



Israelite Studies

PREFACE

Here at Israelite Studies©, we understand that for information to be provided which helps answer questions, that info must first be studied to give absolute conclusions based upon accurate examinations of any resource contributing to it.

HOW DO WE CONDUCT OUR STUDIES?

Our research team comes with a collective of 50+ years' experience in Biblical Studies and examination. Although each member holds a particular position for each topic, an unbiased approach is taken when applying the comparative research method to best harmonize concrete interpretations of scripture. Each topic is put under heavy scrutiny while taking into consideration, language, cultural and historical backgrounds, parallel texts, etc. Once any study has been exhausted, our team finalizes the findings with a collective position. If necessary, amendments to the studies are applied once all of the views expressed by our research team are made available for the public to form their own conclusions.

- Throughout some of our bible studies, we have replaced *LORD/the LORD* with *Yahawah*, *God* with *Alahayam*, and *Jesus Christ* with *Yahawashi Mashayach*.
- All Hebrew definitions referenced are listed in the *Tel-Dan Inscription* font, along with every Transliteration and Phonetic pronunciation provided in the earliest dialect of Hebrew studied by our team (commonly called '*Lashawan Qadash*' – Holy Language).

Opening

Shalam (Peace). This study will be a general overview of Bible translations and its history.

Background

Bible translations are the result of taking scriptures originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek and rendering them into the thousands of languages spoken today. Presently, complete Protestant Bibles exist in hundreds of languages, with the New Testament and various portions of scripture available in thousands more. Together, these efforts mean that at least some part of the Bible has been translated into well over half of the world's living languages. Differences in translations sometimes reflect variations in ancient manuscripts or the theological perspectives of the translators.

The Hebrew Bible was primarily composed in Biblical Hebrew, though sections such as parts of Daniel and Ezra are in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek, though some of its underlying material likely originated in Aramaic conversations or sayings. Since the original manuscripts no longer exist, today's versions rely on surviving copies, where most differences are minor—like spelling or word order—but some are more substantial, such as alternate endings in the Gospel of Mark or debates over phrases like the “Comma Johanneum.” Early biblical texts did not include punctuation; this was added centuries later by editors and scribes.

Translation has a long history. During the Babylonian exile, Aramaic became widely used, leading to spoken and later written Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew scriptures known as the Targums. In Alexandria, Jewish scholars produced the Septuagint, a Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures completed by around 132 BC, which includes material not found in the later standardized Masoretic Hebrew text. By the third century, Origen created his famous Hexapla, a massive comparative edition displaying Hebrew texts alongside several Greek versions. During the early Christian centuries, translations also appeared in Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, and, most significantly for Western Christianity, Latin.

In medieval Europe, Latin remained dominant because it was the language of liturgy and scholarship, though vernacular translations did exist in languages such as Old English, Old High German, and Old Church Slavonic. Noteworthy examples include the Wessex Gospels in Old English and the translations promoted by scholars like Cyril and Methodius in Slavic regions. These early translations were typically produced under ecclesiastical supervision. The Reformation dramatically expanded translation efforts. Erasmus's publication of a critical Greek New Testament in 1516 influenced many reformers. Martin Luther's 1522 German New Testament became foundational for later German Bibles. English translations evolved rapidly as well—beginning with William Tyndale's New Testament, continuing through the work of Myles Coverdale and others, and culminating in the King James Version of 1611. Similar movements unfolded across Europe and beyond, leading to translations in Polish, Czech, French, Spanish, Welsh, Lithuanian, Arabic, and even Indigenous American languages such as Massachusett.

The Earliest Bible Translations

Septuagint (Greek):

This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, created during the mid-3rd century BC to accommodate the increased use of Greek among diasporic Jews following the conquest of the eastern Mediterranean by Alexander the Great. It became the standard Old Testament for Christians throughout the Greek-speaking world, and, remarkably, is still in liturgical use today by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Vulgate (Latin):

Saint Jerome meticulously undertook his translation of the Bible in the late 4th to early 5th century AD to accommodate the increasing use of Latin instead of Greek in the western Roman Empire. He established a new precedent by translating the Old Testament from its original Hebrew rather than the more commonly used Septuagint version.

First English Translations

It took nearly 1,000 years after the adoption of the Vulgate for Bibles to start appearing in English. By that time, most common people didn't speak or understand Latin, making God's Word inaccessible to them except indirectly, as explained by priests or passed down verbally in Bible-based stories.

Wycliffe's Bible:

The first complete translation of the entire Bible into English was by John Wycliffe and his followers in the late 1300s. It was based on the Vulgate (since the original Hebrew and Greek texts remained unavailable in the West). Because it had to be hand-copied and distributed, it didn't reach a wide audience, but it was still enough to earn Wycliffe a condemnation for heresy 30 years after his death.

Tyndale's New Testament:

William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, published in 1526, was the first English version to be distributed using the new printing press. Tyndale's work was groundbreaking for its use of the original Greek texts and for his commitment to making the Bible understandable for commoners, or those who spoke "the ploughman's terms." Unfortunately, it also led to his martyrdom in 1536.

The Geneva Bible:

Published in 1560 by English refugees in Geneva, Switzerland, this was the first English Bible to include both verse numbers and extensive commentary. Its readability and comprehensive annotations made it the Bible of choice for English-speaking Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries — including the Mayflower pilgrims in America.

The KJV:

Commissioned by King James I of England in 1604, this translation aimed to create a version that could be accessible and acceptable to the broadest English-speaking audience — which included both Anglicans and Puritans, who were then mortal enemies. Its enduring use and admiration are a testament to its success.

Bible Translation in the 20th-21st Centuries

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen a proliferation of English Bible translations, reflecting diverse theological perspectives, advances in historical linguistics, and the ongoing quest for clarity and accessibility. The two most important developments during this era that aren't listed above were the ASV and RSV.

ASV (American Standard Version):

Released in 1901, the ASV took a strict word-for-word approach that sought to capture the original sense of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts, while retaining the KJV's use of Elizabethan English (such as "thee" and "thou"). Though not much used today, it served as the basis for most formal-equivalence translations since, including the RSV, NRSV, ESV, NASB, and the Amplified Bible.

RSV (Revised Standard Version):

A major, comprehensive update of the ASV, the RSV was published in 1952 after 15 years of work by a massive ecumenical body of 38 Christian faith groups in the United States. It was the first translation to do away with archaic pronouns and verb forms (e.g., adopting "you have" instead of "thou hadst"), simplifying the text and opening God's Word to millions of readers while adhering to rigorous accuracy by leveraging the latest Biblical scholarship and manuscripts.

Top Bible Versions Today

NIV (New International Version)

The most popular modern version of the Bible, known for its excellent and broadly accessible balance of accuracy and readability.

Year released: 1978 (Revised 2011)

Translation team/sponsor: 100+ evangelical Bible scholars for Biblica (licensed to Zondervan in the U.S.)

Despite being the world's most popular English Bible translation with over 500 million copies sold, the New International Version (NIV) has faced significant criticism from biblical scholars. The central debate focuses on its "thought-for-thought" translation philosophy, which critics like N. T. Wright and Mark Given argue can lead to paraphrasing, introduce theological biases that conform to modern Evangelical traditions, and obscure the original meaning of key texts like those in Romans. Specific translation choices in passages like Genesis 2:19 and controversial footnotes in 1 Corinthians 11 have been labeled as inaccurate or misleading by various academics.

***Sample passage:** I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (NIV)*

KJV (King James Version)

The enduring and influential classic that set the bar for English Bible translations. Best for traditional worship settings and historical or literary-minded readers.

Year released: 1611

Translation team/sponsor: 47 Anglican scholars and clergy for King James I of England

Commissioned (or “authorized”) by King James I of England in 1604, undertaken by a team of 47 scholars, and released in 1611, the KJV became the definitive Bible version in the English-speaking world until at least the mid-twentieth century. It is directly responsible for hundreds of English terms and phrases that we use every day — often without realizing their Biblical origin. The KJV initially took a formal equivalence approach, though (because it was intended to be read aloud in services) it paid special attention to the beauty and elegance of the language.

***Sample passage:** Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (KJV)*

NKJV (New King James Version)

An update to the KJV that preserves its literary majesty while modernizing archaic words and phrases.

Year released: 1982

Translation team/sponsor: 130 scholars, clergy, and lay Christians for Thomas Nelson Publishers

The NKJV is an update and modernization of the KJV by 130 Bible scholars. It was commissioned in 1975 and released in 1982, with the goal of retaining the same formal equivalence and literary majesty of the original KJV while eliminating archaic, obsolete, or inaccurate terms and phrases. The NKJV serves as the perfect bridge between the traditional feel of the KJV and the accessibility of modern translations like the NIV.

Sample passage: *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (NKJV)*

NRSVue (New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition)

A forward-thinking but academically rigorous translation that emphasizes gender inclusiveness. A favorite of scholars and academics, Catholics (NRSV-CE), and inclusive faith communities.

Year released: 1989 (Rev. 2021)

Translation team/sponsor: 50+ scholars from Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish backgrounds for the National Council of Churches USA

First published in 1989 and then updated in 2021, the NRSV (now NRSVue) was developed by a team of about 30 translators from Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and (for the Old Testament) Jewish backgrounds. It was based on the RSV translation of 1952, itself an update of the ASV from 1901, using a predominantly formal equivalence and considering the latest scholarship of Biblical times and manuscripts. Among its distinguishing developments, the NRSVue is known for using gender-inclusive translations such as “person” instead of “man” and “brothers and sisters” instead of “brothers” where the context supports or allows it. The translators argue that it better reflects the original meaning in languages where plural masculine pronouns (e.g., ἀδελφοὶ/adelphoi) were used for groups that included both men and women — especially where the text makes clear that women were, in fact, present, such as Acts 18:26-27 or 1 Corinthians 1:11. The NRSV is also, in the edited and expanded Catholic Edition (NRSV-CE), one of the few complete Bible translations approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for private use and study.

Sample passage: *What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (NRSVue)*

ESV (English Standard Version)

A straightforward translation that adheres to an “essentially literal” word-for-word approach. A favorite of scholarly evangelicals preferring traditional gendered terminology.

Year released: 2001 (Revised 2016)

Translation team/sponsor: 100+ evangelical scholars and pastors for Crossway

The ESV translation was conducted in the late 1990s by about 100 evangelical scholars and published in 2001, partly in response to the NRSV. Like the NRSV, the ESV is an update of the RSV and aims as closely as possible for word-for-word accuracy while remaining readable. The translators sought to go beyond the NRSV and what they perceived as some liberties it took with interpretation, particularly its gender neutrality. Instead, the ESV endeavored to hold to an “essentially literal” approach that emphasizes word-for-word accuracy and fidelity as well as building on the RSV’s literary excellence and depth.

Sample passage: *I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (ESV)*

NASB (New American Standard Bible)

A rigorously word-for-word translation that seeks to reproduce the original structure of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Generally considered one of the most literal Bible translations available in English.

Year released: 1995 (Revised 2020)

Translation team/sponsor: Lockman Foundation

First published in 1971 and updated in 1995 and again in 2020, the NASB strives to be as literal and precise as possible without sacrificing readability and modern English usage. The 1995 version was a significant update to the original release. It echoed the NKJV by removing archaic pronouns (thee, thy, thou) and restructuring awkward phrases. In 2020 the NASB was updated again to account for the latest scholarship (including gender neutrality where appropriate to the context) and modern language usage (such as “let’s go up” instead of “let us go up”). Throughout these improvements, though, the NASB has held closely to a strict word-for-word equivalence.

Sample passage: *Now I say this, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (NASB)*

NLT (New Living Translation)

A looser translation that emphasizes readability, simplifying complex terms and phrases while preserving their original meaning.

Year released: 1996 (Revised 2015)

Translation team/sponsor: Tyndale House Foundation

Developed by some 90 scholars from various denominational backgrounds in the 1980s and released in 1996, the NLT is notable for being the most popular of the firmly functional-equivalence translations. Rather than striving for word-for-word accuracy, the NLT translators sought to convey the original meaning of the text as clearly as possible for modern readers. This includes updating measurements and dating to modern standards (e.g., feet instead of cubits), as well as making sense of archaic idioms (“get yourself ready” instead of “gird up thy loins”).

Sample passage: *What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (NLT)*

Other Notable Bible Versions

Here are some other notable Bible versions from recent decades. See the graphic above for sample text of these translations.

CSB (Christian Standard Bible)

A balanced translation that goes for word-for-word accuracy while simplifying the language for modern readers. Though a similarly balanced translation to the NIV, the CSB has struggled to step outside of the former’s shadow, especially for those outside of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Year released: 2004 (Rev. 2017)

Translation team/sponsor: 100 evangelical scholars for Holman Bible Publishers

Sample passage: *What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can corruption inherit incorruption. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (CSB)*

CEB (Common English Bible)

A dynamic yet balanced translation that strives for natural language and broad accessibility to speakers of modern English without sacrificing rigorous accuracy. Known for its informal, conversational style falling somewhere between the NIV and NLT.

Year released: 2011

Translation team/sponsor: 120 mostly mainline Protestant and progressive evangelical scholars for Christian Resources Development Corporation (licensed to Abingdon)

Sample passage: *This is what I'm saying, brothers and sisters: Flesh and blood can't inherit God's kingdom. Something that rots can't inherit something that doesn't decay. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (CEB)*

NABRE (New American Bible Revised Edition)

The official Catholic translation of the Bible and the only one approved for use in Mass, the NABRE takes a balanced, word-for-word translation approach, similar to but less stringent than the NRSVue or ESV. It's also known for its extensive footnotes and cross-references.

Year released: 2011 (Based on the 1970 NAB)

Translation team/sponsor: Catholic Bible Association of America for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine

Sample passage: *This I declare, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (NABRE)*

AMP (Amplified Bible)

A unique translation balancing word-for-word equivalence and paraphrase by offering multiple translations and exposition ("amplifications") on many words and phrases. It's a useful tool for private study but has received criticism for interpolating phrases like "personal Savior" that did not exist in the original time and language of the Bible.

Year released: 1965 (Rev. 2015)

Translation team/sponsor: Frances Siewert (Presbyterian) and other scholars for Lockman and Zondervan

Sample passage: *Now I say this, believers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit nor be part of the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable (mortal) inherit the imperishable (immortal). — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (AMP)*

MSG (The Message)

A popular paraphrase by pastor and theologian Eugene Peterson, begun in 1993 and finally completed in 2002. Peterson sought to capture the tone and informal style of contemporary speech to deliver a version of the Bible that reads like a story, vibrant and accessible.

Year released: 1993-2002 (Piece by piece)

Translation team/sponsor: Eugene Peterson (Presbyterian) and consulting scholars for NavPress

Sample passage: *I need to emphasize, friends, that our natural, earthy lives don't in themselves lead us by their very nature into the kingdom of God. Their very "nature" is to die, so how could they "naturally" end up in the Life kingdom? — 1 Corinthians 15:50 (MSG)*

Translation Types

Bible translations generally fall along a spectrum with three main types, based on their underlying translation philosophy: word-for-word, thought-for-thought, and paraphrase.

Word-for-Word (Formal Equivalence)

This approach prioritizes translating the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as literally as possible, preserving the original wording, structure, and literary style.

Goal: To be as transparent as possible to the original text, allowing the reader to see the original form of the language and perform detailed word studies.

Pros: Highly accurate for in-depth study, sermon preparation, and theological analysis; minimizes translator bias.

Cons: Can sometimes result in awkward, less natural-sounding English, as idioms and sentence structures are preserved even if they don't make immediate sense in modern language.

Examples: King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV).

Thought-for-Thought (Dynamic or Functional Equivalence)

This method focuses on conveying the meaning or thought of the original writers in clear, natural, and contemporary English.

Goal: To produce a highly readable and understandable text, even if it requires adjusting sentence structures or translating idioms by their intended meaning rather than literally.

Pros: Easy to read, excellent for daily devotional reading, and ideal for new believers or young readers; helps in grasping the overall flow and meaning.

Cons: Involves more interpretation by the translators, which means it is less suitable for rigorous, in-depth doctrinal study where the specific original wording is crucial.

Examples: New International Version (NIV), New Living Translation (NLT), Good News Bible (GNT/TEV).

Paraphrase (Free Translation)

These versions aim for the highest level of readability and modern relevance, often retelling biblical passages and ideas in a very free, conversational style.

Goal: To make the Bible as accessible and engaging as possible, using contemporary language and expression.

Pros: Very easy to read and understand; can be useful for getting a fresh perspective on a familiar passage.

Cons: Authors often take considerable "poetic license," which can introduce personal interpretations and may significantly change the original meaning, making them unreliable for serious study or establishing doctrine.

Examples: The Living Bible (TLB), The Message (MSG), The Passion Translation (TPT).

Below is a chart of many common and historically significant English Bible translations, and how they map onto the translation-philosophy spectrum.

Translation	Abbreviation	Translation Type / Philosophy
King James Version	KJV	Formal equivalence (“word-for-word”)
New King James Version	NKJV	Formal equivalence (modern update of KJV)
New American Standard Bible	NASB	Very literal / formal equivalence
English Standard Version	ESV	Essentially literal / formal-equivalence leaning
Revised Standard Version	RSV	Formal equivalence, though somewhat mixed
New Revised Standard Version	NRSV	Balanced: a mix of formal + dynamic equivalence
New International Version	NIV	“Optimal equivalence” — a blend of dynamic and formal
New Living Translation	NLT	Dynamic equivalence (thought-for-thought)
Holman Christian Standard Bible	HCSB	Blend of formal and dynamic equivalence
Christian Standard Bible	CSB	Combination of dynamic and formal (optimal equivalence)
Contemporary English Version	CEV	Dynamic equivalence, very readable
Good News Translation (aka Good News Bible)	GNT / GNB	Dynamic equivalence / “functional” translation
Amplified Bible	AMP	Formal equivalence, but with expansions and clarifications for meaning
The Message	MSG	Paraphrase — very free, highly interpretive
The Passion Translation	TPT	Paraphrase / interpretive paraphrase
Young’s Literal Translation	YLT	Extremely literal / formal equivalence — aims for word-for-word as strictly as possible
Literal Standard Version	LSV	Very literal; derived from YLT, emphasizing verb tense, word order, and meaning preservation
Concordant Version	CV	Hyper-literal; uses consistent English equivalents for Greek/Hebrew terms, very exacting
God’s Word Translation	GW	“Closest Natural Equivalence” — tries to be clear and natural but still close to the original meaning
The Voice	—	Dynamic equivalence; very modern, story-like rendering
Revised New Jerusalem Bible	RNJB	Formal equivalence (Catholic translation)
Common English Bible	CEB	Balanced: uses both dynamic and formal techniques

Our study team prioritizes the usage of literal or word-for-word translations when composing our studies for public viewing. While we understand these translations can be difficult to read, we also affirm that using this type will aid an individual in how to properly read and study the Bible for accuracy.

Prologue of the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach (KJV Apocrypha)

Whereas many and great things have been delivered unto us by the law and the prophets, and by others that have followed their steps, for the which things Israel ought to be commended for learning and wisdom; and whereof not only the readers must needs become skilful themselves, but also they that desire to learn be able to profit them which are without, both by speaking and writing: my grandfather Jesus, when he had much given himself to the reading of the law, and the prophets, and other books of our fathers, and had gotten therein good judgment, was drawn on also himself to write something pertaining to learning and wisdom; to the intent that those which are desirous to learn, and are addicted to these things, might profit much more in living according to the law. Wherefore let me intreat you to read it with favour and attention, and to pardon us, wherein we may seem to come short of some words, which we have laboured to interpret. For the same things uttered in Hebrew, and translated into another tongue, have not the same force in them: and not only these things, but the law itself, and the prophets, and the rest of the books, have no small difference, when they are spoken in their own language. For in the eight and thirtieth year coming into Egypt, when Euergetes was king, and continuing there some time, I found a book of no small learning: therefore I thought it most necessary for me to bestow some diligence and travail to interpret it; using great watchfulness and skill in that space to bring the book to an end, and set it forth for them also, which in a strange country are willing to learn, being prepared before in manners to live after the law. All wisdom cometh from the Lord, and is with him for ever.

In the Prologue is revealed an insight behind the difficulties of translating things spoken in Hebrew into another language. Even the most literal translations of English bibles can't fully relay the exact idioms, contexts, and cultural significance of antiquity. As the saying goes, some things are lost in translation. It is for this reason we advise anyone reading this study to not rely on other translation types for accuracy, for they will likely be much further away from the literal meaning of what was originally written.

Key Bible Verses Compared by Translation

2 Timothy 2:15

(KJV) | word-for-word

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

(NIV) | thought-for-thought

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

(Message) | paraphrase

Concentrate on doing your best for God, work you won't be ashamed of, laying out the truth plain and simple.

2 Timothy 2:15 being a foundational scripture of Israelite Studies has a variation among different translation types. While the KJV renders that which is found among Greek manuscripts, both the NIV and Message translations have completely disregarded the word 'study' and used a very vague phrase stating to do your best. (For more information on the word 'study' in this verse, please review our study 'How Do I Read & Study the Bible?').

Romans 8:28

(KJV) \ word-for-word

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

(NIV) | thought-for-thought

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

(Message) | paraphrase

That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

In this comparison of Romans 8:28, while the KJV & NIV retain the important aspect of those who are called according to the purpose of the highest, the Message Bible omits it completely.

Conclusion

We hope this study serves as a guide for those seeking to better understand bible translations; that it may be a tool used to lead those seeking the truth of the scriptures.