

## “WHAT DOES THE BIBLE MEAN?”

What does the Bible “mean?” There are verses that are clear and verses that are obscure. Each word, each phrase, has been subject to volumes of commentary. Surely by now we have plumbed its meaning? Can there still be more to say?

When we interpret, rephrase, or translate, something is lost. Only by returning to the original can we recapture its full force. In 1929 there was a meeting of the Oxford poetry club at which T.S. Eliot was the guest of honor. An undergraduate asked him, “Please, sir, what do you mean by the line ‘Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree?’” Eliot answered, “I mean, ‘Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree.’”

To expound the messages of the Torah is indispensable, but it is not the same as hearing the Torah's own voice. The Torah is not a simple vessel of meaning that we can extract and understand. Each verse is a blend of sanctity, command, poetry, entreaty, story, history; it is mixed in the brew of generations, refined by the tragedy and glory of a people, and elevated by its origin. Open the book and read words that have been an inspiration to a needful world.