

# PARABLES

Bringing Hidden Things to Light



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

## Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.18.5

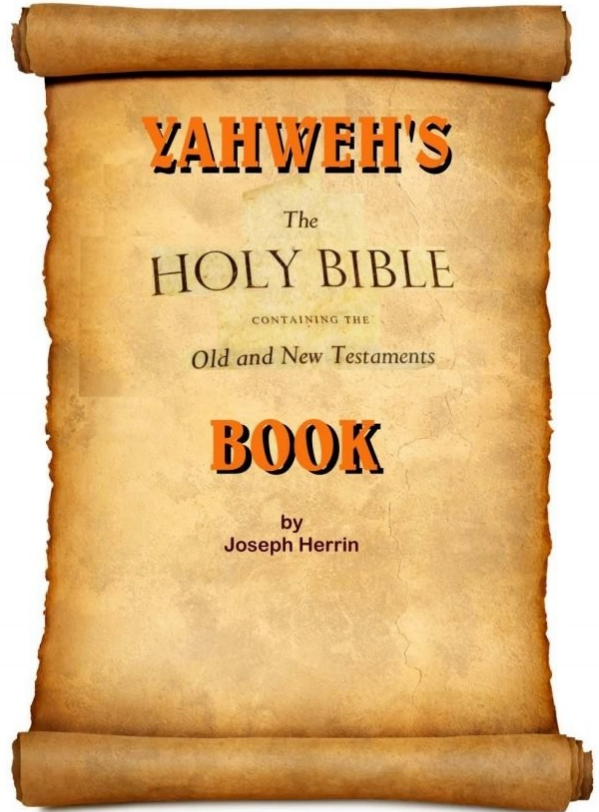
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This edition of the Parables Bookshelf Newsletter series continues the writing *Yahweh's Book*. In this newsletter we will consider the various types of Bible: those which are literal translations, those which are dynamic equivalent translations, and those which are paraphrases. We will present a case for the need of a literal translation for serious students of the Bible to study.

In addition, we will look at some of the variant readings of ancient Scripture found in the existing manuscripts.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding as you read.

Joseph Herrin



### Food for Thought

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*"We approach Scripture with minds already formed by the mass of accepted opinions and viewpoints with which we have come into contact, in both the Church and the world....It is easy to be unaware that it has happened; it is hard even to begin to realize how profoundly tradition in this sense has moulded us."*

J.I. Packer

### Scripture Memory

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Psalms 119:130

The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

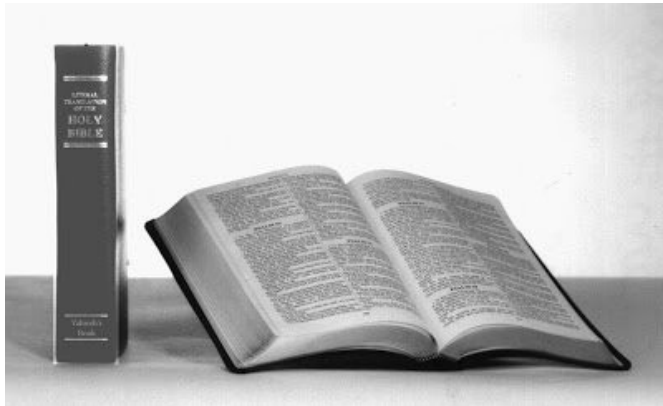
#### Parables Newsletter

- Series 1.18.5
- *Yahweh's Book*
- Chapters 9-10

# Yahweh's Book

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## The Necessity of a Literal Translation



The extent to which the Bible contains spiritual parables has been little understood by Christians. This is true today even of seminary trained Bible scholars, and experts in the ancient Greek and Hebrew languages, men and women who are frequently employed in the work of Scripture translation. Because these individuals do not discern the multiple layers of revelation contained in the Scriptures, they do not perceive the damage they are doing when they paraphrase. When translators choose what they refer to as a “functionally equivalent” word or phrase, rather than being faithful to bring forth an “essentially literal” translation of the original Bible manuscript, they are stripping vast amounts of divine information from the text, information whose presence they have little suspected.

This matter is best expressed by use of an illustration. I have previously shared that Joshua, the man chosen by Yahweh to lead the Israelites into the land of their inheritance, is a type of the Son of God who bore the same name. Even as Joshua lead the Israelites into Canaan to take possession of their physical inheritance, the Son of God who bore the same name leads the saints to Zion to take possession of their spiritual inheritance. In the book *Christ in You - The Hope of Glory*, I have looked at a specific account from the life of Joshua, demonstrating that the details provided were chosen carefully by Yahweh to reveal a profound spiritual parable. Most Christians have been taught to only read

such accounts as a narrative story of the history of God's dealings with man. Readers may derive a moral application from the historic accounts of the Bible, but they seldom perceive that the passages contain veiled truths waiting to be discovered by those who are given spiritual insight.

Following is a partial excerpt from the aforementioned book in which I have demonstrated that every detail of the account of the crossing of the Jordan River is filled with divine revelation.

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As Joshua (a type of Yahshua) led the people of God into their inheritance at the crossing of the Jordan River, we are given clear types of the first resurrection from the dead. The Promised Land serves as a type of the inheritance of the saints in Christ, which is their resurrected state in glory. Even as the Jordan had to be crossed, we have to cross over from death into life. Observe now the symbolism of this crossing.

Joshua 3:3-4

And they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

The ark of the covenant stands as a symbol of the presence of God in His glory... (This glory was revealed in the Son who was the incarnation of the Father.)

Joshua commanded the priests to carry the ark into the waters of the Jordan, and all who followed were strictly charged to remain at a distance of *about*

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*2,000 cubits*. Every detail of the word of God is pregnant with meaning. Yahshua would be the first man to cross into the inheritance prepared for the sons of God. It would be "about 2,000" years before any others were to follow, entering into the same inheritance prepared for the saints in glory. The 2,000 cubits stand for 2,000 years. We should note, however, that it says "about 2,000," for no one knows the hour or the day. We are not told that it would be precisely 2,000 years from the time of Yahshua's resurrection to the time of the resurrection of His firstborn brothers. We are only told that it will be "*about 2,000*" years.

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This is a marvelous testimony. Joshua is leading the people of God across the Jordan, signifying that we must all pass through the waters of death before entering into our spiritual inheritance. The ark, representing the presence of God revealed bodily in the person of the Messiah, went ahead of the people. They were told to remain at a distance of "about 2,000 cubits."

This distance was not arrived at arbitrarily. It was commanded by Yahweh who does all things with great deliberation and divine purpose. He could have told the people to stay back 1,000 cubits, or 5,000 cubits, but He did not. He could have commanded the people to surround the Ark as they did when they were camped in the wilderness. Doing so, however, would not have communicated the spiritual parable that Yahweh had purposed. The distance was set by Yahweh to prophesy of His Son being the first to cross through the waters of death and then to enter into His glorious inheritance. Yahshua would be the first to enter into ruling and reigning with the Father, but there would be a much more numerous company of overcoming sons who would one day join Him. These are those sons who attain to the first resurrection.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

There is a distance in time between Christ's ascension to the throne, and those who attain to the first resurrection from the dead. The distance is "about 2,000" years, even as the ark and the Israelites were separated by "about 2,000 cubits." To understand more on this subject, I recommend the book from which the above excerpt was taken.

It is very important that our Bibles faithfully reproduce the words and details of the original manuscripts, for any alteration of the text will tend to obscure the spiritual insight contained therein. Consider now, how the following Bible translations have rendered this passage from the book of Joshua.

Joshua 3:3-4

When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of ***about a thousand yards*** between you and the ark; do not go near it."

[New International Version]

Joshua 3:3-4

"When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, move out from your positions and follow them. Since you have never traveled this way before, they will guide you. Stay ***about a half mile*** behind them, keeping a

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clear distance between you and the Ark. Make sure you don't come any closer."

[New Living Translation]

Joshua 3:3-4

"When you see the Covenant-Chest of God, your God, carried by the Levitical priests, start moving. Follow it. Make sure you keep a proper distance between you and it, **about half a mile** — be sure now to keep your distance! — and you'll see clearly the route to take. You've never been on this road before."

[THE MESSAGE Bible]

Each of these versions cited are examples of a new breed of Bibles that are known as “dynamic equivalent translations.” The word “dynamic” signifies that which is living, and changing. The opposite of the word dynamic is static, which indicates that something is fixed and unchanging. There are many proponents of the dynamic equivalent model of Bible translation. Their main goal is to make the Bible “relevant” and “understandable” to the masses. Being ignorant of the depth of information Yahweh has encoded in every word of Scripture, these translators are effectually covering up, obscuring, and bringing wholesale alteration, to the spiritual mysteries Yahweh has hidden in His word.

Proverbs 25:2

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

The Bible contains tens of thousands of these types of symbolic details. A man could spend his entire life mining for hidden truth, seeking to unveil the mysteries of Yahweh's word, and only skim the surface of all that lies therein.

Romans 11:33

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

Dynamic equivalent translations, although easier to read and understand, do not contain all the information Yahweh chose to communicate through His holy prophets. They end up being like a Cliffs Notes version of the Bible. These translations are focused only on the surface account, giving no heed to that which lies beneath. Christianity today is very shallow in its comprehension of spiritual truth. Human reasoning and mental apprehension have largely replaced a focus upon divine inspiration. Most Christians see only that which human reasoning can disclose to them. The mysteries of God which can be grasped only through divine revelation and spiritual enlightenment remain hidden from their sight.

Returning to the two verses in the book of Joshua that we have looked at, we can see that the divine intent has been missed by these modern paraphrases. The words “about 1,000 yards,” and “about a half mile” do not contain the same information as the words “about 2,000 cubits.” Although these substitutions may be functionally equivalent on a surface level, denoting a similar distance of space, they are not equivalent at the many deeper levels in which Yahweh communicates truth selectively to those who are granted insight. Yahweh hides truth that His sons and daughters might search it out. However, in a dynamic equivalent translation, much of this hidden information is no longer present. These types of translations transform the Bible into something that appears good on the surface, but which has no depth underneath. That so many have cast off literal translations of the Bible to embrace paraphrastic translations is an indictment upon the shallow state of the body of Christ in this hour of apostasy.

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The many books and writings I have made available to the body of Christ are filled with hundreds of examples of the parables hidden in Yahweh's word. In my studies of the Scriptures, I have always relied upon a class of Bibles that are described as "essentially literal translations," or "formal equivalency" translations, terms which are used interchangeably. These Bibles preserve the information contained in the original autographs of the Scriptures. An essentially literal Bible translation makes only those alterations to the text that are necessary to adapt the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures into a modern language. These changes are generally minor, consisting in the rearrangement of words, the addition of punctuation, and the addition of words that render the text more readable, such as inserting the definite article "the" before a noun. Many of these essentially literal translations indicate where such words have been added, often by printing the added word in italics.

Because essentially literal translations strive to reproduce the original text of the Hebrew and Greek Bibles faithfully, with a minimum of alteration, there is a high correspondence between them. Leland Ryken, in his book *The Word of God in English* demonstrates the correspondence between essentially literal translations by citing a portion of I Thessalonians 1:3. He begins by citing four essentially literal versions of the Bible.

"... your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ..." (KJV).

"...your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (RSV).

"...your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (NASB).

"...your work of faith and labor of love and stead-

fastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (ESV).

You will note that these four translations are nearly identical, for they have held to a philosophy of translation that encourages fidelity to the original manuscripts. In contrast, Leland Ryken includes the following four dynamic equivalent Bible renderings of the same text.

"...your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (NIV, TNIV).

"...how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, and how your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm" (GNB).

"...your faithful work, your loving deeds, and your continual anticipation of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ" (NLT).

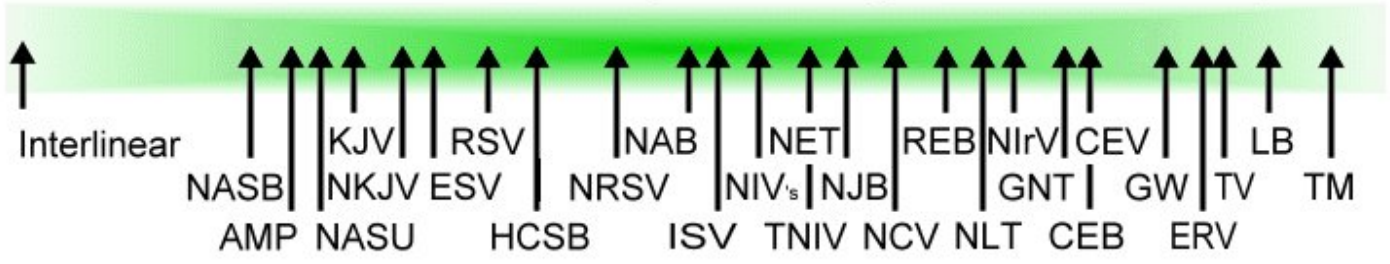
"...your faith and loving work and...your firm hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (CEV).

These four translations not only differ from the essentially literal Bible versions, but they vary widely from one another. Each of the dynamic equivalent translations insert explanatory words and phrases not found in the original manuscripts. Very often, these explanations are subjective, introducing error that leads the reader away from the actual thought of the author. The more loosely a translation treats faithfulness to the original text, the more divine information is lost, or obscured.

Following is a graphic listing many of the well known English translation Bibles, placing them on a scale from the most literal to those that take the most liberties with the text.

## English Bible Translation Comparison

Word for Word ←————→ Thought for Thought —————→ Paraphrase



- NASB / NASU - New American Standard (11)
- AMP - Amplified Bible (12)
- ESV\* - English Standard Version (9.5)
- ERV^ - Easy to Read Version (3.5)
- KJV\* - King James Version (13)
- NKJV - New King James Version (9)
- RSV\* - Revised Standard Version (11)
- HCSB - Holman Christian Standard (8)
- NRSV^^ - New Revised Standard (10.5)
- NAB\* - New American Bible (7)
- NIV - New International Version (8)
- NIVI^ - NIV [UK only, 1996 edition] (8)
- NIV2011^^ - NIV Revision (8)
- CEB^^ - Common English Bible (7)

- TNIV^ - Today's NIV (7.5)
- NJB\* - New Jerusalem Bible (7.5)
- NCV^ - New Century Version (5)
- REB (NEB)^\* - Revised English Bible (7)
- NLT^ - New Living Translation (6.5)
- NirV - New International Reader's (3.5)
- GNT (GNB/TEV)\* - Good News Translation (6)
- CEV^^ - Contemporary English (5)
- ISV^^ - International Standard Version (8.5)
- GW - God's Word (4.5)
- LB - Living Bible (8.5)
- TM - The Message (4.5)
- NET^^ - NET Bible (7)
- TV - The Voice (7)



^^ No gender neutral language for God, careful/moderate inclusive language regarding mankind.

^ Gender neutral language \* Apocrypha available or included (#) Approximate overall reading grade level

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This graphic, created by Brent MacDonald, notes which Bibles have adopted gender neutral language, which Bibles include the Apocrypha, and the approximate reading grade level of the Bibles. The reading skill level varies from third or fourth grade for the *Easy to Read Version* and the *New International Readers Version*, to twelfth grade reading level for *The Amplified Bible*, and grade 13 for the *King James Bible*. This higher reading level for the *King James Bible* is largely due to its employment of archaic words that have fallen out of common usage.

(Note: I am personally hesitant to place *The Amplified Bible* so high on the scale of literal translations,

for as its name implies, it “amplifies” the original text, adding many explanatory words to bring out the fuller meaning of the Scriptures. I do find *The Amplified Bible* to be a valuable resource, however, and I refer to it frequently.)

I have found the *New American Standard Bible* version to be a much better translation for study than the *New International Version*, or far looser translations such as *The Message*. Yet, even the NASB translators have failed to maintain fidelity to the original Hebrew and Greek in a great many instances. There are no “perfect” Bible translations today. I have not even found one that I would de-

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scribe as “excellent.” There are some good Bible versions, but all of them contain errors, many of which are serious, and all have strayed from the original manuscripts in numerous places. Consider the following example from the *New American Standard Bible* which is rated as one of the more literal English Bibles.

Luke 24:13

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about *seven miles* from Jerusalem.

NAS

The writers of the New Testament did not express distances in miles. In the verse above, the Greek manuscripts use the word “stadia,” a common measure in Roman times. Stadium is the singular form of this Roman word, and stadia is plural. The English equivalent of the Roman stadia is the furlong which equates to 606.14 feet, or 185 meters. The passage above from Luke’s gospel actually records that the distance between Emmaus and Jerusalem is about “60 stadia.”

I do not believe there is a number found anywhere in Scripture that does not bear some divine significance. It is therefore inadvisable for translators to alter the text of the Bible using modern measurements that will change the numbers Yahweh has inspired holy men to record. The NAS Bible states that the distance between Jerusalem and Emmaus is about “seven miles.” The number seven is nowhere to be found in the Greek manuscripts. The only number given is “hexekonta,” which translates as “sixty.” Only a translator who does not perceive that every detail of Scripture is significant would place so little emphasis upon rendering every word as literally and accurately as possible.

I am sympathetic to the fact that a literal translation

is more difficult to understand, but it is the only form of translation that preserves the divine mysteries and manifold parables contained in holy writ. I believe a better translation policy would have rendered Luke 24:13 accurately as “sixty stadia” while adding a parenthetical comment stating that this distance equates to seven miles. Following is another example of this type of translation error that is found in the New American Standard Bible.

Revelation 21:16-17

And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.

NAS

Are we to believe that angels measure things in miles and yards? This is what this English Bible version would lead one to believe. To be quite accurate, there is no mention of miles or yards in the Greek text from which these words were translated. Neither will you find the numbers “fifteen hundred” or “seventy-two” in these verses. The literal measurements given are “12,000 stadia” for the length, width, and height of the city, and “144 cubits” for the wall. Without question the numbers 12,000 and 144 were chosen by Yahweh for the design of the New Jerusalem because of their divine significance.

Consider now, how *The Amplified Bible* conveys this matter. It both preserves the literalness of the translation, as well as including parenthetical explanations.

Revelation 21:16-17

The city lies in a square, its length being the same

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as its width. And he measured the city with his reed--12,000 stadia (about 1,500 miles); its length and width and height are the same. He measured its wall also--144 cubits (about 72 yards) by a man's measure [of a cubit from his elbow to his third fingertip], which is [the measure] of the angel.

AMP

(I will insert what I intend to be a helpful note here. As I have been writing this series, some have noted that I have made mention of particular Bible translations as being above average in some aspect of their translation policy. For example, I have mentioned that *The Scriptures* published by the Institute for Scripture Research does an admirable job with its naming conventions. This is not a minor point, and it provides some reason to give attention to this Bible translation. At the same time, I commented that there are other translation policies adopted by *The Scriptures'* editors that I find to detract from its overall usefulness. The bias against certain words such as "holy," and "Lord," and the editorial explanations that state that Christians continue to be subject to the Law of Moses, are but a few examples of that which detracts from the overall value of this Bible translation.

Some may take my favorable mention of various translation policies of *The Amplified Bible* as another endorsement, and be inclined to run out and purchase this Bible version. You will no doubt find much benefit in adding this translation to your study resources, but it too has shortcomings. Not all parenthetical explanations are as objective as the ones found in the passage from Revelations above. It is no more than a statement of fact to say that 12,000 stadia equates to "(about 1,500 miles)." Nevertheless,

a great many of the parenthetical explanations found in *The Amplified Bible* are subjective. Such is the case in the following Scripture.

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not [any longer] exert dominion over you, since now you are not under Law [as slaves], but under grace [as subjects of God's favor and mercy].

AMP

The words "as slaves" which are found in brackets are not found in the Greek text of the New Testament. These are explanatory words of the editors intended to amplify the meaning of the passage. These explanatory words can, and often do, change the entire meaning of a passage. They can also limit a reader to perceiving only one narrow understanding of a Scripture, rather than opening their spirit to multiple shades of meaning.

In Romans 6:14 the apostle Paul is stating without any equivocation that Christians are "not under Law." He does not mean to state that they are still under Law, but not under Law as slaves. Because of the added words "as slaves," some would understand this verse to mean that Paul is stating that Christians are not bound to a **slavish subservience** to the Law, but they still remain under the Law. The addition of various explanatory words placed in *The Amplified Bible* can lead the reader to erroneous conclusions.

\* The subject of the Law, its role and duration, is an important one, but it is beyond the scope of this book to address it. I would refer any interested readers to the book *Laying Down the Law*.



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Some of the bracketed and parenthetical comments found in *The Amplified Bible* are truly helpful, but they must all be tested carefully. Whenever men begin to expound upon the meaning of the Bible there is the possibility of error.

What I wish to convey is that whereas I find certain editorial and translation policies of individual Bible versions to be excellent, I have not found any Bible version to be free of error, or editorial bias. I believe there is value in studying from multiple translations of the Bible. I am not seeking to endorse any single Bible version as an exceptional resource to be studied exclusively.)

It now seems a good point for me to interject that although I find that dynamically equivalent translations degrade the overall value of the Bible by rendering void much of the divine information contained therein, I still believe this class of Bibles can be of benefit in certain situations. They may be helpful to a new believer, or to a child, who is at the elementary levels of spiritual or scholastic learning. They may also be of use to more advanced students of the Scriptures who wish to compare various translations to glean from different perspectives on the meaning of Bible passages. Dynamic equivalency Bible translations should not be relied upon exclusively, however, nor for too long, for to do so will hinder the apprehension of divine truth.

If you are beginning to perceive that there are a large number of problems in every English Bible existent today, and that none of them approach perfection, then this series is achieving one of its purposes. I desire that Christians

would understand that even as the church is leavened with error, deception, and that which is false, yet the Holy Spirit is present to lead a remnant of God's people to spiritual maturity, so too the failings of our English Bible translations can be overcome as we look to the Spirit of Christ as our tutor. Yahshua stated:

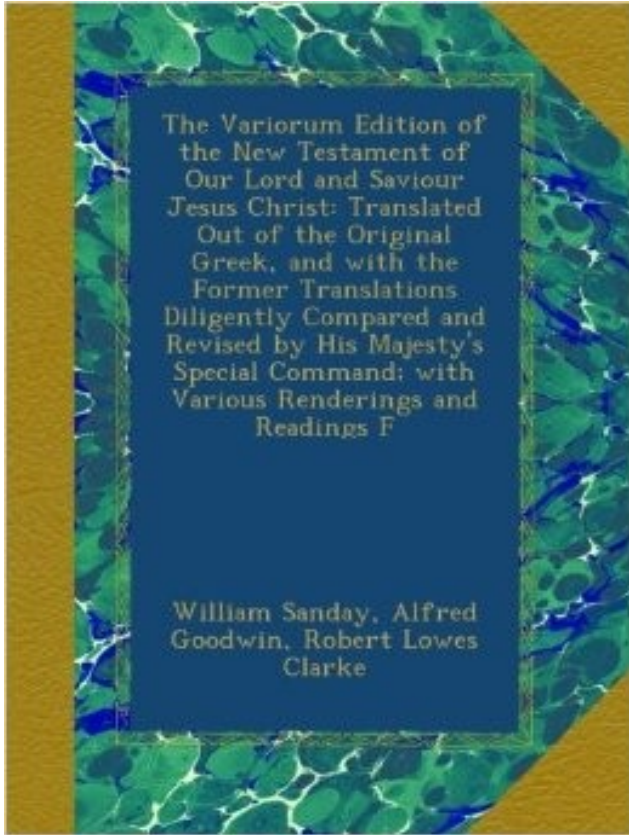
John 16:7-13

“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you... I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.”

Yahweh did not promise that a flawless Bible translation would be preserved for His people to study anymore than He promised that the church would be pure and spotless and free of error in this age. What He did promise is that He would send us His Spirit to guide us into all truth. The Spirit is able to disclose to us truth and error, both in the church and in the Bible versions we read. We must apply ourselves in both cases to discerning between that which is true and that which is false. We must study, while always inviting the Spirit of Christ to open our eyes and our minds to discern both truth and error.

# Yahweh's Book

## Variant Readings



### Variorum New Testament

(The Variorum Edition of the New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: Translated Out of the Original Greek, and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised by His Majesty's Special Command: with Various Renderings and Readings)

The zealous student of the holy Scriptures who desires to arrive at the knowledge of the truth would be greatly assisted by being able to examine where the ancient manuscripts and various textual sources of the Bible differ from one another. By having this information readily available, the Bible student can meditate upon the variant readings of the most ancient Scriptural sources, and, with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, have some hope of arriving at the original author's meaning.

Adopting an essentially literal translation method does not guarantee a flawless Bible version that is faithful to the original Hebrew and Greek texts. Bible translators must choose what is the best, most authentic, and accurate rendering of the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament. The majority of English Bible translations provide only one rendering of a word, phrase, or sentence. Yet, the source texts that they are working from may present more than one possible meaning. Because of the way in which ancient Hebrew was written, having no vowels, a large number of words had to be determined by the context in which they were found. To give an example in English, if we remove all vowels, then the letters "wrđ" have many possible interpretations. They could represent the following: word, ward, wired, weird, wearied, etc.. We would only know which is the proper word by the context in which it is found. In some cases, more than one possibility may make sense. Additionally, there are a significant number of Hebrew and Greek words that contain multiple meanings. The translators must determine which definition of a word is most appropriate in the context in which it is found. For example, consider the various meanings that the following short English phrase could convey.

The fan roared.



### Fan/Fan

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Many words in Hebrew and Greek carry multiple possible meanings, even as they do in English. It is the task of the Bible translator to determine which word best conveys the author's intent. In many instances Bible scholars have sincere differences of opinion on how a word should be translated, yet most readers of a particular Bible version would not know that there is any dispute about the meaning of a passage unless there is some marginal note explaining that a variant reading exists.

There are some Bible versions that provide such notes. One Bible that was created specifically to make the reader aware of many of the significant variant readings is called the *Variorum Bible*. It was produced in 1880. The *Variorum Bible* took the KJV Bible as its main text, noting wherever a variant reading existed. The *Variorum Bible* did not attempt to provide an exhaustive list of variant readings, rather it focused upon those textual differences that could alter the meaning of a passage. The KJV Bible used the *Textus Receptus* as its basis for translating the New Testament from Greek into English. The *Textus Receptus* was produced by Erasmus a century prior to the publication of the King James Bible. Erasmus had only five Greek manuscripts to work from, and none of them were complete, nor were they chosen for their accuracy. They were simply those manuscripts Erasmus could get his hands on at short notice. In the Preface to the *Variorum Bible*, we find the following statement.

*(2) With regard to the Various Readings, it is necessary to remind the reader that the text from which the Authorised Version (KJV) of the New Testament is translated is substantially identical with that of the first edition of the Greek text published by Erasmus in 1510, an edition based upon not more than five MSS., and those chosen almost at random without any regard to their intrinsic value. The discovery of some of the most ancient and valuable MSS. of the New Testament, and the systematic use of*

*others, both ancient and valuable, which, though known in Western Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, were scarcely used, and, in general, a more comprehensive study of MSS. and ancient Versions, has shewn that this "Received Text," as it is called, labours under manifold corruptions.*

Regarding the Hebrew Old Testament, the editors of the *Variorum Bible* include the following note:

*The Hebrew text of the Old Testament stands upon a somewhat different footing. The form in which it appears in the printed Bibles is that in which it has been fixed by the Jews themselves for centuries. But a close examination reveals the fact that, jealously guarded as it thus has been, there must have been an earlier period in its transmission, during which errors and alterations crept in. The existence of such errors may be easily shewn, without passing beyond the limits of the Hebrew text itself, by a comparison of the corresponding chapters in the Books of Samuel and Kings on the one hand, and in the Chronicles on the other. Of the MSS. which have as yet been examined, but few date back as far as the 10th century A.D., and these few contain only portions of the Bible. But the ancient Versions at once carry us back to a period from 500 to 1000 years anterior to this: they thus reflect, with more or less exactness, a text far older than that represented by the earliest Hebrew MSS. Certainly to classify and account for all the divergences which they exhibit is a problem of extreme complexity, and perhaps insoluble: but, if used with tact and sobriety, the ancient Versions*

*afford invaluable aid in restoring order and sequence where the Hebrew, as we possess it, appears involved in much confusion.*

*Cases, however, occur in which a suspicion of corruption attaches to the text, which even a comparison of the Versions does not avail to remove. Here,*

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then, nothing remains but to make a temperate use of critical emendation. However reluctant we may be to admit the principle of conjecture, an exceptional application of it is justified in the case of the Old Testament (1) by the long interval which elapsed between the composition of most of the books and the earliest date to which we can trace them, and (2) by the nature of the Hebrew characters, which, in every phase through which the alphabet has passed, are very liable to be confounded. Purely arbitrary emendations are, of course, inadmissible; but there are many passages which become at once intelligible on a slight alteration in the form of one or two of the letters. Changes of the vowel-points are also occasionally of service, but these do not in the same sense fall under the head of conjecture, for the vowel-points merely represent a valuable, but still post-Christian, exegetical tradition.

The editors of the *Variorum New Testament* utilized Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament, which had not yet been published. The pre-publication manuscript was made available to them. This Greek New Testament utilized more ancient and more reliable manuscripts than Erasmus' *Textus Receptus*. Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament is considered a much more accurate and valuable Greek translation than that which the KJV Bible translators used.

The editors of the *Variorum Bible* collated a great many writings from both modern and ancient Bible scholars. When citing a variant reading, they frequently mention some scholarly authority's thoughts on that particular rendering. The list of Bible scholars whose works they consulted is extensive, and is found in the introductory material at the front of the Bible.

These Bible scholars themselves made reference to a large number of sources in setting forth their

comments on plausible variant readings of the Scriptures. Among these sources are the following:

- Papyri Manuscripts
- Uncials (Ancient manuscripts written in capital letters)
- Minuscules (Slightly less ancient manuscripts written with lower case letters)
- Lectionaries (Arrangements of the Bible created to be read in congregational meetings)
- Early Bible Translations (Latin Versions, Syriac Peshitta, Septuagint, Coptic translations from Egypt, etc.)
- Writings of the Early Church Fathers

The *Variorum Bible* is useful in learning about a great number of variant word renderings, but it does not contain all possible variants. The editors did not include variant renderings they deemed to be implausible, and undoubtedly a significant number of possible interpretations remained unknown to them. Following are a couple of examples of variant readings that I find interesting which are not mentioned in the *Variorum Bible*.

### Crows and Camels

Most Christians are familiar with the story found in I Kings of Elijah being instructed to hide himself at the Brook Cherith during a time of famine. Yahweh promised to feed the prophet there. All of the popular English Bibles tell us that Yahweh used ravens to bring Elijah his daily food.

I Kings 17:4-6

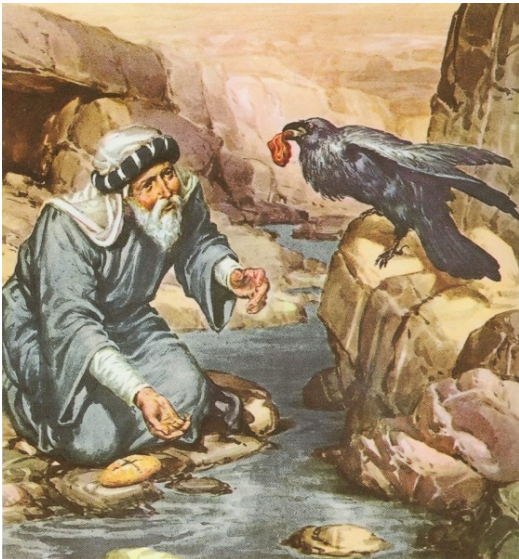
And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the *ravens* to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word

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of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the *ravens* brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

KJV



Although this appears to be a miraculous account of Yahweh's provision for one of His servants, and the Bible contains numerous accounts of animals behaving in extraordinary ways at Yahweh's command, some have been troubled by the fact that the raven is an unclean bird.

Leviticus 11:13-15

***These, moreover, you shall detest among the birds; they are abhorrent***, not to be eaten: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard, and the kite and the falcon in its kind, ***every raven in its kind...***

Although Elijah did not “eat” the ravens, one wonders why Yahweh would choose an unclean animal to deliver Elijah's daily food. It is no different than if a herd of swine had daily brought his food. There is a variant reading to this passage, however, which resolves this apparent incongruity. The word for “raven” and the word for “Arab” are spelled simi-

larly in Hebrew.

Some time back I did a study on the word “tent” in the Bible. I found that the Bedouin (Arab) tents were renowned for being black, made from black goatskins. The raven and the Arab both had an association with the color black. It was a prominent association, for even as a raven is recognized by its black feathers, a Bedouin of the desert is recognized by his black tent.



### Bedouin Tents

Following is an entry for the word “Tent” in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

TENT ('ohel; skene; 'ohel is a derivative of 'ahal, "to be clear," "to shine"; hence, 'ohel, "to be conspicuous from a distance"): In the great stretches of uncultivated lands in the interior of Syria or Arabia, which probably have much the same aspect today as in Abraham's time, it is an easy matter to espy an encampment of roving Bedouin, "a nation .... that dwelleth without care .... that have neither gates nor bars" (Jer 49:31). The peaks of their **black** (compare Song 1:5) **goats' hair tents** stand out in contrast against the lighter colors of the soil. There seems to be little doubt about the antiquity of the Arab tent, and one can rightly believe that the dwelling-places of Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, and

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their descendants were made on the same pattern and of the same materials (Gen 4:20; 9:27; 12:8; 13:3; 18:6; 31:25,30; Ps 78:55; Heb 11:9, etc.).

In the Song of Solomon the Shunamite compares herself to the black tents of the Arab Bedouins.

Song of Solomon 1:5

"I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar..."

Keep in mind that the ancient Hebrew did not contain vowels. Words were written in consonants only. The Hebrew word for raven is "oreb." The Hebrew word for a Bedouin is "Arab." They have the same consonants. What then is the proper interpretation? Most of the ancient manuscripts, including the Greek Septuagint, have understood the passage to be speaking of ravens. Yet there is plausible reason to conclude that "Arab" is the appropriate translation. Elijah was sent to a remote wilderness area with a water source. This would be a likely location for Bedouins to camp. Also, when the brook dried up, Yahweh sent Elijah to Zarephath in Sidon where He had prepared a widow woman to feed the prophet. There is a consistency in Yahweh choosing Arabs to feed the prophet, then choosing another foreigner, a Sidonian woman to feed him.

Yesterday a brother in Christ asked me for my thoughts regarding a specific Bible translation he had recently come across. When visiting the website of the organization that produced this version of the Scriptures, I noted that they listed a number of variant readings. They were comparing and contrasting their Bible version with the King James Bible. Following is one example that they listed.

(**Note:** I am not going to name this Bible translation at this time, but I intend to address it in a following

chapter.)

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*Compare the next scripture;*

*King James;*

*Mat 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

*24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a **camel** to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

*(Variant Reading);*

*Mat 19:23 And Yahshua said to His disciples, Truly I say to you that a rich man will with great difficulty enter into the kingdom of Heaven.*

*24 And again I say to you, It is easier for a **heavy rope** to pass through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of YAHWEH.*

*In Aramaic as in Hebrew there are no vowels, simply markings under the words, which many times are not listed. The word for camel in Aramaic is gamla and would look like this "gml". The word for heavy rope is gamala and would also look like "gml" without the vowels. So when the translator translated this scripture from Aramaic to Greek, he simply made a mistake and put camel instead of heavy rope. This is a Jewish idiom. You cannot put a heavy rope through a needle, but if you take it apart strand by strand, then one strand can go through. Yahshua is using this idiom to show that a rich person would need to give up his possessions strand by strand or piece by piece to enter the Kingdom of Yahweh.*

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A translator's understanding (or lack thereof) of a particular phrase or expression may lead him to favor one reading over another. In the example

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above, it is possible that the translator did not understand what Christ was referring to when He spoke of a camel going through the eye of a needle. I think what comes most readily to the modern reader's mind when the eye of a needle is mentioned is a sewing needle. We know that camels cannot go through an eye of a sewing needle, yet Christ said that it was difficult, but not impossible, for a rich man to enter into heaven.

Matthew 19:25-26

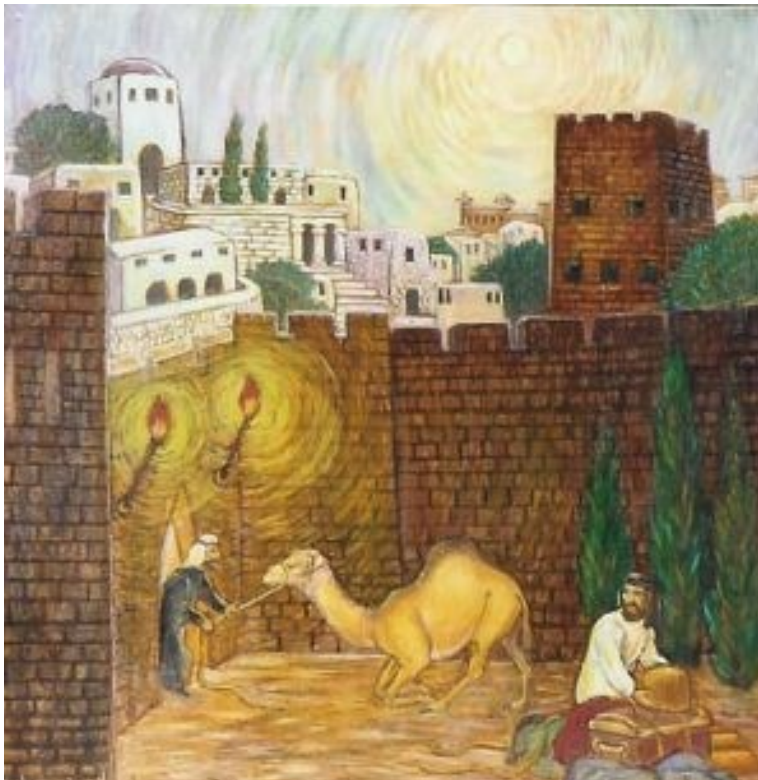
And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking upon them Yahshua said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

If we try to envision a camel going through the eye of a sewing needle, the image is one of impossibility. Yet, when the eye of the needle is defined according to a more ancient understanding, the matter

becomes comprehensible.

In the days of Christ cities were surrounded by walls for protection against invading enemies. Gates were set in the walls to allow people and materials to come and go. These gates were closed at night and in times of danger, but it was still necessary to allow a limited flow of people in and out. Therefore, built into the large gates was a small door which could be opened to let a man in or out. This small door was called "the eye of the needle."

Camels at the time were used for transport of goods. They would be piled high with merchandise and goods to be traded. If a man came to the gates after they had been closed and needed to enter, it was possible to go through and take his camel along, but it was very difficult. The master of the camel would have to take all the merchandise off of the camel, and the camel would have to go through the gate on his knees.



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This is a picture of how a rich man must enter the kingdom of heaven. Getting on one's knees speaks of humility, and removing all the goods from the camel's back speaks of the necessity of Christians being unburdened from their possessions.

Matthew 19:21-22

Yahshua said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.

Although interpreting the word as "heavy rope" does no great harm to the meaning of the passage, we see that the more common translation of "camel" makes very good sense. In this writing I am not advocating for one reading over another. My goal is to demonstrate that there are a great many variations in the way Scriptures may be translated.

Being aware of the variants may help you to resolve a difficult passage that has troubled you. Awareness of the many variants further affirms the need for Christians to apply themselves to a study of the Scriptures. If you would arrive at truth, you must be a truth seeker. If you take a casual approach to the study of the Scriptures, relying on others to tell you what a passage means, or you have placed your trust in a specific Bible version to convey truth perfectly to you, you will certainly be hindered in the quest for truth. I would admonish all the saints to embrace the apostle Paul's counsel to Timothy.

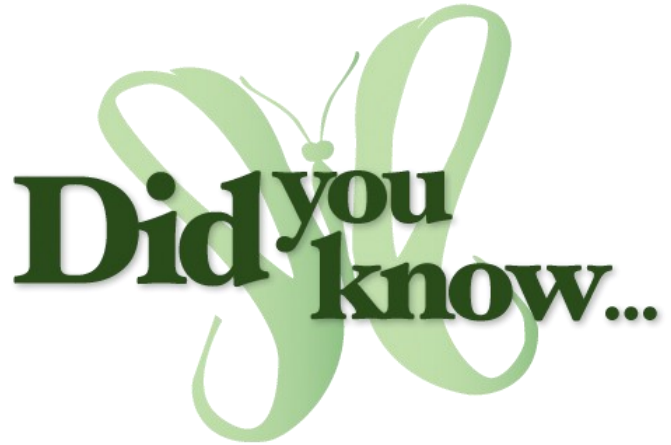
II Timothy 2:15

Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly

analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.

[Amplified Bible]

End of Chapter



Did you know that the Parables Bookshelf Newsletters are available at no cost to anyone who writes and requests to receive them? They are!

Did you know that you cannot sign someone else up to receive the newsletters, or request that they be sent to family members or friends? Yes, it is true. In order to insure that the newsletters are ONLY sent to people who want to receive them, each individual inside a prison, or outside of a prison, must personally send a request that they might receive the newsletters.

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Did you know that the Parables Bookshelf Newsletters are spread only by word of mouth as one man in prison tells another about them, or shares a newsletter with another inmate? It is true.

Did you know that the Parables Bookshelf Newsletters had their beginning in 2009 as I began sending them to two men in one prison in the state of Georgia? Now (October 2015) the newsletters are being sent to men in more than 2 dozen Georgia prisons as well as several other state's prisons and 4 Federal Penitentiaries. The spread of the newsletters to other institutions has largely occurred as men were transferred between facilities and then introduced others to the newsletters.

Did you know that from the beginning, and continuing until now, there has been only one person involved with the writing, layout, printing, and distribution of the Parables Bookshelf Newsletters? It is true. Many who receive the newsletters think a large church or ministry organization creates, prints, and distributes them, but it is only one man, Joseph Herrin. This should encourage you to consider how much God can use you, though you are only one person, to touch the lives of many people for the kingdom of God.

Did you know that I have never had to solicit funds to be able to carry on the work of the prison newsletter ministry? Yahweh moves independently upon the hearts of men and women from across the United States and around the world to send financial gifts which enable this work to continue. So pray that Yahweh might continue to supply every need that this valuable work might not be interrupted.

Joseph Herrin

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## Parables Bookshelf — Series 1.18.5

### PARABLES PRECEPT— Famous Hymns: Great is Thy Faithfulness

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Great is Thy faithfulness, O  
God my Father;  
There is no shadow of turn-  
ing with Thee;

Thou changest not, Thy  
compassions, they fail not;  
As Thou hast been, Thou  
forever will be.

Refrain

Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new  
mercies I see.

All I have needed Thy hand

hath provided;

Great is Thy faithfulness,  
Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and  
springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in  
their courses above

Join with all nature in  
manifold witness

To Thy great faithfulness,  
mercy and love.

Refrain

Pardon for sin and a peace  
that endureth

Thine own dear presence to  
cheer and to guide;

Strength for today and  
bright hope for tomorrow,

Blessings all mine, with ten  
thousand beside!

Refrain

Written by Thomas Chis-  
holm, 1923