monotheism and polytheism in ancient times.

Differences in the use of the BCT green in the original and in translations put on the agenda the role of prototypes (PT) and their most typical qualities, apart from green. Colour language has different levels. The lowest level is the routine reference of the BCT for a particular colour. The universality of the prototypes (all plants) and their most typical qualities (freshness, moisture, resurrection every spring) makes possible the culturalization of the prototype with meanings ‘life’ and ‘fresh’ for human notions and feelings; the death of green plants is treated as ‘catastrophe’, ‘disaster’, ‘death’, ‘illness on human body’, and ‘illness on buildings’. ‘Poison’ is a contextual meaning of the PT.
herb in 2 Kings 4:39, but in the Word-association Norm this meaning is kernel, just as ‘malice’ and ‘hatred’ are. The translations prove the possibility formutual substitution between BCT, PT and terms for the basic features of the prototypes (clean, pure, and immaculate for light; hot and warm for fire; fresh for renew, moist for plants, etc. (TBFP). Semio-osmosis flows between Hebrew and translations and it sails on the wind of the prototypes and their most typical features. The context and discourse cause the creation of new versions of universal basic non-colour meanings. Finally, the culture linked with the target language imposes itself.

5. Prototype Terms of Colour (PT)

Prototypes of colours are all plants. Accordingly, we are interested in all words referring to plants or significant parts of plants, e.g. leaf, fruit. It is not possible to trace the names of all the plants, or places with plants—meadow, lawn, field, forest. So, I’ll follow what is important from a semiotic perspective—grass, herbs, tree, olive, and vine.

BCTs are context independent, i.e. despite of every metaphorical or contextually coerced meaning, the word never changes it basic reference—green colour. PTs are context dependent, i.e. the word grass does not refer to the green colour in every instance of its use. Very often, in a context in which it is mentioned, the presence of grass or herb is underlined. Herbs and grass are synonyms of vegetation or plants. The names of particular fruits in current languages can be substitutes for BCTs, e.g. lemon, orange, cherry, etc. In the Bible there are no such uses, the opposite is the case—pomegranate is used to refer to a round object but not to a typical colour—‘The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe’ (Ex. 28:34 NIV).

The semio-osmosis between grass, herb, vegetation and plants is one more proof that not in every use do they mean green.

Genesis 1:11
And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. (KJV)
Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. (NIV)
Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with seed in them, on the earth"; and it was so. (NAS)

5.1 The green frame of the Pentateuch—The couple grass דֶּשֶׁה [dèshe] & herbs הָרֶבֶצ [èsev]
The Pentateuch is the base for the development of monotheism in all versions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Pentateuch consists of five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). It starts with the Creation of the world and finishes with the death of Moses.

From the outset, the Pentateuch was a written text, what is more, by the finger
of God himself (Gen. 31:18). Very often, however, the text has been recited by heart because of the lack of easily available written versions. So, the text is both language and speech. The centuries-old success of this text is proof that all its functions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday, 1978, 1993) operate successfully. Moreover, over the centuries various religious figures and scholars have sought hidden content, different concealed elements and structures in order to explain its exceptional communication value.

The Bible differentiates grass from grass-like herbs.

Grass and herb occur dozens of times—grass of/in the field, grass of the earth/land, every herb, tender herb, all herbs, etc. Sometimes they are used together: ‘Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up’ (KJV 2 Ki. 19:26).

The most interesting example of coordinated use of grass and herbs is in Deut. 32:1-3, which is the start of the Song of Moses:

Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth; Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! (NIV)

“Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As the droplets on the fresh grass And as the showers on the herb. (NAS)

Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As raindrops on the tender herb, And as showers on the grass. (NKJ)

The first use of the BCT green in Gen. 1:30 is instructive—we should expect important symbolism of green. The first use of the couple grass & herbs is in Gen. 1:11:

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. (KJV)

Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. (NIV)

Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with seed in them, on the earth”; and it was so. (NAS)

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. (NKJ)

The translations of the first (Gen. 1:11) and last (Deut. 32:2) use of grass & herbs show the normative substitution between grass, herbs, vegetation and plants, provided in the Hebrew text the original uses are grass [dēshe] & herbs [èsev]. Significant differences are observed in the attributive specifiers. An unique feature of the last use of
the green PT couple is the extraordinary appeal of Moses in verse 1, Deut. 32. Usually prophets turn to the people of Israel in order to transmit the messages of God, saying, Hear, O Israel! (Deut. 4:1; 5:1; 6:4; 9:1; Ps. 50:7 etc.) Actually, the appeal of Moses to heavens and earth is a hapax legomenon: ‘Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.’

We cannot understand this appeal without the help of the situation/context. The context of Deut. 32 is that Moses will not be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Because of the weakness of the Israelites God announced to Moses that he and his brother Aaron will not come into the Promised Land (Num. 20:13). In Moses’s lifetime, God was angered by yet another complaint of the Israelites during the Exodus, this time because of the lack of water. The punishment is not for the sin of Moses but for the lack of faith among the twelve tribes. Aaron dies soon—at the end of the chapter. Moses dies in the last chapter, 34, of the Pentateuch: ‘I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it. And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said.’ (Deut. 34:4-5).

Before that, in Deut. 32:1-43 we have an extraordinary text—‘The song of Moses’ (Deut. 32:1-43), written/orated prior to Moses’s death.

Though fated to die for the lack of faith in the God of his tribesmen, Moses did not lose his abilities: ‘Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone’ (34:7).

Chapter 33 is the blessing of Moses to the Israelites. Essentially, he implores them to adhere to their faith in monotheism—something which was missing in the framework of his life. This blessing, which is also a wish for each of the twelve tribes, adheres to the genre of the last will and prophecy of Jacob to the tribes (Gen. 49). The blessing is replete with metaphorical characters containing prototypes for the colour of the mentioned couple, though appearing in single order, not in the couple for the same colour, as grass [dēshe] & herbs [ēsev]. The last chapter of Deuteronomy (34) relates to the last moments of Moses without making reference to colour but to substance.

The completely unconventional address of Moses to heaven and earth can be interpreted in the following manner. Moses exhausts his obligations to people, but his faith is so strong that after his physical death, he will continue to preach monotheism—this time to heaven and earth.

There are many linguistic pieces of evidence that sky and earth are perceived as representatives of separate powers, different from God. The name Shamayim, used here, is different from the substitute of the genuine God’s name YHWE—Shamayim (Heavens):

Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it. (Deut. 10:14)

Or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain… (Deut. 11:17)
It seems that Moses achieves better result with heavens (than with people) because King David declares ‘Heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork’ (Psa. 19:1).

5.2 Context meanings and symbolism of grass
The symbolism of grass is actually a contextual meaning, which became the instructive norm with the translations and the spread of Christianity. The symbolism of grass is a fable, kind of anthropomorphization by comparing and transferring the features of grass to human life. Comparison underlies every metaphor. The metaphors and symbolism of grass are well studied:

In Palestine grass grows rapidly after the winter and spring rains. It wilts just as rapidly before the heat of summer or the blistering khamsin, the dry desert wind. Because of its ephemeral nature, grass is often used as a symbol of the transitoriness of man's existence: the wicked will soon wither like the grass (Psa 37:2); men are like the grass which flourishes in the morning but fades in the evening (Psa 90:5; Psa 103:15). The fleeting nature of man, which is like that of the grass, is contrasted with the abiding character of God's Word (Isa 40:6-8; cf. Jas 1:10-11). Inasmuch as it is the Creator who comforts us we are not to be afraid of mortal man who is like the grass (Isa 51:12). The flat roofs of the Palestinian houses would often sprout some grass which would wither even before it grew much because it had no depth of soil. So Israel’s enemies would wither before the Lord (2Kings 19:26; Isa 37:27; Psa 129:6). (BW)

The Easton Bible Dictionary adds ‘As the herbage rapidly fades under the scorching sun, it is used as an image of the brevity of human life (Isa. 40:6-7; Ps. 90:5).

The definition in the Dictionary of Bible Imagery is the shortest:

The fifty references to grass in the Bible fall mainly into three categories: grass as an agricultural staple for the pasturing of livestock, the loss of grass as an act of divine judgment, and grass as a symbol of human transience, mutability and mortality. [...] the ability of grass to flourish quickly usually implies its imminent destruction, sometimes the quick growth is a positive image of prosperity (Isa. 66:14) [...] Mainly, though, references to grass use climatic conditions as a metaphor for human frailty and transience. [...] A minor motif draws upon blades of grass as an image of large numbers. (Ryken et al., 1998, pp. 1197-1200)

The Bulgarian edition of the Dictionary of Biblical Symbols (Owen, 1992) is closer to the original symbolism in the Song of Moses, but not enough: ‘The grass soaked by rain or dew is a symbol of the revival of God’s blessings.’

All are not quite relevant to Deut. 32:1-3.

The author of the Song of Moses scrupulously selected terms available in Hebrew to express a specific message and meaning. The verse metaphorically compares the pupils of Moses with grass and herbs. Obviously the green PT couple ‏(dêshe)‏ & ‏עִשְׁבָּה‏.
[èsev], whatever the translations are, is a symbol for the pupils of Moses. This time, the pupils are not the twelve tribes, but the heavens and the earth. In this brief verse there are six terms that symbolize and mark the mechanics by which the monotheistic preaching of Moses reaches the followers. All of them are expressed by terms of raining—two verbs and four nouns. The selection of words for types of rain leads to the conclusion that the author deliberately did not use the term for the rain caused the catastrophic flood in Genesis. Ergo, the doctrine of monotheism can not causing a flood to destroy mankind. The absence of מָגֶשֶׁם [gèshem] from Deut. 32:2 seems to testify clear intentional phenomena. Hebrew has more terms for (heavy) rain, which are not used in the Song of Moses, e.g. זָרָם [zaram] pour forth in floods, flood away (Psa. 90:5; Psa. 77:18) זֶרֶם [zèrem] flood of rain, downpour (e.g. Job 24:8; Isa. 4:6; Hab. 3:10). Moses has few more options to express rain, but he did not use them—רָתַב [ratåv] be wet, be drenched, be moist (Job 24:8); latter (spring) rain מַלְכוֹש [malèkòsh] (Deut 11:14); early (autumn) rain בְּנֵי יָרֵא [iorè] (Deut. 11:14); flood יָשֶׁר [shetèf] (Ez. 13:13); steady rain סָגַרְר [sagrir] (Prov. 27:15);

Routine treatment of verses 1-3 (Deut. 32) as biblical parallelism (semantic, syntactic, prosodic, or sound elements) partially reveals the secrets of the relationships in Deut. 32: 1-3, e.g. some differences between rain/waters (strong—weak) but no colour and no verbs and nouns referring to rain/waters.

There are 3:3 stresses in the first two pairs of versets, and 2:2 stresses in the last pair. But syntactically the last two pairs are linked. The words לְשׁוֹנֵי יָדִים (“give ear”), and עֲשָׂרֵים (“hear”) are synonymous in meaning though not in morphology; “I will speak” and “the words of my mouth” are not synonyms, but their meanings are parallel. “Heavens” and “earth” are parallel by opposition. “Rain” and “dew” both express fruition by water, but one is strong and the other is subtle, these are two poles of one scale. There is also a concatenation of the three parts: versets 3 and 4 unfold the theme of the first pair (“the words of my mouth”); versets 5 and 6 develop the images of 3 and 4. But the versets of the last pair are parallel only to one member of the previous pair (“the rain” or “the dew”). The parallelism of meaning in the last four versets is chiastic: the water is strong (3)—weak (4)—weak (5)—strong (6). In the last pair אֵשֶׁת לֶשֶׁת and אֵשֶׁת לֶשֶׁת are on one level, but רָבְכֵם and שָׁעְרָיִם, though morphologically alike, are quite different in degree. Some additional devices of rhythm and sound reinforce the effect of this passage. (EJ, Vol. XVI, p. 599)

Here is the complete picture which considers green and types of rain/water:
In respect to the verbs for raining (וּלֵל [iaaròf], לָשׁוֹנֵי [tizål]):

1. The doctrine/teaching drops/falls
2. The speech/words distil/descend

In respect to the nouns for different rain/waters (מָטָר [matår], טָל [tal], שָׁעְרָיִם [searìm],
which expand our concept of the way monotheism comes down to the pupils we can summarize the following:

1. The doctrine/teaching is **rain**
2. The speech/words is **dew**
3. The doctrine/teaching and the speech/words are **small rain/showers/droplets/raindrops**
4. The doctrine/teaching and the speech/words are **showers/abundant rain**

The six types of rain ([iaarof], [matâr], [nazâl], [tal], [seirim], and [revavim]) symbolize six different ways in which the doctrine and speech of monotheism of Moses reach his pupils presented by the PT couple [dèshe] & [èsev]. Moses’s thesis is that the only way of proper living is keeping to morality and behavior, consistent with the 613 commandments of the monotheistic Torah.

I’ll not enter into interpretations based on extended semantics of the roots of different kinds of rain, but it is a possible way to add information. It is worth noting that the lexeme [sarîm] in Biblical Hebrew means ‘heavy rain/showers’, but it is too close to the lexemes [sair] (goat, shaggy devil; shaggy, mossy); [sàrîr] (hair); [seàr] (fur-coat); [shàar] (gate); [shàar] (measure; price). This similarity needs too long a linguistic analysis based on playing with gender, and letters Sin/Shin. In addition, such analyses would be too close to the mystical. Other word-formation connections such as the masculine [matâr] rain—feminine [matâra] goal; patrol will further complicate the picture.

The address of Moses is to the substances created in Gen. 1:1 through the verb to *create* [barà]. After the first verse, God creates the world using another method—through the verb to *say* [imer]. In this sense, it is not a random token of *my teaching*—[Imrati]. Choosing this token shows the self-confidence of Moses as the first man contributing to the creation of a new world and civilization—one founded on a monotheistic base. Moses is at the end of his life, and he proceeds to preach to the heavens and the earth, not to the people. Deuteronomy 32 is possibly a short story telling how he preached to people. At the same time, the highest prophet in Judaism chooses carefully specified types of rain to preach to the heaven and earth.

5.3 The interplay of Old information (topic/theme) & New information (focus/rheme)

We can approach the first and last uses of the couple of the PT for green as a macro-text’s topic and focus, respectively.

A reminder of this theory and its current developments is useful.

The theory deals with new and old in the information structure of the sentence and language communication, also with information structure, or pragmatic structure of a clause and how it coheres with other clauses. It was created by the Prague School of Functional and Structural Linguistics. The **topic**, or **theme**, of a sentence is what is being talked about, and the **comment** (**rheme** or **focus**) is what is being said about the
In our days, we meet speculations on ‘Topic-Focus values in the discursive context’ (Curteanu et al., 2009). This idea could be applied to analysing the sacral structure ‘first—last use’ of an element. The use of the PTs grass & herbs in Gen. 1:11 can be treated as given in relation to the last use of the same green appearance, treated as a new one. The “new one” are the contact and distant word to the green couple—the appeal of Moses to heavens and earth, the six kinds of rain (verbal and nominative). Indo-European translations add a non-existing adjective fresh/new/tender/ to נַעַם [dēshe]—fresh grass (NAS)/new grass (NIV)/tender herb (KJV; NKJ). In Gen. 1:11 the grass & herbs are described in a botanical way—‘Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants’ (NIV), ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed’ (NKJ).

5.4 Conclusions for the couple grass נַעַם [dēshe] & herbs בָּשָׂם [èsev]
In both cases the seme ‘life’ is actualized in the PT green couple נַעַם [dēshe] & herbs בָּשָׂם [èsev]. In the first use, it is physical life of plants, in the last use—it is the monotheistic lifestyle which gives life true meaning.

The seme ‘life’ is kernel in the Free Word-Association Test, and encompasses different nuances.

The last one cannot exist without the first one—it is kind of both macro Parataxis and macro Hypotaxis in a cultural and textual unit where the seme ‘life’ undergoes the process of developing.

The road from the botanical creation of grass & herbs (Gen. 1:11) to a sign for the monotheistic lifestyle is supported by a memorable moment situated between the first and last use of the couple grass & herbs in the Pentateuch. During the Exodus, the seventh and eighth plagues on Egypt include the devastation of all plants. Many PTs for green—herb, fruit, tree, plant, and field are used here.

Exodus 10:15
For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.

The picture in 10:15 ends with the disappearing of the BCT ‘every green thing’—‘there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field.’ The disaster in 10:15 is preceded by a similar destruction of herb of the field in 9:22-25, where the BCT green and the PT grass are missing. Thus, we observe a gradation in the presence of green plants, which are a sign for ‘life’. Their destruction is a dramatic moment marked with the absence of green, absence of ‘life’.

Exodus 9:22-25
Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail
in all the land of Egypt—on man, on beast, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.” And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field.

It is a discrete structure where the destruction of ‘life’, symbolized by green (the PT and the BCT), is situated between the first and last uses of grass & herbs.

Thus, we have the macrostructure of the meaning ‘life’ marked by green PTs: Creation of botanic grass and herbs—Destruction of green PTs, ‘death’—Doctrine and speech to heavens and earth about the monotheistic lifestyle assuring ‘life’ for Moses’s pupils (grass & herbs), encoded by words for six different rain/method types (two actions represented by verbs and four substances represented by nouns).

If nothing else, this semiotic string in the depth of Pentateuch is a mnemonic tool for priests who spoke by heart the sacral text of Pentateuch, where cornerstones of the cognitive building of memorizing are the Prototypes for green, grass & herbs.

I can declare that this is only one of the structures useful for memorizing, sealed with colours. It can easily be predicted that for one individual a particular colour is attractive and deeply meaningful, while for another person—another colour chain may be overgrown with potent contexts and symbolism. In short, more people would remember the Pentateuch by the activation of cognitive processes based on the universality of the colour prototypes.

Many other PTs for green are important elements of Biblical symbolism, but the green colour is not a significant part of this symbolism. Green’s development seems to be backward: The trees in the garden of Eden and in Heavenly Jerusalem, Tree of Life, Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, palm tree, olive, sitim tree, the garden (of Eden), vine, vineyard, wine, grapes, etc. They are symbols in many polytheistic cultures too.

Translations of the Hebrew fresh tree [etz raanan] with green/thick/leaf/shady tree is a special case, used in Christian versions of the Pentateuch to designate a natural altar for Middle Eastern polytheistic religions.

5.5 Vegetables
In languages like Hebrew and Bulgarian vegetables is a word derived from the BCT green: פָּרָן [ierek]/ פָּרָן [iarok] → פַּרְנָן יָאָר [gan] (vegetable garden פַּרְנָן יָאָר [gan iarâk] Deut. 11:10).

There is doubt that vegetables is a prototype for green. Despite divergent opinions, it is woven in the logical feature that is laid down in the word-formation pattern of the term. The etymology of the English term vegetables shows the semio-osmosis and colour
language—F. *vegetable*, fit or able to live—L. *vegetabilis*, full of life. Animating,—L. *eugetare*, to quicken, enliven’ (Skeat, 1993, p. 538). The English/French etymology suggests the notion of a colour language based on the universality of prototypes and sulfurizing their basic features with human notions and feelings—‘life’ is such a non-colour meaning of green, situated in the kern of the Free Word-Associative Test’s Norm.

The concept *garden* occupies a special place in culture, delineating the semiotic opposition ‘nature—culture’.

* Dish of vegetables ḫכְּר הַצָּר [aruhât iarâk]—Proverbs 15:17

Better *is a dinner of herbs* where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. (KJV)
Proverbs 15:17 Better a meal of *vegetables* where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred. (NIV)
Proverbs 15:17 Better a meal of *vegetables* where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred. (NIB)
Proverbs 15:17 Better is a dish of *vegetables* where love is, Than a fattened ox and hatred with it. (NAU)

In Daniel (1:12; 16) another word for vegetables is used—[zeruim]—a derivative from *sowing*, *seed*, and *offspring*. We should consider the strong influence of Aramaic on Daniel’s language—the only Aramaic parts of the Old Testament are by Daniel.

**Grass נְצָר [hatzir]**

Isa. 15:6; Psa. 147:8; 104:14; Job 40:15; 8:12 (greenness KJV); (green NAS, NKJ, RWB)

5.6 Other PT couples for green

*grass נְצָר [hatzir] & herb בַּשָּׁב [èsev]*

In Psa. 103:14/104:14 the couple is נְצָר [hatzir], constantly translated as *grass* and the herbs בַּשָּׁב [èsev], which is perceived by translators as *herb* (KJV), *plants* (NIV, NIB), *vegetation* (NAS, NAU), *vegetable* (Bulgarian Protestant—зеленчук), *fresh, green plants* (Bulgarian Orthodox—звезд). The linguistic fuzziness of translations shows the wide spectrum of natural language signs engaged with referring to the PT for green.

*Greenness, flowering, blossoming of plants, barley בַּז [ev] & grass נְצָר [hatzir].*

The word בַּז [ev] is used three times in the OT and could refer to *barley*, but instead in Lev. 2:14 it is translated as *roasted grains*.

The word בַּז [ev] in Song 6:11 is translated as *fruits* (KJV; RWB; ACF); *new growth* (in the valley, NIV, NIB), *blossoms* (NAS, NAU, NRS), *verdure* (NKJ), *зелени* (green—BUL 1; BUL 2), *зелень* (greenery RST), *Sträuchlein* (fresh green, greenery—LUO), *verdure* (LSG), *verdor* (LBA), *vedere* (NRV, IEP), *zieleń* (greenery BTP).

In Job 8:12 the same word בַּז [ev] is *green* (NAS, NAU, NKJ, RWB), *growing and uncut* (KJV, NIB), *flower* (NRS). In the same verse, Job uses, as usually in parallelism, the word נְצָר [hatzir]. The couple in Job presents an interesting version of green presence—
PT and TBFP.

The PT couples for green, out of grass נֶּשֶׁת [dêshe] & herbs עֵסֶע [èsev], do not organize a frame for Pentateuch.

In any case, the triple individual presence of בָּרוּץ [ev] in the OT can be used as a mnemonic technique to link the following: Leviticus (commandments on grain offering to the LORD) ↔ The beauty of gardens of Jerusalem (Song of Solomon) ↔ Yet another test of Job's faithfulness to God (Job 8:12).

6. Rivals of Prototypes (RT)

Green is a unique case in the biblical text. Unlike for the other colours, there are no uses of Rivals terms (RT) for it. This is due less to the peculiarities of the Bible and much more to the fact that even today there are no worthy Rivals of the prototypes (RT), e.g. emerald. This is because the terms for the prototypes (PT) are actually a huge number—the names of all plants. Moreover, their properties, i.e. fresh, moist, leafy, also serve to indicate the colour green, as the translations show.

7. Terms for the Basic Features of the Prototypes (TBFP)

Through three of its features—fresh, moist and leafy—the prototype for green (all plants) participates in the semio-osmosis. The following examples are proof for accepting and translating a feature of the prototypes as a synonym of Green. The fuzziness of the translator’s choices in different renditions of the same Hebrew word does not undermine the impression that it involves few basic qualities of the prototype—all plants.

*Fresh* has the highest frequency in Hebrew and, respectively, in translations. It is translated more often as *green*. *Fresh* רָאָן [raanàn] appears in 12 cases as *green*, and its synonym *fresh* בָּרוּץ [av]—twice in the Song of Solomon and the book of Job.

*Moist* is also presented by two words in Hebrew—לח [lah] and רַטְו [ratòv]. The term רַטְו [ratòv] is used only twice in the Old Testament, and it is by Job. Prophet Job is one of the highest masters of biblical poetry. He demonstrates excellent knowledge of Hebrew and has the richest language in which Semitic words infiltrate biblical poetry, usually in parallelism.

*Having interwoven foliage*, leafy נִבְצוּ [avåt] can also be translated as green, as well as by some other choices.

7.1 *Fresh* רָאָן [raanàn] appears with attributive semantics to PTs in Noun Phrases (NP)—*fresh tree, fresh olive tree, fresh leaf*

*Green tree* אלץ רָאָן [etz raanàn], lit. fresh tree

For Deutromony 12:2

The following Indo-European and Finno-Ugric translations use the BCT *green tree:*

Latin—VUL (lignum frondosum); English—KJV, NKJ, NAS, NAU, RWB; German—
LUT (grünen Bäumen), LUO (grünen Bäumen), ELB (grünen Baum); French—LSG (arbres verts), TOB (arbres verdoyants), BFC (arbres verts); Italian—LND (albero verdeggianti), NRV (albero verdiggianti); Polish—BTP (drzewem zielonym); Czech—BKR—(stromem ratolesným); Bulgarian Protestant version (зелено дърво).

- Thick tree—Greek—LXT (δέντρον δασεῖος)
- Spreading tree—English—NIB, NIV
- Leafy tree—English—NRS, NAB; Italian—IEP (albero frondoso); Spanish—LBA (árboles frondosos), RVA (árboles frondosos); Portuguese ACF, ARA (árvores frondosas); Russian—RST (ветвистым деревом)
- Shadowy tree—Bulgarian Orthodox Version (сенчесто дърво)

It is noteworthy that the Hebrew original offers specialized use of the term סֶפֶךְ [etz raanàn] in 13 uses refers to pagan altar—Deut. 12:2; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4; 17:10; 2 Chr. 28:4; Is. 57:5; Jer. 2:20; 3:6; 3:13; 17:2; Ez. 6:13; 17:24; 20:47.

2 Kings 16:4/4 Царе 16:4
And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree. (KJV)

For 2 Ki. 16:4/4 Царе 16:4:
Green tree (KJV; NAS; NAU; NKJ; RWB); grünen Bäumen (LUT; LUO; ELB); arbres verts (LSG), arbres verts (BFC), arbres verdoyants (TOB); albero verdeggianti (LND; NRV), albero frondoso (IEP); drzewem zielonym (BTP); stromem zeleným (BKR); ligno frondoso (VUL)

- Spreading tree (NIV; NIB)
- Leafy tree (NAB); albero frondoso (LBA, RVA); árvore frondosa (ARA)
- Tree like a grove (LXT)

The Russian translation for [etz raanàn] is ветвистым деревом (lit. ramified tree) in Deut. 12:2, but in 2 Ki. 16:4/4 Царе 16:4 is тенистым деревом (lit. shadowy tree).

Evergreen cypress/green fir tree בָּרֹשׁ שֶׁפֶךְ [verosh raanàn]
Hosea (14:8-9) calls Israel to return to fidelity to God. God is compared to a fresh/green cypress. The translations oscillate between cypress, pine tree, fir tree, but whatever the tree is, it is green, evergreen, luxuriant, or shadowy.

The fuzziness of translations preserves the meaning of green/fresh ‘life’, ‘monotheism’, ‘monotheistic lifestyle’, ‘monotheistic behavior’.

Lit. ‘radiant freshness’ אָזְרָא שֶׁפֶךְ [ezrah raanàn] as green tree

Psalm 37/36: 35
I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. (KJV)
The phrase ארצָה רָאָנָן [ezráh raanân] is translated as green bay tree (KJV), green tree (NIB), luxuriant tree (NIV, NAS, NAU), and native green tree (NKV). NRS follows the decision in the Septuagint—cedar of Lebanon (κέδρος τοῡ Λιβάνου). In fact, in Hebrew what is actually said is radiant freshness [ezráh raanân].

In Psa. 37/36:35 a special use which binds the words fresh רָאָנָן [raanân] and tree אֵצָה [etz] to the pagan altars is detected. In this particular verse, the word tree is missing in the Hebrew version. It is possible to suppose that the psalm uses a constant notion connecting [etz raanân] to pagan nature altars and their negative assessment. Contextual meaning from the verse is the successful spreading of evil—‘violent, wicked man spreading himself’.

Use of the Hebrew verb רָאָנָן [raanân] be(come) fresh, luxuriant, green.

This verb occurs only once, in Job 15:32 ‘It will be paid in full before their time, and their branch will not be green.’ Green in Bulgarian, Russian and English.

Green olive tree זָיֶת רָאָנָן [zàit raanân]

There are few uses of this Noun Phrase, e.g Jeremiah 11:16, Psalm 52:10, etc. The usual symbolism is positive and goes in association with pure/clean oil for ointment. In some contexts the olive tree could be destroyed because of weakness.

Jeremiah 11:16
The LORD called your name, “A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form”; With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, And its branches are worthless. (NAS)
The LORD called you a thriving olive tree with fruit beautiful in form. But with the roar of a mighty storm he will set it on fire, and its branches will be broken. (NIV)

Psalm 52:10
But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the loving kindness of God forever and ever. (NAS)
But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. (NIV)

As far as the translations are concerned the same fuzziness is observed, but the sense is preserved by the use of the BCT green or some synonym to the implied meanings ‘life’, ‘monotheism’, ‘monotheistic lifestyle’, and ‘monotheistic behavior’.

Leaf will be green אלהו רָאָנָן [alehù raanân]—Jeremiah 17:8
“her leaf shall be green’/ its foliage stays green’; “лист его зелен”; “листът му ще зеленее”/ “листата му са зелени”).
Different translators routinely substitute רָאָנָן [raanân] with green in their languages.
7.2 Damp, humid, moist, wet

Lit. damp/humid/moist/wet poplar

Leaving aside the fact that the green and white stick of poplar is the instrument invented by Jacob for artificial insemination, the use of both colours is noteworthy in several directions:

1. This is the first appearance of the BCT white.
2. The Hebrew term for poplar [livnè] is a derivative of the basic term for white [lavàn].
3. In relation to Jacob’s life several BCTs appear for the first time—red, brown, white. (Gen. 25-49)

Genesis 30:37
And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chesnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. (KJV)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>green</th>
<th>fresh</th>
<th>fresh-cut</th>
<th>fresh sticks</th>
<th>fresh rods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rob of poplar (Douay-Rheims Bible)</td>
<td>shoots from poplar (NJB)</td>
<td>branches from poplar (NIV)</td>
<td>of poplar (ESV)</td>
<td>of poplar (NASB)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Russian Synodal translation prefers the word свежих (lit. fresh), avoiding the use of colour terms for green. Some of the English translations also avoid the use of Green—fresh, fresh-cut.

green tree נֵחַ [etz lah]—twice in Ezekiel, 17:24; 20:47 [H] 21:

In the Indo-European languages (Latin, Greek, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, the Bulgarian Protestant version, Polish, Czech, Russian) translations predominantly prefer green tree. Only in the Bulgarian Orthodox version shadowy tree (сенчесто дърво) is chosen. In Finno-Ugric, green tree is the choice for Hungarian. Only in Finnish fresh tree (tuoreen puun) is preserved: green tree; l’arbre vert; árbol verde/arbres verdoyants; albero verde/legno verde grünen Baum; зелено дърво; drzewo
zielone; strom zelený; зеленее дерево.

The Noun Phrase green tree הֵן בָּשָׁם [etz lah] is an opposite of green tree הֵן בָּשָׁם [etz raanân]. It is used in contexts positive for Jews, despite their systematic non-monotheistic behaviour. Both cases are marked.

Jdg. 16:7-8 is about the story of Samson and Delilah. Green with (KJV)/ fresh cords (NAS) הָרָאתִים לְחִי [itarim lahim] are signs for Samson’s lie which at that moment saves his life.

7.3 Moist, juicy, in full green, lush, full of sap בָּשָׁם [ratov]; be wet, be drenched, be moist, juicy בָּשָׁם [ratav]

Here there is usual fuzziness of the choices but the final impression is for green:
Job 8:16
(Grows) green (LXT; VUL; KJV; NJV; RWB); LND (verdeggiante), NRV (verdeggia), Bul. Orthodox and Protestant versions; RST; ARA, ACF (viçoso); FIN (rehevânã);
Well-watered—NIV, NIB
Thrives—NAS, NAU
Full of sap—NAB
Saft (Juice)—LUT, ELB, LUO
Vigueur (strong)—LSG,
Plein (juicy)—TOB, BFC
Vigor (strong)—LBA
Lleno (juicy)—RVA
Rigoglioso (luxuriant)—IEP
Nedvességû (moisture)—HUN

As usual, Job shows a masterpiece of parallelism in Job 24:8. In the verse there are two words for wet, moist, rain, flood of rain, pour forth in floods—זָרָם [zèrem] and לְחִי [ratav] be wet, be drenched, be moist. Actually, the word translated by a noun (rain, showers) is a verb. But it is more suitable for Indo-European languages to take such a decision. Only the Septuagint gives a verb as it is in Hebrew υγραίνονται (to wet, moisten). Indo-European interpreters, including St. Jeronimo, prefer rain for לְחִי [irtavû].

The language and style of Job is quite interesting because from the Bible we know that Job had been born “Son of Esav/Edom” but not “Son of Jacob/Israel”. Here is the information on the birth place of Job: “út [utz]. Meaning: Utz = “wooded” 1) son of Aram and grandson of Seth; 2) son of Nahor by Milcah; 3) an Edomite, son of Dishan and grandson of Seir; 4) the country of Job; probably east and southeast of Palestine somewhere in the Arabian desert” (BW).

7.4 Greenness, flowering, blossoming of plants בָּקָש [av]
This appears twice—Song 6:11; Job 8:12 and serves as another example of the mastery of Job in biblical poetry, with parallelism. The first word is בָּקָש [av] (TBFP), the second is
grass, barley [hatzir] (TP).

Usual fuzziness of choices for בנים [av]:

English versions—green, greenness, flower, growing. The same for French—vert, fleur. Close in Spanish—verde, tallo (stem); Italian—verde, germoglio (bud); Spanish—verde, tallo (stem); Portuguese—verdor; Geman—Blüte (bloom), knospen (buds); Bulgarian Orthodox—преснота (fresh), Bulgarian Protestant—зелена (green); Polish—świeże (fresh); Czech—zelena (green); Hungarian—Korában (early); Finnish—vihreänä (green).

7.5 Having interwoven foliage, leafy [avat]

Leafy/thick trees שלט [etz avot] Leviticus 23:40, Ezekiel 20:28, Nehemiah 8:15

The choices in the English translations vary between leafy, thick and shade (tree) which is indicative of the decisions in other translations. The influence of the Septuagint and Vulgate is valid for all languages—φύλλα ξύλου δασέος; frondes ligni nemorosi (lit. leaf tree thick)

7.6 Heaping and gradation of green—Isaiah 37:27—BCT & PT

Another parallelism, which portrays gradation of the green colour can be pointed out. The first one is ברק [av] (TBFP), and four Prototype terms (PT)—grass Ù-away [deshé], herbs אסב [èsev], grass, barley [hatzir], field [sade], and one Basic Colour term (BCT)—to become green [virak]

Isaiah 37:27

Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as grain blighted before it is grown up. (RWB)

8. Semio-Osmosis and Biblical Accommodation

The ultimate goal of semio-osmosis is equalization of the content between target language and source language. The septum/membrane that translators must overcome is made up of the different worldviews and grammar rules of the two languages. Semio-osmosis is a dynamic process. Lexical fuzziness appears in different translations—different words are the corresponding decisions for Hebrew TBFP. The lexical fuzziness depends on the linguistic competence and surface choices of translators for rendering and preserving the worldviews and grammar rules in both languages, as well as the personal encyclopaedic knowledge of translators. Far too often in translator’s choices the BCT green appears as equalization of a Hebrew TBFP sense.

In relation to the presence of green (by BCT, PT or TBFP), there are no differences related to effective suggestions for Green in Hebrew and in Indo-European texts—the effective presence of Green is symmetrical notwithstanding some lexical differences.
between Hebrew and Indo-European texts.

The routine definition for Biblical accommodation is ‘the adaptation of words or sentences from the Bible to signify ideas different from those expressed therein’ (CE, 1913). The ‘Divine accommodation’, ‘while being in His nature unknowable and unreachable, has nevertheless communicated with humanity in a way which humans can understand and respond to’ (Wikipedia—Accommodation in religion) is not taken into account. Also, I do not take into account accommodation caused by scientific discoveries in mathematics, physics, astronomy, nor accommodation in view of human behavior and use of biblical quotations in everyday situations. I am dealing with the bare text of translations.

Assuming that official translations are the result of the activities of competent and well-intentioned interpreters, the process of accommodation depends on the target language for various changes and developments.

The final goal of Semio-osmosis is the highest possible equality of texts. In this sense, accommodation and semi-osmosis are opposite processes. In fact, the authors of the key translations adhere more to semio-osmosis despite inter-linguistic asymmetry, dissymmetry, different worldviews, culture differences and traditions. An excellent example is the work of St. Jerome’s commentaries on the Scripture, often explaining his translation choices in using the original Hebrew source. Thus, every translation is an interpretation in the frames of semio-osmosis.

BCTs’ representation of colour is extremely sparing in the OT, so it is not subject to any kind of accommodation, except for the differences caused by asymmetries and different worldviews. Disregarding the PT and TBFP also supports the idea not to pay particular attention to the topic. The colours seem to be an insignificant issue but it is here that we can see translation difficulties and solutions that preserve the original content.

9. Concluding Remarks

The colour green permeates all traditional genres—law, history or narrative, wisdom, poetry, prophecy, parables, apocalyptic stories.

The fact that the first use of the BCT is green (not white, black or red) underlines at least two things: 1. The text is not a document for the evolution of Hebrew from its initial, primitive forms; 2. The high degree of intention and electiveness of the authors.

Semio-osmosis is a cognitive, linguistic and cultural process which provides the greatest possible closeness and equivalence between Hebrew and its translations.

Hebrew original requires a specialized use of the term הָרֶשָׁנָן [etz raanân], and refers to a pagan altar. Translations keep this use of the BCT Green—green tree.

Notes
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**Abbreviations**
ALAA—Applied Linguistics Association of Australia
BW—Bible Works 4. 1989 LLC. Hermeneutika, Big Fork, Montana
EBD—Easton Bible Dictionary.
F.—French
JSOT—Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
L.—Latin

**Bibles**
BFC—French Bible en français courant, édition révisée. 1997
BKR—Czech Bible Kralická: Bible svatá aneb všecka svatá písmá Starého a Nového Zákona podle posledního vydání kralického z roku 1613
BTP—The Polish Millennium Bible 1984, 4th ed.
DRB—The French Version Darby 1885 [1991]
IEP—The Italian NVB Nuovissima Versione della Bibbia 1995-1996
LND—The Italian La Nuova Diodati 1991
LUO—The German Luther Bibel 1912 [1995]
NAB—The New American Bible 1991
NAU—The New American Standard. 1995
NKJ—New King James—according BibleWorks
NRV—The Italian La Sacra Bibbia Nuova Riveduta 1994
NRS—The New Revised Standard Version 1989
RST—The Russian Synodal Text 1917 [1996]
RVA—The Spanish La Santa Biblia Reina-Valera Actualizada 1989
RWB—The English Revised Webster 1833 [1995]
TOB—French Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible
WTT—Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. 1990. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft
VUL—Vulgate Latin Bible 1983. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft

BUL 1—Bulgarian Protestant Version, 1940
BUL 2—Bulgarian Orthodox Version, 1991

Books from the Bible
Am.—Amos
Chr.—Chronicles
Deut.—Deuteronomy
Ex.—Exodus
Ez.—Ezekiel
Gen.—Genesis
Hab.—Habakkuk
Hagg.—Haggai
Isa.—Isaiah
Jdg.—Judges
Jer.—Jeremiah
1 Ki.—1 Kings
2 Ki.—2 Kings
Lev.—Leviticus
Num.—Numbers
Rev.—Revelation
Song—Song of Solomon
Prov.—Proverbs
Ps.—Psalms
Zech.—Zechariah

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