

## THE NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

[This article is based upon the Preface to the New Translation, the statements published from time to time by The Jewish Publication Society of America, and the records kept by the Society.<sup>1</sup>]

### THE NEED OF A NEW TRANSLATION

While the Hebrew original of the Holy Scriptures is the chief source whence the Jews derive their knowledge of the Word of God, there is a great number of men and women who are not familiar with the Hebrew language, and it is an obvious duty to teach them the Bible in their vernacular. This was the underlying motive of the version known as the Targum, which originated at a time when Aramaic supplanted the Hebrew language in Palestine; of the Septuagint, or the Greek translation of the Scriptures, the product of Israel's contact with the Hellenistic civilization dominating the world at that time; of the Arabic translation by the Gaon Saadya, when the great majority of the Jewish people came under the sceptre of Mohammedan rulers; and of the German translation by Mendelssohn and his school, at the dawn of a new epoch, which brought the Jews in Europe, most of whom spoke a German dialect, into closer contact with their neighbours. These translations are all historical products intimately connected with Israel's wanderings among the nations and with the great events of mankind in general.

The greatest change in the life of Israel during the last two generations was his renewed acquaintance with English-

<sup>1</sup> The first impression of 20,000 copies, issued January, 1917, was disposed of by April, 1917. The second impression of 20,000 copies was issued in August, 1917.

speaking civilization. Out of a handful of immigrants from Central Europe and the East who saw the shores of the New World, or even of England and her colonies, we have grown under Providence both in numbers and in importance, so that we constitute now the greatest section of Israel living in a single country outside of Russia. It was, therefore, imperative to prepare a new translation into the English language, which, unless all signs fail, is to become the current speech of a great portion of the children of Israel.

For the last two thousand years the keenest interest has been taken in the elucidation of the Sacred Book in the original, and more accurate interpretations are constantly being suggested. The results of these investigations are eagerly incorporated into the new translations which appear from time to time. An archæological discovery sometimes sheds a flood of light upon an obscure passage, and it is quite obvious that a translation which does not keep pace with the progress of philological research will necessarily become antiquated.

In English the King James Version (1611), which was itself a revision of earlier versions, has, owing to its graceful diction, endeared itself to the pious reader in spite of its faulty renderings. Nevertheless, the English-speaking world could not indefinitely exclude the scientific results obtained in the field of biblical research and archæological discovery, and in 1885 the Revised Version, which had been prepared by the representative scholars of English-speaking countries, was given to the world. The Revisers endeavored to incorporate the best results into that version, and despite the adverse criticism that has sometimes been raised against it, the Revised Version is a work of conscientious scholarship. At the same time it can by no means lay claim to finality, as indeed no

translation can be considered perfect. There is always room for improvement even in a translation of an ordinary book. An author, anxious that his work should be as perfect as possible, will constantly introduce alterations, and it is only after his death that his book becomes fixed forever. This cannot be the case with a translation, however excellent it may be. The Hebrew text of the Bible was permanently fixed at the beginning of the present era, and the Masorettes achieved marvellous results with the material at their disposal. But it is impossible to stereotype a translation. There can be no doubt that the Revised Version is gradually becoming antiquated like the Authorized which it sought to supersede.

With the Jews the need of a new translation is twofold. We, too, are naturally eager to have a translation based upon the most recent results of scientific research. At the same time it is our ardent desire that our translation should be prepared by representative scholars of the Jewish faith. All the various Christian denominations, Catholics, Protestants, and so forth, have issued translations of their own, and the Jewish people that produced the prophets, psalmists, and historical writers is certainly entitled to lay before the world its interpretation of the Sacred Book. It is unreasonable to expect that the Jew should allow other denominations to prepare for him the book for his religious needs. Moreover, there are technical difficulties which make it inconvenient for a Jew to use the English versions in his synagogue. The order of the biblical books according to Jewish tradition differs greatly from that adopted by the Church. Thus in the Hebrew Bible the Five Megillot (Scrolls) are practically regarded as a unit, and are placed in the third section known as Ketubim (Writings), where they follow the order of the Festivals on which they are read, while

in the Bible of the Church these books are scattered in the various sections: Ruth is placed next to Judges, and Lamentations is put immediately after Jeremiah. The same is the case with Daniel: in the Bible of the Church it is among the Prophets, but the Jewish Canon places it in the group of Writings. The scriptural readings constitute a prominent part in the service of the synagogue, and a Jewish Bible should mark the various sections for the Sabbaths and the Festivals.

The need of such a translation was felt long ago. Mention may here be made of the work of Isaac Leeser in America, which was both preceded and followed by two translations produced in England: the one by Dr. A. Benisch, the other by Dr. Michael Friedländer. The most popular, however, among these translations was that of Leeser, which was not only the accepted version in all the synagogues of the United States, but was also reproduced in England. Its great merit consisted in the fact that it incorporated all the improvements proposed by the Mendelssohn school and their successors, whose combined efforts were included and further developed in the so-called Zunz Bible, which enjoyed a certain authority among German Jews for several generations. It is to be observed that Leeser's work preceded the Revised Version by thirty years. All these translations, however, were the undertakings of individual scholars, and could never command universal approval. What was really needed was the united efforts of representative Jewish scholars in English-speaking countries.

#### THE HISTORY OF THE NEW TRANSLATION

The Jewish Publication Society of America almost at the very outset of its career conceived the plan of the new English translation of the Bible. At its second biennial convention,

held on June 5, 1892, the following statement was made: "We look forward to the time when the Society shall furnish a new and popular English rendition of the book which the Jews have given to the world, the Bible, that shall be the work of American Jewish scholars." The Executive Committee voted that "the publication of an English translation of the Bible at the earliest possible time was feasible and necessary." On November 27 of the same year the Publication Committee appointed a sub-committee of three to make suggestions as to the method to be pursued in preparing the translation. The sub-committee, consisting of the Rev. Dr. Marcus Jastrow, Chairman, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Krauskopf, and Dr. Cyrus Adler, Secretary, drew up a number of recommendations. In order to make the new translation as representative as possible, the Committee invited the co-operation of some Jewish scholars in Great Britain.

The original scheme, which was supported by special funds contributed by persons who recognized the necessity of a Bible for Jews, was to assign the various books of the Bible to different translators whose work was to be harmonized by the Editorial Committee. In 1901, however, it became apparent that this process was too slow and cumbersome to secure a complete translation of the entire Bible, and it was therefore decided to print the Book of Psalms in a handy shape as a separate publication. This book was published in 1903.

Meanwhile important changes took place in the world of Jewish scholars. Dr. Solomon Schechter, of Cambridge, England, came over to this country to be president of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, while the lamented death of Dr. Marcus Jastrow deprived the Editorial Committee of its Editor-in-Chief. Other members had resigned, and it

was necessary to reorganize the Board of Editors. The new committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. Schechter, soon discovered that the method hitherto employed was too complicated, and that it was impossible to accomplish by correspondence the extensive work required.

In 1908 the Jewish Publication Society of America and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which had taken up the project of issuing the Revised Version of 1885 in a form suitable for the synagogue, reached an agreement to co-operate in bringing out the new translation upon a revised plan of having the entire work done by a Board of Editors instead of endeavoring to harmonize the translations of individual contributors. As a result of this understanding the following members were appointed: Dr. Solomon Schechter, Dr. Cyrus Adler, and Dr. Joseph Jacobs, representing the Jewish Publication Society of America, and Dr. Kaufman Kohler, Dr. David Philipson, and Dr. Samuel Schulman, representing the Central Conference of American Rabbis. By mutual agreement Prof. Max L. Margolis was chosen as the seventh member, and was appointed Editor-in-Chief of the work and Secretary to the Editorial Board, of which Dr. Cyrus Adler was elected Chairman. Incidentally the selection thus made resulted in an equal representation of the three institutions for Jewish learning in the United States, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America at New York, the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati, and the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning at Philadelphia.

It will thus be seen that the members of the various committees spared no trouble in experimenting with different methods until they finally evolved a plan which seemed to be the most likely to secure the best results.

## THE METHOD EMPLOYED BY THE TRANSLATORS

As soon as a definite plan was agreed upon by the Board of Editors, Professor Margolis devoted himself entirely to the work, and prepared a manuscript draft of the new translation, taking into account the existing English versions, the standard commentaries, ancient and modern, the translations already made for the Jewish Publication Society of America, the divergent renderings from the Revised Version prepared for the Jews of England, the marginal notes of the Revised Version, and the changes of the American Revisers. Due weight was given to the ancient versions as establishing a tradition of interpretation, notably the Septuagint and the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, the Targums, the Peshitta, the Vulgate, and the Arabic version of Saadya. Talmudic and midrashic allusions and all available Jewish commentators, both the great mediæval authorities, like Rashi, Kimhi, and Ibn Ezra, and the moderns, S. D. Luzzatto, Malbim, and Ehrlich, as well as all the important non-Jewish commentators, were consulted. A copy of the manuscript was sent in advance to the members of the Board of Editors in order to give them ample time to consider the merits of every improvement proposed by the Editor-in-Chief and to enable them to make new suggestions not included in the draft. Sixteen meetings, each lasting ten days or more, covering a period of seven years (1908-1915), were held, at which the proposals in this manuscript and many additional suggestions by the members of the Board were considered. Each point was thoroughly discussed, and the view of the majority was incorporated into the manuscript. When the Board was evenly divided, the Chairman cast the deciding vote. From time to

time sub-committees were at work upon points left open, and their reports, submitted to the Board, were discussed and voted upon. Before being sent to the printer the manuscript was once more examined in order to harmonize, as far as possible, the various suggestions made in the course of seven years. The first proof of the entire work was sent to each member of the Board for revision. The various corrections and suggestions made by the Editors were tabulated, and those which were supported by a majority or by a general rule of the Board were immediately inserted in the proof. There remained about three hundred cases for which the Editor-in-Chief and Chairman did not think it advisable to assume responsibility, and these were referred to the Board for discussion at the final meeting, the seventeenth, which took place in the autumn of 1915. The printer then prepared another proof which was carefully compared with the first by the Editor-in-Chief and Chairman, who removed slight discrepancies, consulting their colleagues by correspondence on weightier matters. In order to issue as correct a translation as possible, the various proofs were read by professional correctors, and each stage of the proof was carefully compared with the Hebrew original. Every measure was taken to make the edition attractive from all points of view. No labour, no expense was spared. Even at the final stages of the proof, paragraphs were reset to make the appearance more artistic. No detail, however trivial, was neglected.

Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Jacob H. Schiff, who contributed \$50,000.00 to the Bible Fund, the Publication Society was able to carry out its plans on such a scale and yet sell the Bible at a very moderate price.



## TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENTS

It was one of the important innovations introduced in the Revised Version to divide the lines in the poetic portions of the Bible according to the rules of poetry. The studies of C. A. Briggs, David Heinrich Mueller, Sievers, and others have since 1885 advanced the subject to a considerable extent. Making use of the researches of these scholars, the Editors of the new translation have printed as poetry passages which in the Revised Version are given as continuous prose. See, for instance, II Kings 19. 21-28, and the greater part of the prophetic books.

As an excessive number of marginal notes is liable to confuse the reader, the Editors thought it advisable to limit the margin to the shortest compass, and they give only such elucidations and references as are absolutely necessary for making the translation intelligible. In order to avoid ambiguity as far as possible, personal pronouns referring to the Deity have been capitalized. For the same reason direct discourse has been indicated by quotation marks. In the prophetic writings, where the speech of the prophet imperceptibly glides into the words of the Deity, and in the legal portions of the Pentateuch, it has been thought best to use quotation marks sparingly. The other punctuation marks have been modernized. Unnecessary archaisms in spelling have likewise been removed. There is no need to retain such forms as 'spake,' 'drave,' 'begat.' Suspended numbers indicate the exact position where a verse begins.

In all externals the new translation is especially adapted for use in synagogue and school. The name of every book and of every pentateuchal section is given in Hebrew characters. These sections which amount to fifty-four are read on the

sabbaths, and a table has been provided which gives all scriptural readings for the sabbaths, festivals, and fast-days.

The volume has a very attractive and artistic appearance. The type is beautiful and clear, and the press work deserves all praise.

#### THE MERITS OF THE NEW TRANSLATION

The new translation is the first for which a group of men representative of Jewish learning among English-speaking Jews assume joint responsibility, all previous efforts in the English language having been the work of individual translators. It has a character of its own. It aims to combine the spirit of Jewish tradition with the results of biblical scholarship, ancient, mediæval, and modern. It gives to the Jewish world a translation of the Scriptures done by men imbued with the Jewish consciousness, while the non-Jewish world, it is hoped, will welcome a translation that presents many passages from the Jewish traditional point of view.

As to the text and order of the biblical books, the new translation follows Jewish tradition, the Sacred Scriptures having come down in a definite compass and in a definite text. They are separated into three divisions: Law (Torah, Pentateuch), Prophets (Nebi'im), Writings (Ketubim).

With every step by which each of the three parts of the Scriptures, Law, Prophets, and Writings, was sealed, nothing to be added or to be taken away, the text was likewise fixed and thenceforth made the object of zealous watchfulness. Even with regard to the latest book of the Scriptures, its text is read substantially in the form in which the great Rabbi Akiba read it, he who said that the system by which the sacred text was guarded constituted a fence about the Scrip-

tures. In that system, at first oral and later committed to writing, the letters were actually counted and lists made, to the end that no alterations should creep in at the hands of careless scribes. The first to collect the notes known as Masorah was Jacob ben Haim Ibn Adonijah, the editor of the second Rabbinic Bible. In our own day many scholars have been prominent in this field of labour, chief among whom are Wolf Heidenheim, S. Frensdorff, S. Baer, and C. D. Ginsburg. Baer's text has been followed, and for the parts not edited by him that of Ginsburg. Not only does the text known as the masoretic represent the text current in the Synagogue with regard to consonants, but also with regard to its signs standing for vowels and accents, both of which embody the interpretation accepted by the Synagogue.

While the style of the new translation is modelled after the Authorized and Revised Versions, there are cases where awkward expressions have been removed. Thus in II Samuel 14. 5 the Authorized Version reads: 'I *am* indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.' Some of the later versions omitted the tautologous word *woman*, without altering the second clause which is quite superfluous: a widow's husband is necessarily dead. In the new translation this verse is: 'I am a widow, my husband being dead.' Great care was taken to harmonize the style in every change that was introduced, and the stately diction of the Elizabethan period was retained throughout the book. The Editors have thus succeeded in clothing new interpretations in the old garb.

It is, however, the changes introduced in passages involving improved exegesis that constitute the chief merit of this translation. When the popular commentaries of the Jewish Publication Society of America are published, the numerous changes

will be fully explained and justified. To indicate in any complete way the changes in the new translation from previous English versions would require a volume of considerable size. For the present it may be of interest to draw attention to some of the striking improvements and to contrast them with the renderings in the older versions. 'Christological' passages have advisedly been omitted, as they were adequately dealt with in earlier Jewish translations. The Editors have not thought it right to admit theoretical novelties in a work intended for the people, and have only accepted such new interpretations as have stood the test of time. But in matters where Assyriology, archæology, zoology, and botany can speak with authority, this new translation represents the latest results. The passages are given in the order they occur in the Hebrew Bible. For the sake of brevity the new translation will be designated NV, Authorized Version AV, Revised Version RV.

#### GENESIS

7. 2. **each with his mate** (NV) is more in keeping with the Hebrew than **the male and his female** (AV, RV, and Leeser). See AV Isaiah 34. 15.

49. 10. Numberless interpretations have been suggested for the third clause of this verse. AV, RV, and Leeser render it: **until Shiloh come**. The objections to this rendering are numerous. A more appropriate interpretation is given in NV: **As long as men come to Shiloh**.

#### EXODUS

3. 1. NV expresses the sense of the Hebrew very accurately: **to the farthest end of the wilderness**. This is better

than: to the back side of the desert (AV); to the back of the wilderness (RV); away into the desert (Leeser).

3. 19. Following Rashi and Mendelssohn, NV renders: **except by a mighty hand**. This is more suitable than **no, not by a mighty hand** (AV and RV).

5. 5. **and will ye make them rest from their burdens?** (NV with Kalisch). AV and RV: **and ye make them rest from their burdens**.

12. 6. NV, following Kalisch, renders: **at dusk**. This is more in accordance with the tradition of the rabbis. AV: **in the evening**; RV: **at even**; Leeser: **toward evening**.

13. 12. **every firstling that is a male, which thou hast coming of a beast, shall be the Lord's** (NV omits *and* according to Mekilta and Jewish commentators). AV: **and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the male shall be the Lord's**. Similarly RV and Leeser.

18. 11. Following Ibn Ezra and Luzzatto, NV renders: **yea, for that they dealt proudly against them** (supply: hath He punished them). AV: **for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly (he was) above them**; RV: **yea, in the thing wherein they dealt proudly against them**; Leeser: **for by the very thing wherein they sinned presumptuously was punishment brought upon them**.

22. 14 (15). **if it be a hireling, he loseth his hire** (NV, following the ancient versions and Geiger). AV and RV: **if it be an hired thing, it came for its hire**; Leeser: **if it be a hired thing, the loss is included in its hire**.

23. 5. NV: **thou shalt forbear to pass by him**; AV: **wouldest forbear to help him**; RV: **and wouldest forbear to help him**; Leeser: **wouldst forbear to unload him**.

23. 19. **The choicest first fruits** (NV with Luzzatto). AV, RV, and Leaser: **The first of the first fruits.**

#### LEVITICUS

2. 14. **groats of the fresh ear** (NV with Septuagint, Mendelssohn, and Hoffmann). AV: **corn beaten out of full ears**; RV: **bruised corn of the fresh ear**; Lesser: **pounded corn out of full ears.**

5. 2. **and be guilty, it being hidden from him that he is unclean** (NV; see Rashi and Mendelssohn). AV: **and (if) it be hidden from him; he also shall be unclean, and guilty**; RV: **and it be hidden from him, and he be unclean, then he shall be guilty**; Leaser: **and it escape his recollection; but (he becometh aware that) he is unclean, and hath (thus) incurred guilt.**

6. 2 (9). **it is that which goeth up** (NV with Luzzatto). Older versions: **burnt-offering.**

19. 16. The Anglican versions miss the Hebrew idiom when they render the second half of this verse: **neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour.** NV gives the traditional Jewish interpretation, which had already found place in Leaser's translation: **neither shalt thou stand idly by the blood of thy neighbour.**

23. 15. Following tradition, NV has: **day of rest.** AV and RV: **sabbath**; Leaser: **holy day.**

27. 2. AV offers this rendering: **When a man shall make a singular vow, the persons shall be for the Lord by thy estimation.** RV improved the phraseology, but did not remove the difficulty, when it rendered: **When a man shall accomplish a vow, the persons shall be for the Lord by thy**

**estimation.** Leeser obviated the syntactical difficulty, and translated: **If a man make a particular vow (to give) the estimated value of persons in honour of the Lord.** NV gives the verse quite a different meaning: **When a man shall clearly utter a vow of persons unto the Lord, according to thy valuation, then thy valuation shall be** (verse 3, etc.).

## NUMBERS

6. 4. On the authority of Rabbi Judah (in the Mishnah), Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Septuagint, Peshitta, Vulgate, and Luzzatto, NV renders: **from the pressed grapes even to the grape-stone.** AV, RV, and Leeser have: **from the kernels even to the husk.**

6. 13. NV adopted Luzzatto's suggestion, and gave a literal rendering of two Hebrew words: **he shall bring it** (marginal note: That is, bring his consecrated head, come with his consecrated hair unshaven). AV and RV miss this point: **he shall be brought.** Leeser: **shall he present himself.**

11. 28. In accordance with the majority of the ancient versions, NV has: **shut them in.** 'This is more accurate than **forbid them** (AV, RV, and Leeser).

23. 10. **the stock of Israel** (NV with Septuagint, Talmud, and Jewish commentators) is more appropriate than **fourth part of Israel** (AV, RV, and Leeser).

24. 7. As may be seen from the second half of the verse, the word *buckets* does not suit the context, despite the unanimity of all translations. But the Hebrew word representing *buckets* is capable of yielding a much more appropriate meaning, and NV offers this improvement: **Water shall flow from his branches.**

## DEUTERONOMY

1. 5. NV expresses the Hebrew sense more correctly: **took Moses upon him to expound this law.** AV and RV: **began Moses to declare this law; Leeser: began Moses to explain this law.**

1. 13. Following Septuagint, Targum, and Barth, NV renders: **Get you, from each one of your tribes, wise men, and understanding, and full of knowledge.** AV: **Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes.** So substantially Leeser. RV: **Take you wise men, and understanding, and known, according to your tribes.**

6. 15. In accordance with the accents, NV renders: **for a jealous God, even the Lord thy God, is in the midst of thee.** So also Mendelssohn. AV: **For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you; RV: for the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is a jealous God; Leeser: For the Lord thy God is a watchful God among you.**

32. 42, NV gives a more accurate translation of the last line, which reads: **From the long-haired heads of the enemy.** Other versions have: **from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy (AV); from the crushed head of the enemy (Leeser); From the head of the leaders of the enemy (RV).** The superiority of NV becomes apparent when we consider that it was the custom of ancient warriors to become Nazirites and let their hair grow long, as may partly be seen from the story of Samson. Compare also Judges 5. 2.

## JOSHUA

13. 23 is slightly cumbersome in the original, and the older translations, wishing to avoid a minor difficulty, assigned to it an unintelligible meaning for which there is no justification.



RV and AV have: **And the border of the children of Reuben was Jordan, and the border (thereof).** Leeser makes it still more definite: **And the boundary of the children of Reuben was the Jordan, and the bordering territory.** But it is quite unusual, to say the least, in the Bible to give indefinite territories as boundaries; all the other borders are well defined. NV: **And as for the border of the children of Reuben, Jordan was their border.** The same construction is repeated in verse 27 of this chapter: **the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, the Jordan being the border thereof.** The other translations have also here: **Jordan and the border thereof (AV and RV); the Jordan and its bordering territory (Leeser).**

#### JUDGES

5. 2. As in the case of Deuteronomy 32. 42, NV renders:

**When men let grow their hair in Israel,  
When the people offer themselves willingly,  
Bless ye the Lord.**

This is more vivid and exegetically superior to AV: **Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves;** to RV: **For that the leaders took the lead in Israel, for that the people offered themselves willingly, bless ye the Lord;** to Leeser: **When depravity had broken out in Israel, then did the people offer themselves willingly; (therefore) praise ye the Lord.**

5. 11. NV offers a more correct interpretation: **Louder than the voice of archers, by watering-troughs! There shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord.** AV has: **(They that are delivered) from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord.** RV improved the first part: **Far from**

the noise of the archers. Leeser is obliged to supply a few words: (Urged on) by the voice of those who divide (the flocks) between the watering wells, there shall they rehearse the benefits of the Lord.

#### I SAMUEL

13. 21. All the versions hitherto published read: **yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulter, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to set the goads,** or something to that effect. Even in a translation the difficulty of this verse is quite apparent. We are told in the preceding verses that 'there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel . . . but all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coultter, and his axe, and his mattock.' Now verse 21, according to the old interpretation, flatly contradicts this statement. The textual difficulty in the Hebrew is still more baffling. The word *pim*, which is not represented in the above translation, could not be satisfactorily explained. Fortunately a weight was discovered by Macalister in Palestine which bore the inscription *pim* in old Hebrew characters. Another weight was excavated bearing the inscription *beka*, and hence we know that *pim*, whatever its etymology, was the name of a weight. Judging by the weight of the *pim* stone, its value is about two-thirds of a shekel. Accordingly, NV renders: **And the price of filing was a pim for the mattocks, and for the coulter, and for the forks with three teeth, and for the axes; and to set the goads.**

#### II SAMUEL

17. 3. NV substantially follows Leeser: **and I will bring back all the people unto thee; when all shall have returned,**

[save] the man whom thou seekest, all the people will be in peace. This is much smoother and more accurate than: and I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned; (so) all the people shall be in peace (AV and RV).

22. 4. AV and RV render: I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from mine enemies. A much more striking translation is given by NV:

Praised, I cry, is the Lord,  
And I am saved from mine enemies.

23. 3, 4. This is another successful rendering:

The God of Israel said,  
The Rock of Israel spoke to me:  
'Ruler over men shall be  
The righteous, even he that ruleth in the fear of God,  
And as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth,  
A morning without clouds;  
When through clear shining after rain,  
The tender grass springeth out of the earth.'

The force of the construction of the third and fourth lines was missed by AV: He that ruleth over men (must) be just, ruling in the fear of God; by RV: One that ruleth over men righteously, that ruleth in the fear of God, (he shall be) as the light of the morning, etc.; by Leeser: That (I should be) ruler over men, be righteous, ruling in the fear of God.

#### I KINGS

11. 11. Forasmuch as this is done of thee (AV and RV) does not correctly reproduce the original, and the marginal note: 'Heb. *is with thee*' conveys nothing to the reader. But the Hebrew idiom permits a more definite rendering: **Foras-**

much as this hath been in thy mind (NV, which substantially follows Leeser).

## II KINGS

19.25. By a correct division of clauses, the Editors were able to give a strikingly poetic rendering, which is syntactically more accurate:

**Hast thou not heard?  
Long ago I made it,  
In ancient times I fashioned it;  
Now have I brought it to pass,  
Yea, it is done; that fortified cities  
Should be laid waste into ruinous heaps.**

AV has: **Hast thou not heard long ago (how) I have done it, (and) of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.** So substantially RV. Leeser's rendering is also on similar lines: **Hadst thou not heard that in distant ages I had prepared this? in the times of antiquity when I formed it, now have I brought it along, and it came to pass, to desolate into ruinous heaps fortified cities.**

## ISAIAH

8.19-20. The first two Hebrew words in verse 20 have caused considerable difficulty, as the construction was not apparent. They had usually been taken as exclamations. Thus AV and RV render: **To the law and to the testimony!** Leeser supplies a word: **(Hold) to the law and to the testimony.** Neither interpretation, however, suits the context. By combining the two verses, NV renders: **And when they shall say unto you: 'Seek unto the ghosts and the familiar spirits,**

that chirp and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? on behalf of the living unto the dead for instruction and for testimony?’

22. 5. Owing to the fact that in Hebrew most of the proper names have well-known meanings, two words in the second half of this verse had been misunderstood, and the picture was somewhat dim. AV and RV have substantially the same: **a breaking down of the walls, and a crying to the mountains.** Leeser’s rendering is hardly an improvement syntactically: **walls are broken, and crying is heard against the mountain.** But *kir* and *shoa* are proper names, and the verse vividly describes the confusion:

**For it is a day of trouble, and of tramplng, and of perplexity,**

**From the Lord, the God of hosts, in the Valley of Vision;**

**Kir shouting, and Shoa at the mount.**

29. 9. The first four words have not hitherto been properly explained, and almost every translation offers something different: **Stay yourselves and wonder; cry ye out and cry (AV); Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind (RV); Stay but still and wonder; turn your eyes away, and be blinded (Leeser).** These are all unsatisfactory. NV has:

**Stupify yourselves, and be stupid!**

**Blind yourselves, and be blind!**

40. 20. Aid for the understanding of the first word in this verse has been sought from all quarters. The same consonants differently vocalized occur in Ecclesiastes 4. 13, where that word signifies *poor*, a meaning well known in Arabic and Syriac; hence AV and RV have something like that: **He that is too impoverished for such an oblation chooseth a tree that**

**will not rot.** Although the word rendered *oblation* may have that meaning in Hebrew, it manifestly does not suit the context. Leeser greatly improved the sense: **He that is skilled in the choice chooseth a wood that will not rot.** Still the philology of the first word was not very sound. NV offers a novel rendering:

**A holm-oak is set apart,  
He chooseth a tree that will not rot.**

41. 2. NV gives this rendering:

**Who hath raised up one from the east,  
At whose steps victory attendeth?**

This is superior to: **Who raised up the righteous (man) from the east, called him to his foot? (AV); Who hath raised up one from the east, whom he calleth in righteousness to his foot? (RV); Who waked up from the east the man whom righteousness met in his steps (Leeser).** It will be noticed that Leeser comes nearest to NV in grasping the construction.

#### JEREMIAH

17. 2. The first Hebrew word of this verse has not been properly understood. It is best taken as a noun. NV accordingly renders:

**Like the symbols of their sons are their altars,  
And their Asherim are by the leafy trees,  
Upon the high hills.**

This is superior to: **whilst their children remember their altars (AV and RV),** although the latter is syntactically not impossible.

31. 22. A very happy rendering is **How long wilt thou turn away coyly,** instead of **How long wilt thou go about (AV);**

**How long wilt thou go hither and thither (RV) ; How long wilt thou roam about (Leeser).**

51. 16. More in accord with Jewish tradition and syntactical principles is NV's rendering:

**At the sound of His giving a multitude of waters in the heavens,**

**He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth.**

Against the Hebrew construction is the rendering of RV: **When he uttereth his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth.** Similarly AV.

51. 32. The sentence **and the reeds they have burned with fire (AV, RV, and Leeser)** hardly seems plausible. It is true that the Hebrew word represented by *reeds* usually means *pools* and may signify *reeds*; but what meaning does it convey here? NV has, with Ibn Janah: **And the castles they have burned with fire.**

51. 39. Here again NV follows Ibn Janah: **And I will make them drunken, that they may be convulsed.** Instead of *convulsed* the older translations have *rejoice*, which obviously does not suit the context.

#### EZEKIEL

5. 7. NV renders: **Because ye have outdone.** This seems to suit the sentence better than **Because ye multiplied (AV) ; Because ye are turbulent (RV).** Leeser's **Because ye have given yourselves up to evil** is too free.

24. 12. This verse was rendered: **She hath wearied (herself) with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her; her scum (shall be) in the fire (AV).** The last clause hangs

rather loosely, and even the added words in parentheses do not relieve the awkwardness. RV supplies more words, without improving the sense: **She hath wearied (herself) with toil; yet her great rust goeth not forth out of her; her rust (goeth not forth) by fire.** Leeser's rendering is on quite different lines, but the difficulty alluded to is not removed: **With fraud hath she wearied (the poor); therefore shall not go forth from her the greatness of her scum: through fire shall her scum be removed.** NV renders: **It hath wearied itself with toil; yet its great filth goeth not forth out of it, yea, its noisome filth.**

28. 12. The phrase **Thou sealest up the sum** of AV and RV is far from being an accurate representation of the original. Leeser again offers here an entirely different translation: **Thou wast complete in outline.** This is, however, too free to command approval. NV comes nearest to the original: **Thou seal most accurate.**

38. 4. Here, too, NV gives a more accurate translation of a difficult Hebrew phrase. **Clothed in full armour** (RV and substantially AV) does not reproduce the original, though it apparently has the support of some of the ancient versions. Leeser's **clothed in elegant attire** has been changed by NV to **clothed most gorgeously.**

47. 8. By a judicious division of clauses NV has smoothed an awkward sentence. AV overlooked a difficulty in the original when it rendered: **These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: (which being) brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.** The additional words *which being* cannot be justified. It is no doubt due to this objection that RV was constrained to introduce some changes which scarcely improve the verse:



These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Arabah: and they shall go toward the sea; into the sea (shall the waters go) which were made to issue forth; and the waters shall be healed. Leeser offers nothing new. NV's superiority is immediately apparent: **These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Arabah; and when they shall enter into the sea, into the sea of putrid waters, the waters shall be healed.**

## HOSEA

5. 2. NV, with Halévy and others, renders: **I am rejected of them all.** AV: **though I (have been) a rebuker of them all.** So substantially RV. Leeser: **but I will inflict correction on them all.**

5. 11. The last Hebrew word in this verse has caused great difficulty. Lexically there is some justification for rendering it *command*, but that this meaning does not suit the context may be seen from AV: **Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.** So substantially RV. Leeser gives further definiteness to this idea by supplying more words: **the commandment (of false prophets).** The possibility of taking that word to signify *filth* solves the difficulty, hence NV reads: **Because he willingly walked after filth.**

6. 8. The exact force is brought out by NV: **It is covered with footprints of blood.** AV has: **polluted with blood;** RV: **stained with blood;** Leeser: **full of traces of blood.**

10. 10. Adopting Wijnkoop's suggestion, the Editors translate: **their two rings** (a meaning well established in the Mishnah), instead of **their two furrows** (AV and Leeser); **their two transgressions** (RV).

## JOEL

4. 4 (3. 4). NV's rendering: **Will ye render retribution on My behalf?** brings out the force of the original more accurately than **will ye render me a recompense?** (AV and RV); **is this the recompense which ye repay me?** (Leeser).

## AMOS

2. 13. There are numerous difficulties in the original of this verse, and the Editors, following Aquila, have chosen the most appropriate rendering:

**Behold, I will make it creak under you,**

**As a cart creaketh that is full of sheaves.**

AV misunderstood the metaphor: **Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.** RV supplied an object: **Behold, I will press (you) in your place, as a cart presseth that is full of sheaves.** Leeser supplies another object: **Behold, I press down (the ground) under you, as the wagon presseth (it) down that is full of sheaves.**

6. 5. NV renders: **That thrum on the psaltery,** instead of **That chant to the sound of the viol (AV)**; **that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol (RV)**; **That chant to the sound of the psaltery (Leeser).**

## MICAH

2. 7. The apparently easy word at the beginning of this verse has baffled all modern commentators. The older translations have: **O (thou that art) named the house of Jacob (AV)**; **Shall it be said, O house of Jacob (RV)**; **Shall it be said (in) the house of Jacob (Leeser).** Apart from the weakness of the sense thus derived, there are specific objections to these renderings. The Editors adopted Ehrlich's suggestion,

and rendered: **Do I change, O house of Jacob?** Compare Malachi 3. 6.

## ZEPHANIAH

3. 3. AV, RV, and Leeser speak of **evening wolves**; but from Jeremiah 5. 6 we know that it is more appropriate to say **wolves of the desert**, as in NV. So also in Habakkuk 1. 8.

## ZECHARIAH

14. 6. The second half of this verse is rather difficult. AV has: **the light shall not be clear, (nor) dark**, which is scarcely intelligible, and involves an impossible explanation of the last word in the original. RV improved the sense: **the light shall not be with brightness and with gloom**. But this gives a fanciful meaning to the word representing *brightness*. Leeser's change does not recommend itself: **there shall be no light, but fleeting light and thick darkness**. NV succeeded in giving a forceful line: **there shall not be light, but heavy clouds and thick**.

## PSALMS

8. 2 (1). **Who hast set thy glory above the heavens**, given in the older translations, makes good sense; the only objection to it is the Hebrew original: the word rendered 'hast set' can by no stretch of imagination be taken as second person. NV derives that word from a different root, and has: **Whose majesty is rehearsed above the heavens**.

17. 3. The ambiguous constructions and doubtful words in the second half of this verse have given rise to a multiplicity of renderings, none of which could be considered satisfactory. NV construed this part most admirably:

**Thou hast tested me, and Thou findest not  
That I had a thought which should not pass my mouth.**

The older translations missed the force of the sentence. AV: **thou hast tried me, (and) shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.** Similarly RV: **Thou hast tried me, and findest nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.** Leeser has something new, but equally unsuccessful: **thou hast refined me—thou couldst find nothing: my purpose doth not pass beyond (the words) of my mouth.**

27. 8. Here, too, the ambiguity of some of the forms caused great difficulty, and the text was considered corrupt. AV and RV were compelled to add a clause and to rearrange the original when they rendered: **(When thou saidst), Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.** Leeser's translation is certainly an improvement: **Of thee, said my heart, "Seek ye my presence:" thy presence, Lord, will I seek.** NV adopted Leeser's mode of construing the forms, and improved the phraseology:

**In Thy behalf my heart hath said: 'Seek ye my face';  
Thy face, Lord, will I seek.**

56. 6 (5). The first line is rendered by the older translations: **All the day long they wrest my words.** This conveys no definite idea, and the accuracy of *wrest* is more than doubtful. NV's improvement is apparent: **All the day they trouble mine affairs.**

119. 96. Instead of **I have seen an end of all perfection**, as given substantially by the older versions, NV has more appropriately: **I have seen an end to every purpose.**

#### PROVERBS

18. 24. The first half of this verse has an ambiguous expression and a difficult verb, hence we meet with diametrically

opposed renderings. AV has: **A man (that hath) friends must show himself friendly.** RV: **He that maketh many friends (doeth it) to his own destruction.** Leeser: **A man's many companions are hurtful to him.** Each translation has its own difficulties, which become apparent in the original. But, as may be seen from Micah 6. 10, the word rendered *man* can be taken to mean 'there is'; hence NV: **There are friends that one hath to his own hurt.**

26. 10. This verse, too, has ambiguous words, and it was rendered: **The great (God) that formed all (things) both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth the transgressor (AV); (As) an archer woundeth all, so is he that hireth the fool and he that hireth them that pass by (RV); A master injureth all things when he hireth a fool or hireth mere rovers (Leeser).** The vagueness in each case is not the only objection to these interpretations. By assigning more suitable meanings to the ambiguous words, NV offers:

**A master performeth all things;**

**But he that stoppeth a fool is as one that stoppeth a flood.**

31. 10. The vivid description of the accomplishments of the 'virtuous woman' shows that she is something more than virtuous (AV, RV, and Leeser). But elsewhere in the Bible the word *hail* referring to a man is rendered 'valour,' and there is no reason why we should not say a **woman of valour,** as in NV.

## JOB

8. 14. There is a lack of parallelism in this verse as rendered by AV: **Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust (shall be) a spider's web.** We should expect a noun instead

of the verb *shall be cut off*. The changes introduced by Leeser and RV do not affect this particular point. From the cognate languages we know that this word may denote *something flimsy, unsubstantial*. Accordingly, NV has:

**Whose confidence is gossamer,  
And whose trust is a spider's web.**

10. 17. **changes and war are against me** (AV) conveys no meaning to the reader. RV scarcely improved it: **Changes and warfare are with me**. Leeser felt the difficulty, and supplied some words which are not implied in the original: **changes and multitudes (of sufferings) are around me**. NV simplified matters: **Host succeeding host against me**.

12. 5. The first half of this difficult verse has been rendered by NV most appropriately: **A contemptible brand in the thought of him that is at ease**. AV approached this construction very closely: **a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease**. Leeser took the first word of the original quite differently: **To the unfortunate there is given contempt—according to the thoughts of him that is at ease**. RV follows the latter in construction, but gives the line a different purport: **In the thought of him that is at ease there is contempt for misfortune**.

16. 20. AV and RV render the first part very smoothly: **My friends scorn me**. This is, however, against the syntactical rules of the Hebrew language. Leeser, no doubt, felt this difficulty, and rendered: **Are my friends my defenders?** But there is no interrogative particle in the original. By assigning to the word representing *my friends* a meaning well established in Psalm 139. 17, the Editors translate: **Mine inward thoughts are my intercessors**.

20. 23. The last word of this line was misunderstood by AV and RV: **and shall rain (it) upon him while he is eating.** So substantially Leeser. As this is not intelligible, RV added: 'or, *as his food.*' But from Arabic we know that this word may signify 'flesh,' hence NV: **And shall cause it to rain upon him into his flesh.**

33. 21. NV clarified the obscurity of the second half of this verse: **And his bones corrode to unsightliness.** This certainly is more forceful than **and his bones that were not seen stick out** (AV, Leeser, and RV).

33. 23. The last line to **shew unto man his uprightness** (AV and RV margin) is not an appropriate sequel to the preceding. Leeser grasped the purport: **to tell for man his uprightness,** and this idea is more clearly brought out by NV: **To vouch for man's uprightness.**

34. 23. By explaining the first half of this verse in a new way, NV clarified the difficult sentence: **For He doth not appoint a time unto any man.** AV is obliged to supply words not implied in the original: **For he will not lay upon man more (than right).** RV avoids this difficulty: **For he needeth not further to consider a man.** Similarly Leeser: **For he need not direct (his attention) a long time upon man.** These, however, do not suit the context.

#### SONGS OF SONGS

4. 1. The word rendered *appear* in AV is rather dubious. RV bases itself on the Arabic meaning of that root: **Thy hair is as a flock of goats, that lie along the side of mount Gilead.** But the words 'along the side of' can hardly be derived from the original. Leeser came nearest to the right meaning: **that**

come quietly down from mount Gil'ad. NV, however, improved it: **That trail down from mount Gilead.**

#### ECCLESIASTES

12. 11. NV's rendering: **The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails well fastened are those that are composed in collections** brings out the parallelism very gracefully, and accurately interprets a difficult expression. AV misses the sense of the last part: **fastened (by) the masters of assemblies.** There is no justification for supplying *by*. RV avoided the difficulty: **(The words of) the masters of assemblies.** Similarly Leeser: **(the words of) the men of assemblies.** But in both cases the parallelism is destroyed.

#### ESTHER

9. 29. NV's rendering **wrote down all the acts of power** is better than **wrote with all authority** (AV and RV); **wrote . . . with all due strength** (Leeser).

#### EZRA

4. 10, 11. The last word in each of these two verses had usually been rendered: **and at such a time** (AV); **and so forth** (Leeser and RV). This word, however, is a well-known formula for letters. NV, accordingly, omitted the punctuation mark at the end of verse 11 which is connected with the following verse: **and now be it known.**

#### II CHRONICLES

2. 12 (13). **Huram my father's** (AV and RV) is quite unintelligible, as Huram king of Tyre is supposed to have written these words. Leeser, avoiding this difficulty, has:



**Churam-Abi.** It is, however, possible to assign the meaning *master craftsman* to the word usually rendered *father*. Accordingly, NV reads: **Huram my master craftsman.** The same is the case with 4. 16, where the Anglican versions have: **Huram his father**; Leeser has: **Churam-Abiv.** Here, too, NV renders: **Huram his master craftsman.**