

## Translation Essay (750 + words)

Assignment: Examine several translations of one of the following passages:

- **Job 40:25-41: end** In this passage, God describes his primordial battles with the Leviathan. This early myth is mentioned in the Psalms and in Exodus as well. It describes how the Canaanite El (aka “God”) overcame the God of the Sea (Yam) through a battle with Yam’s monster. In the bible, this ancient battle and the sea-beast--sometimes named Rahab—are evoked in Yahweh’s battle with Pharaoh and with the Judean’s suffering the hands of Babylon. Make sure to look at several translations, including Robert Alter’s in *The Wisdom Books*. Talk about how Leviathan is described and what insights you gain from different translations.
- **2 Kings 22-23.** This passage relates the “discovery” by King Josiah of the book of Deuteronomy in the part of his reign that immediately precedes the conquest of the Jews by the Babylonians. Some believe Josiah wrote this book, which relates a series of commandments unknown in Genesis and Exodus, to justify sweeping reforms that included centralizing temple worship in Jerusalem, purifying temple practices, and attacking those who worship other gods or worship in non-standard ways. What kinds of “bad” practices did Josiah abolish? How do the translations differ in what they tell us? Make sure you look at the Interlinear version and examine the meaning of the original Hebrew words. Then look at key passages in the Parallel translation or go verse by verse using the Compare Translations feature of Crosswalk. Examine at least four varying translations, including Complete Jewish Bible, The Message, Young’s Literal Translation, and the King James Version (you should definitely use this one).
- **Isaiah 7, 1-16; 14 1-15; or Isaiah 34 1-15.** These passages contain predictions about how God will defeat Israel’s enemies, but they are useful because they also contain famous references. Chapter 7 contains the famous prediction about a virgin becoming pregnant with the child Immanuel, thought to predict the coming of Jesus. Chapter 14 contains the bible’s only reference to the character Lucifer. Chapter 34 contains the name Lilyit, or Lilith, which in Jewish tradition is the name of Adam’s first, rejected wife. These are passages in which translation could change our entire understanding of an important Jewish or Christian concept. Look for other differences which interest you. Make sure you look at the Interlinear version and examine the meaning of the original Hebrew words. Then look at key passages in the Parallel translation or go verse by verse using the Compare Translations feature of Crosswalk. Examine at least four varying translations, including The Complete Jewish Bible, The Message, Young’s Literal Translation, and the King James Version (you should definitely use this one).
- **Ecclesiastes 1 or 12.** The first passage centers around three important Hebrew words that are often translated as “vanity,” vexation,” and “spirit.” (King James). These words’ translations have a huge impact on whether this poem is read as a complaint about the pointlessness of life or a meditation about human desire. The last chapter, chapter 12, Talks about how we die, and what that means. Examine translations of either passage that could make a difference in how it is read and interpreted. Make sure you look at the Interlinear version and examine the meaning of the original Hebrew words. Then look at key passages in the Parallel translation or go verse by verse using the Compare Translations feature of Crosswalk. Examine at least four varying translations, including NRSV, The Message, and Young’s Literal Translation, and make sure to use Robert Alter’s in *The Wisdom Books*.

- **Proverbs 31.** This last passage in Proverbs talks about what some people call the “ideal wife,” but others translate it much differently. It talks about women who should be feared and shunned, but it also talks about how sons should obey the “torah” or teaching of their mothers. Look at the Interlinear bible, and then look at a range of translations, not just those online. I would suggest looking at translations by Robert Alter and the Judaica Press. See other links in this assignment. [https://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/16402/jewish/Chapter-31.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16402/jewish/Chapter-31.htm)

Resources: At a minimum, you should the following resources at <http://www.biblestudytools.com/>: the interlinear bible, the Compare Translations link (<http://www.biblestudytools.com/compare-translations/>), the lexicon, and the concordance (the Concordance shows how words have been used elsewhere. For example, “nephesh” means breath, soul, wind, and many others things. Compare how differently it is used in Genesis 1, Isaiah 51, Job 41, and Ecclesiastes.)

You can look at translations beyond those on crosswalk. For example, if you’re looking at Genesis, Everett Fox has a new translation that tries to capture the sound of the original Hebrew. It is in our Library, [BS1223.A3 F68 1995](#).

Be specific: use actual quotes from the passages. Your goal should be to show 1) what insights you get from each translation, including the original Hebrew 2) **how key passages are different** and 3) **what those differences mean for those trying to interpret these passages**. Do not – *do not!* -- write about various passages that are translated in similar ways. Those will not produce a good paper. Finally, try to concentrate on differences that are important, not subtle differences in similar translations.

Organization: You can organize your essay in at least two ways.

1. By theme. Each chapter deals with several different issues or themes. For example, Genesis 1 deals with the way God created the earth; the order in which he made things and, therefore, perhaps, his priorities; and nature and purpose of human and animal life.
2. By translation. This method would be productive only if each translation was substantially different from every other translation.

I will grade your paper on these factors:

1. The quality of your observations
2. The organization of your essay
3. Your use of specific, interesting examples of differences in translation to support your argument
4. Your mechanics, grammar, and clear citation of passages

**Note: you should stick close to the text itself. Avoid reading this passage or story in terms of the New Testament or according to received church Doctrine.**

Formal Equivalence	Balanced Approach	Extensive Dynamic Equivalence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Standard Version of 1901</li> <li>• New American Standard Bible</li> <li>• King James Version (formal equivalence, albeit to 17th-century English)</li> <li>• New King James Version</li> <li>• English Standard Version</li> <li>• Revised Standard Version</li> <li>• Douay-Rheims American Version</li> <li>• Green's Literal Translation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holman Christian Standard Bible called "optimal" equivalence</li> <li>• New Revised Standard Version</li> <li>• New American Bible</li> <li>• New English Translation</li> <li>• Murdock's Translation</li> <li>• Modern Language Bible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New International Version</li> <li>• Today's New International Version[5]</li> <li>• New Jerusalem Bible</li> <li>• Revised English Bible</li> <li>• Good News Bible (formerly "Today's English Version")</li> <li>• Complete Jewish Bible</li> <li>• New Living Translation</li> <li>• The Living Bible</li> <li>• Phillips Modern English</li> <li>• The Message</li> </ul>