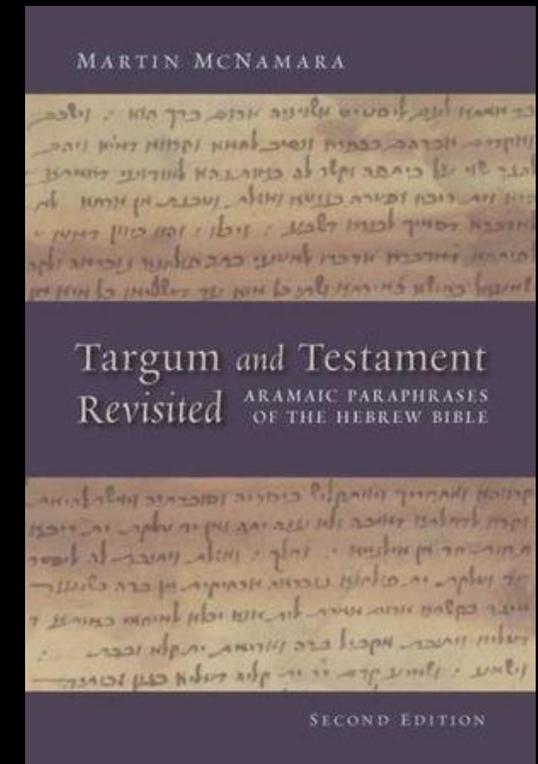
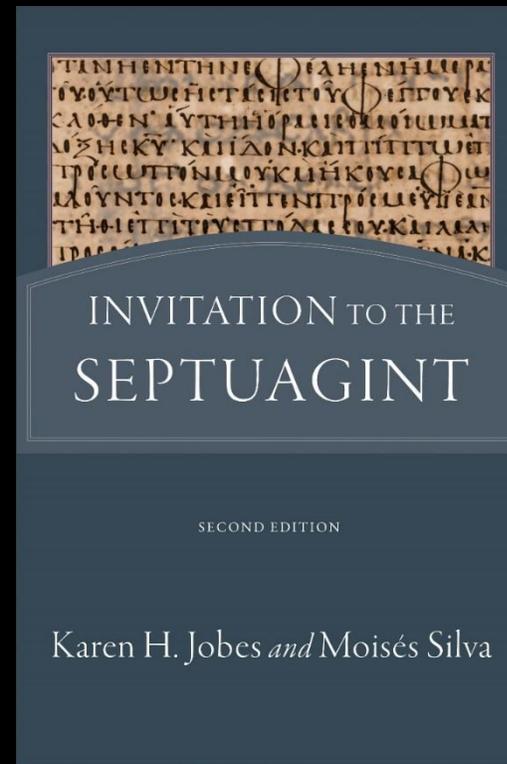
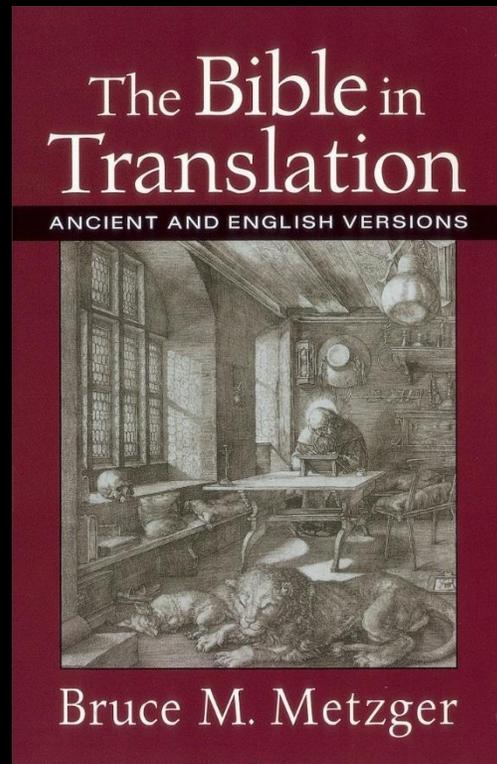


Getting the Big Picture of the Bible: Bible Translations



Pastor Michael Wallace
December 23, 2018

Outline of today's class

- Translation in general
- Discussion about translation techniques
- Linguistic diversity in the Holy Lands during early centuries of our era
- Important ancient translations
- Important modern translations

“He who translates a verse quite literally is a liar,
while he who adds anything thereto is a blasphemer.”

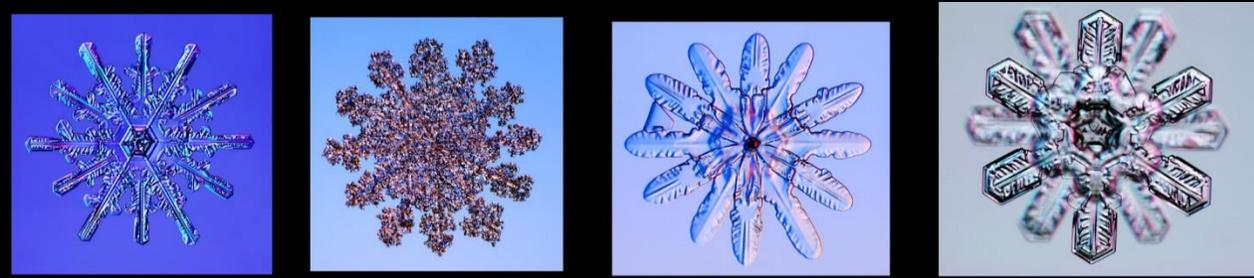
Rabbi Judah ben Ilai

Translation in General

All acts of translation begin with a thorough investigation of the reading process. Translators, by necessity, read each word and sentence at least as carefully as the critic or the scholar. Even the smallest detail in a text, as [Gregory] Rabassa points out, cannot be neglected.. “Reading is already *translation*.” Through the process of reading, readers are transplanted into the atmosphere of a new situation that does not build just one clearly defined reality, but rather possibilities of various realities... Reading becomes the making of meaning and not the description of already fixed meanings... The act of reading should be seen as the generator of uncertainties, as the driving force toward a decision-making process, as the discovery of new interrelations... In the translation process there are no definitive answers, only attempts at solutions in response to states of uncertainty generated by the interaction of the words’ semantic fields and sounds.

The Craft of Translation by Biguenet and Schulte, ix-x

Translation in General



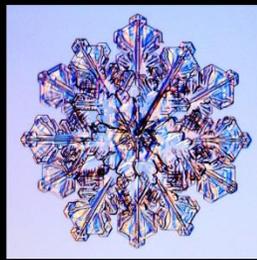
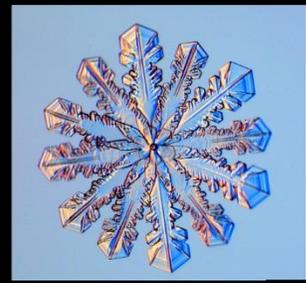
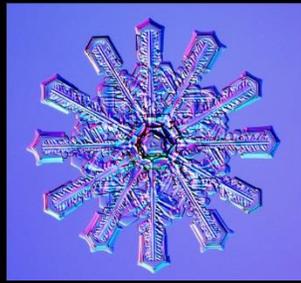
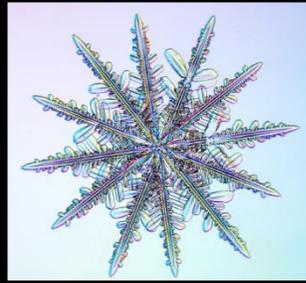
Wishful thinking and early training in arithmetic have convinced a majority of people that there are such things as equals in the world... we should certainly not expect that a word in one language will find its equal in another. A word is nothing but a metaphor for an object... like words, no two metaphors are alike regardless of similarity...

Consider dog vs. *perro* (meaning, sounds, culture, connotation)



Limb and branch are legitimate translations, but the nuance of '*rama*' as arm or leg does not exist in Spanish. By choosing one word over another, the translator may inadvertently suggest meaning to the reader not present in the original language.

Translation in General



Words and phrases, then, are not just descriptions of the objects or circumstances entailed, but more often than not denoted the spirit involved.

[The] matter of choice in translation always leaves the door open to that other possibility. We cannot be sure of ourselves. Translation is a disturbing craft because there is precious little certainty about what we are doing... The translator can never be sure of himself, he must never be... So he must continue to approach, nearer and nearer, as near as he can, but, like Tantalus, at some practical points he must say *ne plus ultra* and sink back down as he considers his work done, if not finished.

“No Two Snowflakes are Alike: Translation as Metaphor” Gregory Rabassa

Translation in General

- What Bibles do we read?
- What language are they in?
- Do we still believe that these are the inspired word of God?
- Why or why not?



Translation in General

- “An obvious reason why English versions differ from one another is the slow, ongoing modification of the English language.”
- “Another is the adoption of a particular style and level of English diction suited to a particular age-group of reading public.”
- As our language changes, shouldn't our translation of the Bible change accordingly so as to be understood?
- Update meaning with more modern terms (e.g. inclusivity)
 - Was Paul *stoned*?
 - Whenever Paul spoke to groups of people, he wrote “brothers,” but was he only speaking to the men? Should we translate that as “brothers and sisters” (so NRSV)
- When presented with possibilities, translators may tend to lean into a particular translation that aligns with their theology (confirmation bias)
- What manuscripts should be used? “Versions of the Bible differ because translators have differed in deciding which variant reading should be preferred as original and which are secondary” (Cf. NRSV 1 Sam 10, DSS)

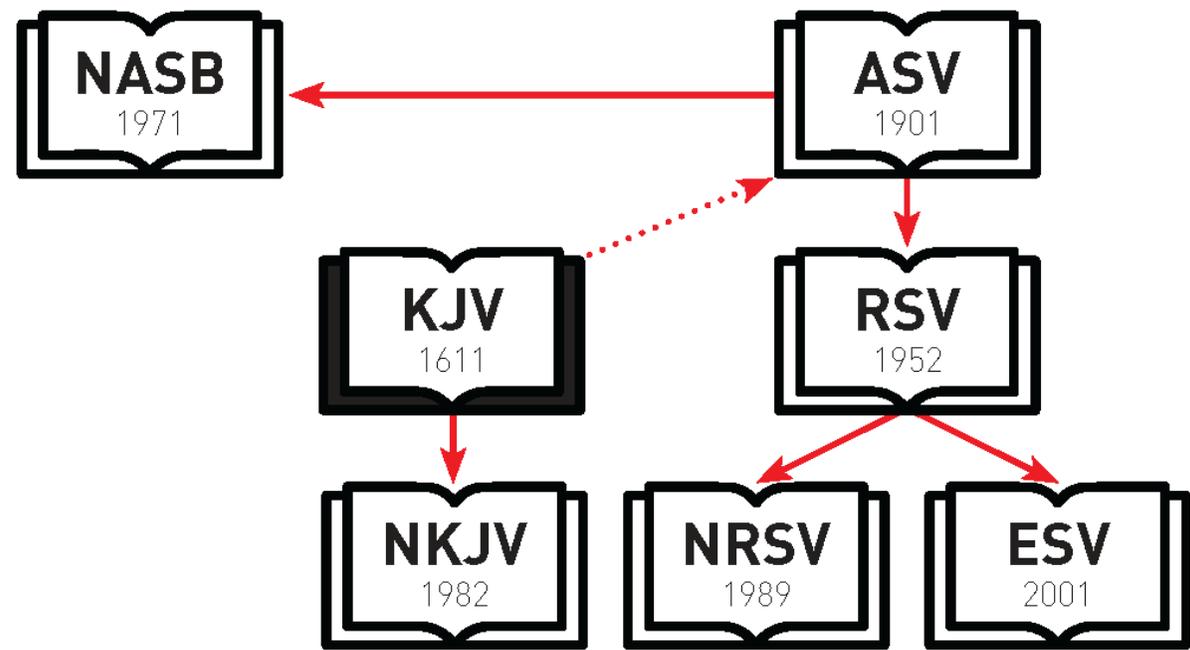
Translation in General

- What do some words mean? “The [HB] contains several hundred words that have not been found in any other literature and are therefore difficult to translate” (i.e., *pim* פִּימ, found only in 1 Sam 13:21. KJV has it as “a file” used by blacksmiths to sharpen tools. However, during the 20th c. archaeologists discovered ancient sets of weights, each bearing the Hebrew word *pim*. Now, we know that this is the amount that the blacksmith charged for sharpening. (Metzger, 186-188)
- Do I try to preserve the original figure of speech like alliteration, but perhaps sound foreign or stilted, or go for clarity in the target language and forgo the figure of speech?



FORMAL EQUIVALENCE
WORD FOR WORD

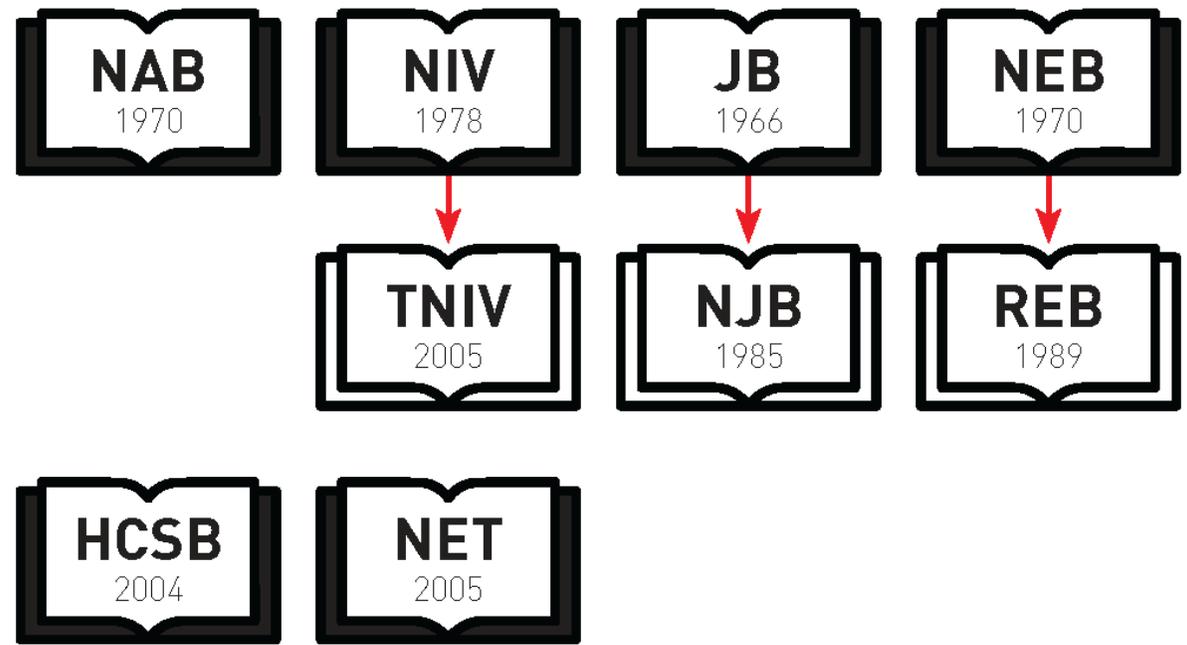
- **theory:** 'literal' or *word-for-word*
- **aim:** to retain the *form*, i.e. the words and structure, of the original text as much as possible
- **result:** an English translation that is primarily accurate, yet also comprehensible



ASV	= American Standard Version
ESV	= English Standard Version
KJV	= King James Version
NASB	= New American Standard Bible
NKJV	= New King James Version
NRSV	= New Revised Standard Version
RSV	= Revised Standard Version

INTERMEDIATE

- **theory:** mediating between ‘literal’ and ‘idiomatic’
- **aim:** to retain the *form* of the original text where possible, without compromising its *function*, i.e. to convey meaning
- **result:** an English translation that is both accurate and clear.



HCSB	= Holman Christian Standard Bible
JB	= Jerusalem Bible (Roman Catholic)
NAB	= New American Bible (Roman Catholic)
NEB	= New English Bible
NET	= New English Translation (online translation)
NIV	= New International Version
NJB	= New Jerusalem Bible (Roman Catholic)
TNIV	= Today's New International Version
REB	= Revised English Bible

FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE MEANING FOR MEANING

- **theory:** 'idiomatic' or *meaning-for-meaning*
- **aim:** to retain the *function* of the original text, i.e. to convey meaning, as much as possible
- **result:** to produce an English translation that is primarily natural and easy to understand

Paraphrase = re-wording a text in the *same* language, rather than translating it from one language to *another*.



PARAPHRASE

CEV = Contemporary English Version

GNT = Good News Translation (Good News Bible)

GW = God's Word

MSG = The Message

NCV = New Century Version

NLT = New Living Translation

TLB = The Living Bible

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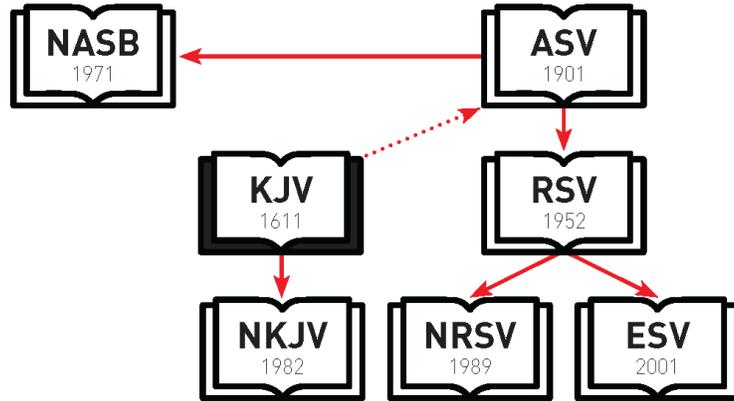
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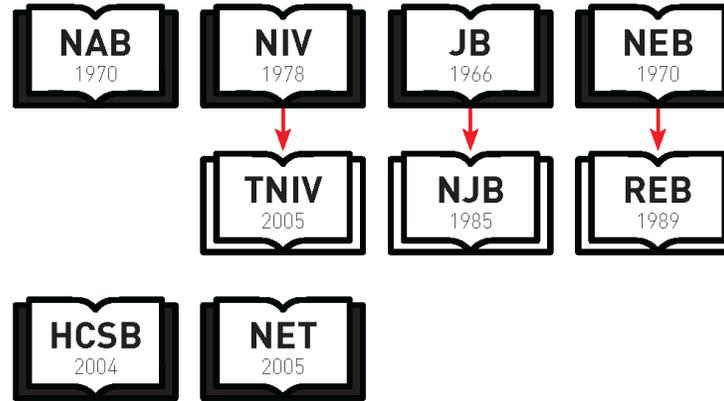
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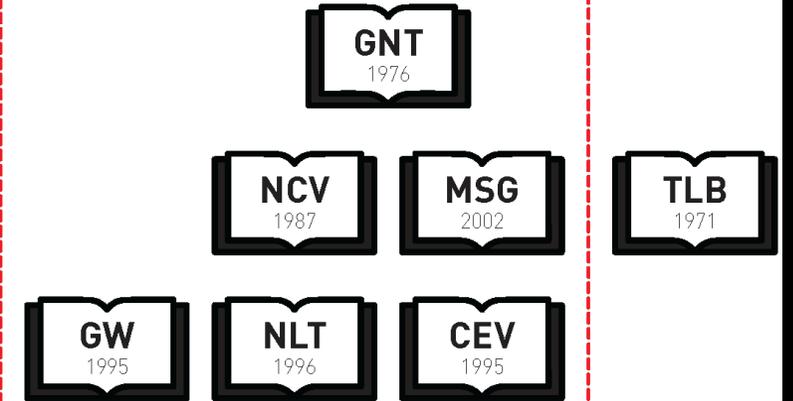
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Linguistic Diversity of the Holy Lands

- Due to socio-cultural heterogeneity, as well as the impacts of imperialism, people in the Holy Lands were multi-lingual in different ways and to different degrees.
- Depending on the time and the location, wealthy people, especially those in the cities, may have spoken a higher class language (e.g., Greek, then later Latin), while poorer people, especially in rural areas spoke a lower class language (e.g., Aramaic)
 - In linguistics, this diversity is classified under the term 'register'
 - Consider, even just in the same language, how do you speak differently with your spouse and family, as compared to your boss, as compared to those in the service industry
- Jesus most likely spoke Aramaic as his primary language (with family and friends), could read and understand Hebrew, and was likely conversational in Koine Greek (common Greek—not Classical).
- Hebrew/ Aramaic (Afro-Asiatic, Semitic)
- Greek → Latin (Indo-European, Hellenic/ Italic)

Ancient and Important Translations

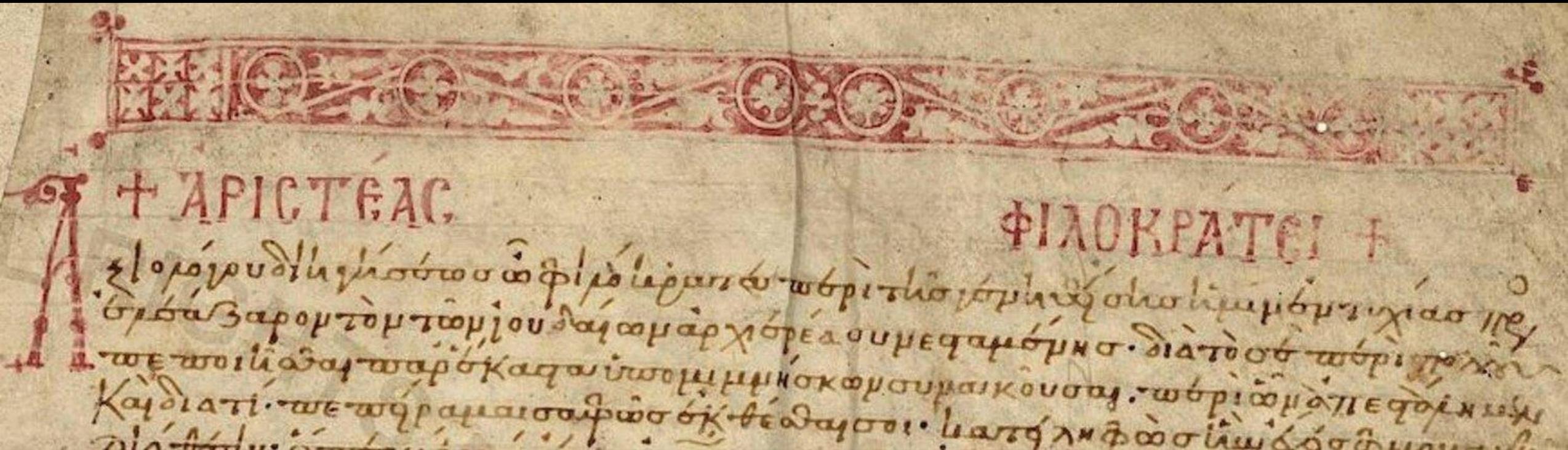
- Septuagint (LXX/OG), Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible
- Targums, Aramaic paraphrases and expansions of the Hebrew Bible
- Vulgate, Latin translation of the whole Bible spearheaded by Jerome

Ancient and Important Translations

- Oral Translations vs. Written Translations
 - The original languages were seen as authoritative (then the Septuagint, particularly for Christians, after which the Vulgate became more standard) and so would be read, even if the folks might not be able to understand (think Latin in the RCC pre Vat-II)
 - Liturgical uses: following reading from the predominant, major, or original language (Heb, Gk, Lat), a lector would translate to the local vernacular
 - Over time, these developed into a written, slightly standardized versions

The Septuagint (LXX/OG)

- Because the Septuagint was the first translation made of the Hebrew Bible (and possibly of any literary work of comparable size) into another language, it marks a milestone in human culture. (Jobes, 1)
- Means “seventy” referring to the legendary story (*Letter of Aristeas*) about how the Pentateuch was translated perfectly by 70 translators (c. 250 BC)



The Septuagint (LXX/OG)

- Actually arose from “the liturgical and education needs of the large Jewish community in Alexandria. Many members of this community had forgotten their Hebrew or let it grow rusty and spoke only the common Greek... they remained Jews and wanted to understand the ancient Scriptures... (Metzger, 15)
- By the end of the first century of the Christian era, more and more Jews ceased using the Septuagint because the early Christians had adopted it as their own translation. At an early stage, the belief developed that this translation had been divinely inspired, and hence the way was open for several church father to claim that the Septuagint presented the words of God more accurately than the Hebrew Bible. The fact that after the first century very, very few Christians had knowledge of the Hebrew language meant that the Septuagint was not only the church’s main source of the Old Testament but was, in fact, its only source.” (Metzger, 18)

The Septuagint (LXX/OG)

- Over the centuries, the Septuagint has had a wide influence. It became the basis for daughter versions of the OT in many languages, including Old Latin, Coptic, Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Syriac ..., Arabic, and Slavonic.
- Finally, the importance of the Septuagint can be judged from the fact that it remains to this day the authoritative biblical text of the OT for the Greek Orthodox Church. (Metzger, 20)
- “Because of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, most Christians in the Western church today are completely unfamiliar with the Septuagint. Part of the reason for this development is that the Reformation shifted attention away from the early translations of the OT, whether they be Greek or Latin, back to the original Hebrew. Today’s English translations of the OT are rightly based, not on the Greek or Latin versions, but on the best available Hebrew text...” (Jobes, 8-9)

The Septuagint (LXX/OG)

- The LXX is important because:
 1. The extant manuscripts contain the earliest and most complete biblical text (though there are earlier fragments)
 2. They contain some of the earliest surviving interpretation of the Bible
 3. Some recession of it was used by the writers of the NT.
 4. Occasionally the Greek translator's rendering can shed light on a rare Hebrew word
- The traditional translation of ἔρυθρά θάλασσα (Red Sea) for יַם־סוּף (Sea of Reeds) continues into most English translations even today!
- The translation often avoided anthropomorphisms or language that could be otherwise misconstrued. For example, God is not called a "Rock," "Lord" is substituted for the Tetragrammaton (YHWH), and God does not repent, is not seen, and doesn't have body parts (particularly hands)
- "The books or portions of the LXX that most clearly preserve a different stage of literary development are Jeremiah, which is 15% shorter than the MT; Ezekiel, which is 4-5% shorter, 1 Sam. 16-18, which is 45% shorter...

The Targums (Targumim)

- Interpretive renderings of [almost] all the books of the HB into Aramaic . Such versions were needed when Hebrew ceased to be the normal medium of communication among Jews. Consequently, it became necessary at the public reading of Scripture in the synagogue to present also an oral translation into the Aramaic vernacular of the populace. (Metzger, 20)
- What started as a simple paraphrase, eventually incorporated explanatory glosses in order to:
 - Resolve textual difficulties
 - Harmonize conflicting texts
 - Reconcile the text with accepted tradition
- What started as simply an oral tradition, eventually became enshrined in a few different written traditions (Targum of Onkelos, Targum of Jonathan, Neofiti I), starting in the first century BCE (McNamara, 122)



Pentateuch with Targum
Onkelos Numbers 5

The Targums (Targumim)

- Upon reading the targumim along with the New Testament, one starts to hear echoes of one in the other.
- Geza Vermes, in a major essay on Jewish Literature and New Testament exegesis outlines four possibilities for explaining these similarities:
 1. Coincidence
 2. Rabbinic borrowing from the NT
 3. NT dependence on the targum or midrash
 4. A NT passage and a targumic/ rabbinic text have their source in “Jewish traditional teaching” (this is the one that Vermes prefers)
- Vermes believes that instead of looking at the NT as an independent unit set against a background of Judaism, we have to see it as part of a larger environment of Jewish religious and cultural history.

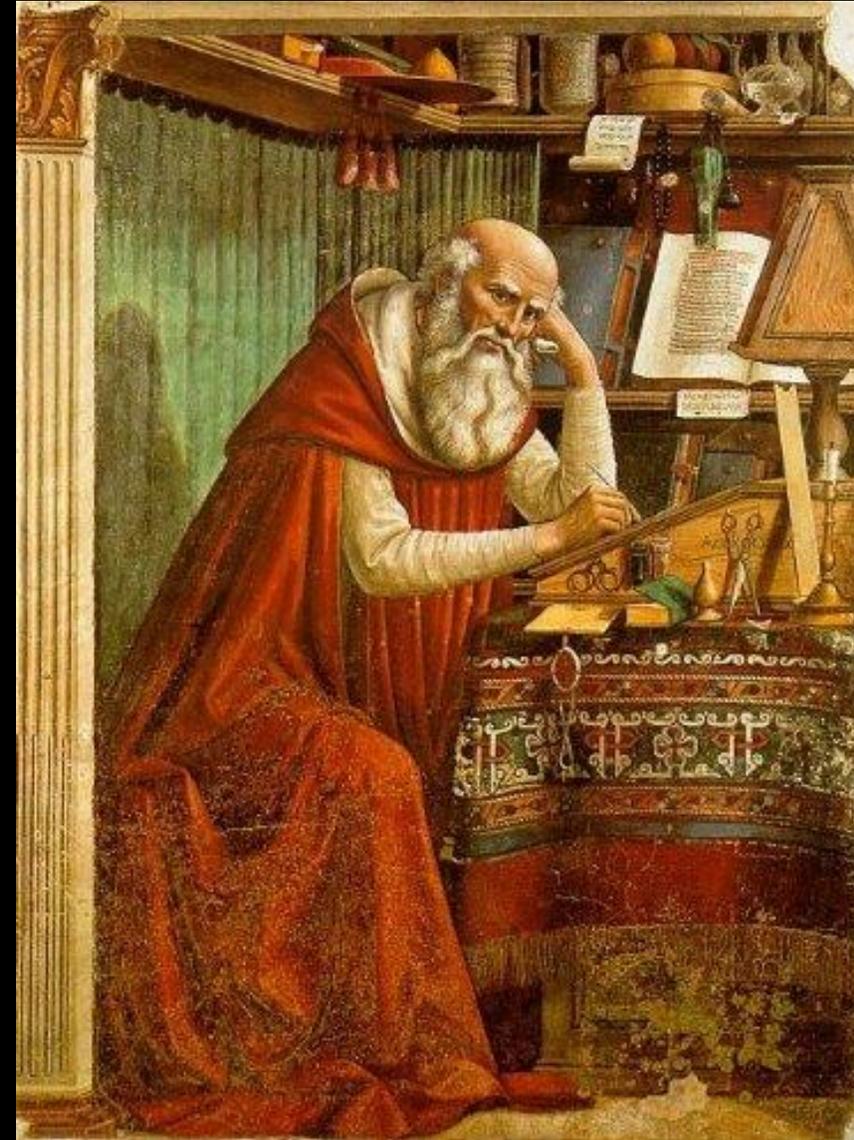
Targum and Testament Revisited, McNamara, 11

The Targums (Targumim): Echoes of the NT

- The prodigal son confesses, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and *before you*.” “To sin before” is a phrase not found in the Hebrew texts, nor in the LXX. The expression used there is “to sin against.” “To sin before” is a good targumic phrase... [and] is generally used when referring to a sin against God. (142)
- Such familiar Gospel expressions as “this world—the world to come,” “the resurrection,” “the judgment,” “the great day of judgment,” “Gehenna,” “Paradise,” etc. are all found in the Palestinian Targum.
 - Consider God’s words to Adam as found in Genesis 3:19 from the Palestinian Targum, “Because you are dust and to dust you are to return; and from the dust you are to return and arise and shall give an account and a reckoning of all you have done”
- Some have suggested that the propensity for the Targums to refer to God indirectly (e.g., ‘memra’) may be behind John’s λόγος theology.

Vulgate

- (Wiki) A late-4th-century Latin translation of the Bible that became the Catholic Church's officially promulgated Latin version of the Bible during the 16th century. The translation was largely the work of Jerome, who in 382 had been commissioned by Pope Damasus I to revise the *Vetus Latina* ("Old Latin") Gospels then in use by the Roman Church. Jerome, on his own initiative, extended this work of revision and translation to include most of the books of the Bible, and once published, the new version was widely adopted... by the 13th century, it had taken over from the former version the appellation of *versio vulgata* (the "version commonly used") or *vulgate*.
- For the RCC, this was *THE* Bible for multiple centuries. Theology was based on this Latin translation of the Bible, and the original languages were rarely consulted to help with exegetical questions.



Vulgate

- “The theology and the devotional language typical of the RCC were either created or transmitted by the Vulgate. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics are heirs of terminology that Jerome either coined or baptized with fresh significance—words such as salvation, regeneration, justification, sanctification, propitiation, reconciliation, inspiration, Scripture, sacrament, and many others.”
- Jerome’s “revision of the Latin Bible provoked both criticism and anger, sometimes extraordinarily vehement. Augustine... reports an account of tumult that erupted in a North African church... during the reading of a Scripture lesson from the Book of Jonah in Jerome’s unfamiliar rendering. When the congregation heard that Jonah took shelter from the sun under some ivy (*hedera*), with one accord they shouted, “Gourd, gourd” (*cucurbita*), until the reader reinstated the old word lest there be a general exodus of the congregation!
- In time, however, opposition to the revision subsided, and the superior accuracy and scholarship of Jerome’s version gave it the victory... For nearly a thousand years, the Vulgate was used as the recognized text of Scripture throughout western Europe. It also became the basis of pre-Reformation vernacular Scriptures, such as Wycliffe’s English translation in the fourteenth century, as well as the first printed Bibles in German (1466), Italian (1471), Catalan (1478), Czech (1488), and French (1530).

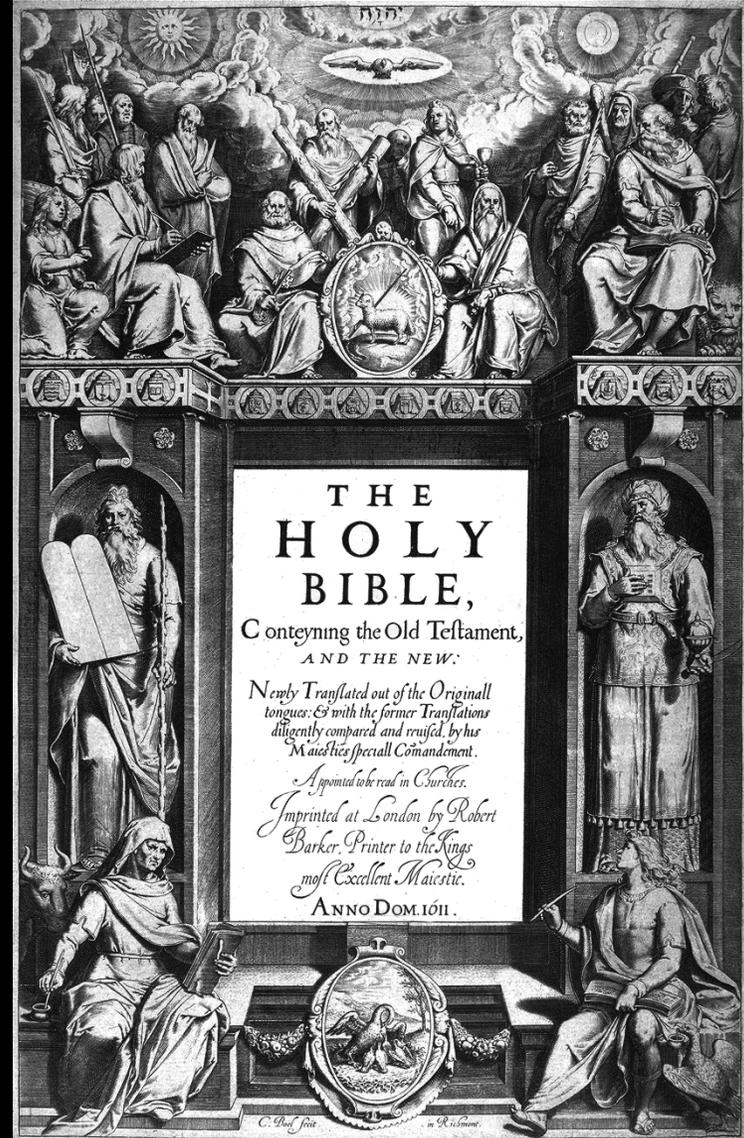
Vulgate: Permanence of the tradition

- What was the forbidden fruit that Eve and Adam ate?
- According to Robert Appelbaum, “A brilliant but controversial theologian, Jerome was known for his hot temper, but he obviously also had a rather cool sense of humor. “Jerome had several options, but he hit upon the idea of translating *peri* as *malus*, which in Latin has two very different meanings. As an adjective, *malus* means bad or evil. As a noun it seems to mean an apple, in our own sense of the word, coming from the very common tree now known officially as the *Malus pumila*. So Jerome came up with a very good pun.”
- Even though the Hebrew only has *peri* (general term for fruit), in Latin, Jerome wanted to include a play on words by juxtaposing evil and apple in the same word *malus*.
- Then, “the apple began to dominate Fall artworks in Europe after the German artist Albrecht Dürer's famous 1504 engraving depicted the First Couple counterpoised beside an apple tree.” (at right)



Modern and Important Translations

- King James Version of the Bible



KJV

- In 1603, when King James VI of Scotland became King James I of England, the text of the Bible, current in a variety of English translations, was a source of division among religious parties in England rather than a bond of unity. In order to reconcile differences among the various parties, the king called for a conference to be held... [Following the conference, King James] endorsed the idea of a new translation. (Metzger, 70-71)
- A committee of 50 men convened
- Instead of creating a new translation, the aim of the committee was actually to make an already good Bible better. That is, it is in fact merely a revision of the Bishops' Bible, as this itself was a revision of the Great Bible, and the Great Bible a revision of Coverdale and Tyndale.
- Coverdale and Tyndale → Great Bible → Bishops' Bible → KJV

KJV

- The phrase Textus Receptus (received text), which lives as the basis of the KJV, is essentially a marketing blurb!
- So superstitious has been the reverence accorded to the TR that in some cases attempts to criticize or emend it have been regarded as akin to sacrilege. Yet, its textual basis is essentially a handful of late and haphazardly collected minuscule manuscripts, and in a dozen passages its rendering is supported by no known Greek witness. (Metzger, 152.)

KJV

- The original introduction to the KJV makes reference to the Septuagint:
 - The translation of the Seventie dissenteth from the Originall in many places, neither doeth it come neere it, for perspicuitie, gratvitie, majestie; yet which of the Apostles did condemne it? Condemne it? Nay, they used it, (as it is apparent, and as Saint Jerome and most learned men doe confesse) which they would not have done, nor by their example of using it, so grace and commend it to the Church, if it had bene unworthy the appellation and name of the word of God.
- So here we have the KJV translators saying that the Septuagint wasn't an accurate or even great translation (it lacked clarity, gravity, and majesty), but that the Apostles didn't condemn it for its failings, but in fact used it. Then they say that because of this use by the apostles, we can rightly look at this inaccurate, problematic translation and still rightly call it "the word of God." In other words, the KJV translators think it is perfectly acceptable to identity an imperfect translation as the word of God. (Thanks to Dr. Pace)

KJV

- Verbal variety in the KJV-they sometimes translated the same exact Greek word in different ways in English (e.g., καταργέω , which appears 27x was translated into 18 different words). On the other end, sometimes they compacted various words into one English word (e.g., “bring” represents 39 Hebrew words and “destroy” represents 49 Hebrew words). (Metzger, 74-75)
- Beautiful Elizabethan English, but difficult to understand and not the most faithful to the original manuscripts.
- Questions to ask: Apocrypha, before 1611, around the world today?

Application: What about 'Virgin' Mary?

- Especially during this season of Advent and Christmas, we hear the passage from Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy of Jesus' birth. How should we understand it?
 - NRSV : Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.
 - KJV: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
- Matthew 1:23 (quoting Septuagintal Isaiah 7:14)
 - NRSV “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel”
- Rather than depending on the Hebrew tradition, Matthew relies on the Greek!
 - Hebrew: עַלְמָה *almah*, meaning young woman of childbearing age
 - Greek: παρθένος *parthenos*, meaning maiden, virgin

Isaiah 7:14 Hebrew Bible: <u>young woman</u>	→	Isaiah 7:14 LXX: <u>virgin</u>	→	Matthew 1:23: <u>virgin</u>
		KJV Isaiah 7:14: <u>virgin</u>		KJV Matthew 1:23: <u>virgin</u>
NRSV Isaiah 7:14 <u>young woman</u>				NRSV Matthew 1:23: <u>virgin</u>

Takeaways from today

- The Bible in translation has spoken to the faithful of the ages in different ways and literally in different languages.
- Even if the translations may say slightly different things, together through the Holy Spirit, they still point to the truth of God in Christ.
- If we don't know the Biblical language, it is helpful to have multiple translations of the Bible or at least a good one with study notes.
- Reading the KJV can be good for devotional practices or to remind us of our Christian upbringing, but it does not represent the most easily understood translation and its textual foundation is shaky at some points, especially with the science of text criticism.
- We stand among a great cloud of witnesses, who spoke different languages, who lived in different eras, and read different Bibles, but together we will one day join together to worship God around the throne.



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شكرا
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شكرا

Gracias

شكرا لك

Merci

Thank you

شكرا لك
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RSV/ NRSV

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