

INTRODUCTION

A HISTORY OF ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The history of English Bible translations has been a very unique process, especially since the Protestant Reformation, and theological and spiritual developments over the past five centuries in the English-speaking world. One of the most significant advancements in the transmission of the Holy Scriptures into English was the production of the King James Version (or Authorised Version) in 1611, which up until the mid-to-late Twentieth Century was the most widely circulated English Bible in the world. Since the Seventeenth Century, notably with the expansion of European imperialism into places such as the Middle East, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), and North Africa, older Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and manuscript fragments of the Scriptures, and related valuable historical materials, have been discovered – and continue to be uncovered. Perhaps one of the most significant discoveries of the Twentieth Century was that of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran in 1947. Because of important finds over the past two centuries, and ongoing research and new proposals always being made – especially into the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek – English-speaking Bible scholars have taken to edit and revise translations of the Holy Scriptures in the English language. Taking into account newly discovered ancient texts, as well as changes in the English language itself, the English Revised Version was produced in Great Britain (1881-1885), followed with a counterpart in the United States, the American Standard Version (1901).

In 1952 the Revised Standard Version was released to much fanfare, which was the first major translation into modern English, as the ASV of 1901, while incorporating older Hebrew and Greek manuscripts which had not been extant in 1611, had still preserved much of the archaic Elizabethan-period English of the KJV. While this was a significant step, some Christian conservatives were a bit taken aback by the RSV's ecumenical translation team composing Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, and Jews. One of the results of this was the 1977 release of the New American Standard Bible. The NASB was intended to be a modern conservative English revision of the ASV, yet it reads very similar to the RSV in many places. The NASB itself was streamlined somewhat in 1995, via the release of the New American Standard, Updated Edition. Both the RSV and NASB followed a translation philosophy of trying to be somewhat literal, more often now called formal equivalence. The RSV went through additional updates, with the release of the New Revised Standard Version in 1989, which employed a great deal of gender-neutral inclusive language. This was also not received well by all Christian conservatives, and 2001 witnessed an evangelical update of the original 1952 RSV called the English Standard Version, which retained a great deal of masculine-centric terminology.

The first major English Bible version that followed a translation philosophy called dynamic equivalency, or now more commonly called functional equivalence, was the New International Version, released in 1984. The NIV is now the most popular Bible purchased within the English-speaking world. The NIV was often rendered conceptually or thought-for-thought in many places. In some instances, this form of translation has been beneficial, given the NIV's strong theologically conservative leanings, but in other instances, it has been problematic. The NIV went through a substantial revision in 2005 with the release of the Today's New International Version, which employed a degree of inclusive language similar to the NRSV. This was not

received as well as was hoped by the NIV's largely evangelical Christian readers, and so the 2011 NIV was released to offer some alterations.ⁱ

Compared with the wide variance of Christian Bible versions, there are, for the most part, very few Messianic Bible translations that exist. The most significant and widespread Messianic Bible version, which is seen throughout the broad Messianic community—encompassing both the Messianic Jewish movement and various independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots persuasions—has been the **Complete Jewish Bible** by David H. Stern, released in 1998. (Stern's original Jewish New Testament was first released in 1989.) In 2016, the **Complete Jewish Study Bible** was released, incorporating a few updates to the CJB translation, but most especially a selection of introductions to the Biblical books, annotations, articles, and commentary. The CJB/CJSB has been an important work for expressing the Jewishness of the good news and Hebraic background, particularly of the New Testament, to Jewish Believers and non-Jewish Believers alike, employing a wide amount of Hebrew terms for proper names and place names. It is true, however, that the CJB/CJSB was translated from a philosophy of dynamic equivalence, meaning that it is paraphrased in many locations.

2011 was an important year for Messianic Bible translation, as it saw the release of the **Tree of Life—The New Covenant**, a literal Messianic version, somewhat based on the public domain 1901 American Standard Version, often taking into account the public domain electronic edition World English Bible, Hebrew Names Version, with the Psalms released in 2012, and the full Bible by the end of 2014. Unlike the CJB, the TLV is the product of around fifteen Messianic Jewish ministries, and has been theologically vetted by a team of both Messianic Jewish and Christian scholars. The TLV, unlike the CJB which preceded it, has employed only a limited selection of Hebrew terms, such as Yeshua, Messiah, Torah, and various ritual items, widely leaving more customary English proper name and place names intact. Its release has been greatly welcomed by many Messianic and Christian people.

THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION

In a technical sense, and especially when one factors in the plethora of “restored name” versions produced by the Sacred Name Only movement (often just selective edits of the KJV),ⁱⁱ today's Messianic community does not really need another Bible version, be it of the entire Holy Scriptures, or even just the Apostolic Scriptures. As far as widespread distribution across our faith community, for general reading and consumption, the functional equivalence Complete Jewish Bible and more formal equivalence Tree of Life Version, have demonstrated themselves to be rather sufficient. They both represent fairly conservative theological positions, they both uphold the Divinity and Messiahship of Yeshua of Nazareth, and they both uphold the general validity of the Torah or Law of Moses for the post-resurrection era.

In the mid-to-late 2000s, the attention of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics was primarily focused on building up the first releases in its series of Messianic commentaries on books of the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament—a heavy labor which still continues. Obviously, in these commentaries, there have been various places where an author translation was proposed and defended, mostly for various terms or clauses of dispute. In 2012, as these volumes began being released in eBook for Amazon Kindle, we thought it prudent to add an Author's Rendering appendix to each complete book commentary. This is not unlike how in many Bible commentaries, an examiner will provide his or her own rendering of the text examined.ⁱⁱⁱ With some nuanced translations proposed in the volumes of

ⁱ For a further review, it is recommended that you consult Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001). Additional thoughts are accessible via the article “**English Bible Versions and Today's Messianic Movement**” by J.K. McKee, in his book *Confronting Critical Issues*.

ⁱⁱ One of the most widely circulated Sacred Name versions, which you will encounter across the broad Messianic community, is *The Scriptures* (Northriding, South Africa: Institute for Scripture Research, 1998, 2009).

ⁱⁱⁱ The 1995 New American Standard, Updated Edition (NASU) is actually used as the main English Bible version in the *Practical Messianic* commentary series, and most publications released by Messianic Apologetics.

the *Practical Messianic* series, it has been useful that once readers finish reading the commentary, for them to see how such renderings might appear in the Biblical book as a whole.

We have had to wait patiently, with much prayer and consideration, to evaluate whether or not it would be prudent to see a specialty version of the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament be released, as a volume within the *Practical Messianic* series. Principally, we have had to determine whether or not the spiritual and theological climate of the Messianic community would be open to such a publication—but most importantly whether the commentaries, books, and articles produced by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics would have reached a certain rate of threshold, with a wide variety of issues addressed and positions defended, which could be referenced. As things stand today, we do not have a complete set of *Practical Messianic* commentaries released on every book of the Apostolic Scriptures. But, we do have a sufficient selection of enough *Practical Messianic* commentaries, and other books and articles and FAQ entries, defending various theological positions which are important to many of today's Messianic people (as well as new resources on the horizon for release). These mainly, although not exclusively, pertain to various issues surrounding the post-resurrection era validity of the Torah or Law of Moses, Moses' Teaching. There are some renderings seen in *The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition* or *PME*, which are not likely to be seen in any other Messianic edition of the New Testament anytime soon.

There are many specialty editions of the New Testament which have been released over the centuries by various scholars and examiners of importance. In the past century to the present, versions like those of Moffat, Phillips, Williams, Montgomery, Goodspeed, and the Kingdom New Testament, among others, have certainly played an important role in Bible readers accessing the Holy Scriptures. In many cases, these sorts of publications have been released, so that others might more easily access a teacher's theological works and understand his or her perspectives on passages of importance or debate. John Wesley, for example, published his own edition of the New Testament in 1755, with his English version including some selective edits of the more widely used KJV. N.T. Wright took the translation he produced for his *for Everyone* commentary series, updated it slightly, and released it as the Kingdom New Testament.

The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition has a similar intention. The PME is not at all intended to stop today's Messianic people from using the CJB/CJSB, TLV, or some other well known Christian or Jewish version like the NASB/NASU, RSV/NRSV/ESV, or NIV/TNIV, as their primary Bible. The PME is intended to be a supplementary tool, the same as any other specialty New Testament edition which has been released before it. And, for those of you who have been steadily building a library of *Practical Messianic* commentaries, this should be a welcome addition to your collection.^{iv}

SOURCE TEXT USED FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES

The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition was initially assembled from the various Author's Rendering appendices appearing in complete book *Practical Messianic* commentaries released by Messianic Apologetics,^v with some changes and updates made here and there. These, along with the rest of the books of the New Testament, have been adapted from the

^{iv} It cannot go unnoticed that the PME has been especially released for service via the widespread free book prison ministry of Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics.

^v To date (2018), volumes have been released (listed in order of release) on: James, Hebrews, Philippians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon, Acts 15, the Pastoral Epistles of 1&2 Timothy and Titus, 1&2 Thessalonians, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians.

Also not to be overlooked are the two workbooks, *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic* and *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*.

public domain **1901 American Standard Version (ASV)**, updated with modern English,^{vi} and retranslated where necessary with an overall Messianic theological reading. The critical edition United Bible Societies' 1998 *Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition*,^{vii} the same basic text as the *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graecae, 27th Edition*,^{viii} has also been consulted with appropriate updates reflected in the English rendering.^{ix}

FEATURES PRESENT IN THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION

Unlike some Messianic Bible versions (notably the CJB/CJSB) which have preceded it, *The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition* uses a minimum of Hebrew or Jewish terminology. Yeshua (ישׁוּעַ) is used to represent the Greek *lēsous* (Ἰησοῦς), Messiah to represent the Greek *Christos* (Χριστός),^x and Torah (תּוֹרָה) to represent the Greek *nomos* (νόμος) where it is reasonably clear that the Law of Moses or Pentateuch is in view.^{xi} To this end, the PME follows very much in the wake of the **Tree of Life Version**, with more common English terminology appearing for both proper names and place names. The Hebrew terms involving various ritual items, are largely addressed in footnotes. Names for religious holidays and functions will more commonly use customary English forms than their Hebrew designations, also with some discussion in footnotes. This also extends to a selection of various proper names, which have been left in their traditional form (i.e., Judas Iscariot), or various statements obviously of Hebraic or Semitic origin (i.e., Hosanna).

Two features of the PME, which are owed extensively to the 1901 ASV (and its successors the 1977 NASB and 1995 NASU), include the employment of *italics* for words not present in the actual Greek source text. Most of these words include either definite articles or various forms of “to be” verbs, as well as missing nouns or pronouns obviously implied by the wider context. Adding words in *italics* for theological reasons has been kept to a minimum. SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS, as have been seen in both the 1977 NASB and 1995 NASU, have been employed to represent significant quotations or allusions from the Tanach or Old Testament. More of these, however, have appeared, as cues have been taken largely from the critical edition Greek New Testaments consulted, which have noted more some additional verses.

This edition of the PME has reproduced references from the Tanach or Old Testament in its footnotes, mainly those recognized in either the 1977 NASB and 1995 NASU, and those noted by the 1998 CJB. When a quotation from the Septuagint is made, the 2007 New English Translation of the Septuagint or NETS is mainly employed. Not all Tanach or Old Testament quotes appearing in the Apostolic Scriptures are word-for-word, as some are abbreviated or adapted, they may include stylistic differences, **many are from the Greek Septuagint (LXX)**, and some are compounded or amalgamated with other Tanach or Old Testament passages. Where necessary, some of the noticeable differences, which may catch readers off guard, have been explained. (A lengthy theological evaluation of these quotations is beyond the scope of this resource.)

^{vi} Much is undeniably owed to consulting the literalness and modern English of the 1977 New American Standard Bible (NASB), which was more faithful than not to the 1901 American Standard Version.

^{vii} Kurt Aland, et. al., *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1998).

^{viii} Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graecae, Nestle-Aland 27th Edition* (New York: American Bible Society, 1993).

^{ix} Messianic Apologetics is very much aware of the many arguments which are present from people across the broad Messianic movement, who believe that the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew, or perhaps Aramaic. Many of these arguments have been addressed in the publication *The Hebrew New Testament Misunderstanding and related issues* by J.K. McKee.

^x Do consult the discussion present in the article “**Sacred Name Concerns**,” appearing in the book *Confronting Critical Issues* by J.K. McKee.

^{xi} Consult the article “**Torah as Constitution**” by J.K. McKee, in the *Messianic Torah Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

Unique to the PME, is how it has employed a moderate degree of gender-neutral or inclusive language, following much of the convention present within the 1989 NRSV and 2005 TNIV. This includes, among other things, how the generic *anthrōpos* (ἄνθρωπος; Heb. equiv. *adam*, אָדָם) can be better rendered with “humanity” or “humankind,” rather than “man” or “mankind,” or in the case of individuals, “human being(s),” “mortal(s),” “person(s),” or “people.” *Adelphoi* (ἀδελφοὶ) is frequently rendered as “brothers and sisters.” However, the singular “he” has been widely maintained when a single person is being spoken of, rather than the plural “they,” which can unnecessarily complicate singular and plural issues from the source text.

Another feature of the PME, in following a philosophy of inclusive language—which definitely makes it distinct among Messianic editions of the Holy Scriptures—is how the Greek *ethnos* (ἔθνος), the equivalent of the Hebrew *goy* (גּוֹי), is widely rendered as “nation(s)” and not the more customary “Gentile(s).” This is more theologically neutral, especially in various missiological passages.^{xii}

Not inconsistent with other Messianic versions, the term *ekklēsia* (ἐκκλησία) is not rendered as “church.” It is instead, following the convention of the YLT and LITV, and as recommended by the *TDNT* entry,^{xiii} rendered as “assembly.”

This **Second Edition** (2018) of the PME has also made some further modifications, incorporating a greater degree of Jewish-sensitive terminology. While the First Edition (2015) employed standard Messianic terms, including: Yeshua for Jesus, Messiah for Christ, and immerse for baptize, there were other terms employed which were more Christian in orientation, partially, but not exclusively, following the convention of the TLV. Changes which have been made in the Second Edition notably include the employment of: wooden scaffold for cross, good news for gospel, turn for convert, and holy ones for saints.

Per customary evangelical Christian convention, and also much Jewish convention, a variety of pronouns and possessive pronouns pertaining to the Father and the Son have been Capitalized.

The headers present in the PME have been largely derived from the *Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament*.^{xiv}

THE ORDER OF THE APOSTOLIC CANON EMPLOYED IN THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION

While all of the twenty-seven canonical books of the New Testament appear within *The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition*, the order in which they appear is admittedly eclectic. In most Bibles, the books of the New Testament appear via the order of: Gospels-Acts, the Pauline Epistles, the General Epistles, and Revelation. Not all ancient textual witnesses of the Greek Apostolic Scriptures, though, have placed the General Epistles after the Pauline Epistles, and there have been some attempts in the past to actually place them before the Pauline Epistles, with the Epistle of James being listed after the Book of Acts.^{xv}

^{xii} Consult the FAQ, “**Gentile, Term,**” which further addresses the various inclusive language issues.

^{xiii} “Since the NT uses a single term, translations should also try to do so, but this raises the question whether ‘church’ or ‘congregation’ is always suitable, especially in view of the OT use for Israel and the underlying Hebrew and Aramaic... ‘Assembly,’ then, is perhaps the best single term, particularly as it has both a congregate and an abstract sense, i.e., for the assembling as well as the assembly” (K.L. Schmidt, “*ekklēsia*,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abrid. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 397).

For a further review, consult the sub-section “**The Term Ekklēsia,**” appearing in the publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?* by J.K. McKee.

^{xiv} *Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament*, NE27-RSV (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies/Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001).

^{xv} Robert L. Webb, “Epistles, Catholic,” in David Noel Freedman, ed. et. al., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:570 notes,

“As a collection, the Catholic Epistles were not always listed or placed in the same location in the NT canon...except for Codex Sinaiticus, all uncial mss which have both Paul’s epistles and the Catholic Epistles place the Catholic epistles

THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION

This order has itself been modified, per what is seen in the Messianic Apologetics workbook *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic* (2012 paperback). The PME broadly follows the order of: Gospels-Acts, the General Epistles, the Pauline Epistles, and the Later New Testament. Mark is listed first, as it is widely agreed to have been the first Gospel composed. Luke and Acts are naturally listed consecutively, as volumes I and II of a composite work. 2 Peter is followed by Jude, and Colossians is followed by Philemon, just as they frequently do in many commentaries.

THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION AND OTHER MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS MATERIALS

The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition has not at all been produced to be used in isolation from other publications and materials released by Messianic Apologetics, where further explanations and discussions on a wide array of theological and spiritual issues have certainly been provided. The relationship that the PME has to the *Practical Messianic* commentaries, and other Messianic Apologetics resources, is most critical. The PME does reflect, in various verses, a number of theological positions unique to Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. This edition of the PME does include **Translation Notes**, which have especially been provided for passages where there is a controversial rendering offered that is *known* to clash with a position held in much of evangelical Christianity, or even a sizeable part of the Messianic movement.^{xvi} The introductions provided to each book of the Messianic Writings have been adapted from the workbook *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*.

first. Westcott and Hort attempted to restore this order because of its ancient attestation. However, the order still used today demonstrates the dominant influence of the canonical order found in Jerome's Vulgate."

^{xvi} Various footnotes and annotations provided within the PME may also address some controversial and/or fringe perspectives of various Apostolic Scriptures passages present within the widely independent, and sometimes rogue, Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement.