

Some basics to note about ...your English Bible translation

On the next few pages we will be looking at some of the basic methods translators have used in the providing of our English Bible versions. With this knowledge we will be able to read our Bibles much more effectively. We will understand how **certain popular beliefs** have been accepted as normal, simply because of occasional **translator bias**.

We will look at the meaning of the following four concepts:

Translating
Anglicising
Interpolation
Transliteration

Translating

Converting words and ideas from one language into another.

The Bible has been translated from three languages

Most of the Old Testament was originally in **Hebrew**

Some of the Old Testament was originally in **Aramaic** (very similar to Hebrew)

The New Testament was originally in **Greek**

Original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words and phrases are converted as close as possible to a similar meaning in the English.

Sometimes the Hebrew or Greek language has a word or an idea that is difficult to understand in English. This is understandable as different races of people can have some unusual habits and ways of expressing themselves. This does not happen often, but when it does and you have a centre column reference Bible you will find extra suggestions in that column to help make the meaning more plain in English.

Anglicising

Giving English form or character to a name or word from another language.

Many of the Hebrew and Greek names in the Bible are given an English form or character making them easier for us to pronounce. Many of these names could have been translated because most of them have a particular meaning, but it is much more concise to Anglicise them into our language. This makes them easier to remember as many of the translations of Hebrew and Greek names cannot be put into one word in English.

Here are some common examples of Anglicising:

‘**Yehowshuwa**’ in Hebrew becomes ‘**Joshua**’

‘**Yeruwshalayim**’ in Hebrew becomes ‘**Jerusalem**’

‘**Aharown**’ in Hebrew becomes ‘**Aaron**’

‘**Iesous**’ (ee-ay-sooce) in Greek becomes ‘**Jesus**’

‘**Paulos**’ in Greek becomes ‘**Paul**’

‘**Loukas**’ in Greek becomes ‘**Lucas**’ or ‘**Luke**’

Interpolation

Adding a word to our English Bibles that does not in any way convey the true meaning of the original Hebrew or Greek word that should have been translated properly.

This is where the translators have been very naughty and have **placed words into** our English Bibles which **do not have any relevance** to the original Hebrew or Greek words they are supposed to be translating. Instead of translating the original text into an English word with the same meaning they have chosen a word with an entirely **different meaning**.

Here are two examples:

Hell

Old Germanic word meaning, ‘a covering’

Many times the Hebrew word **‘sheol’** which simply means the **‘grave’** or the **‘pit’** has not been translated. Instead, the word **‘hell’** is **put in its place** which allows people to read into their Bibles a message that was not there in the original language. When a Hebrew person reads their Bible and comes across the word **‘sheol’** they would simply think of the grave and not a so called place of fiery torment that a western reader may think when he sees the word **‘hell’**.

The irony of this whole situation is that this old Germanic word **‘hell’** simply means **‘a covering’**, hence the word **‘helmet’** means a **‘head covering’**.

So neither the **original meaning** nor the **traditional ‘hell fire’ meaning** for the word **‘hell’** have any connection whatsoever with the grave or the pit which the Hebrew word **‘sheol’** describes.

Some of the later translations of the Bible now transfer (transliterate) the word **‘sheol’** into the English text rather than translate it eg NKJV while the NIV have in many instances actually **translated ‘sheol’ as ‘the grave’** (See the NIV Psa.86:13; Jonah 2:2; Isa.5:14). One wonders why translators for over 400 years were so fearful in so many instances of doing a simple translation of the word **‘sheol’** into the English words **‘grave’** or **‘pit’** rather than resorting the **‘hell’** word.

Atonement

‘Atonement’ is a word coined in the 13th century. Apparently there were many sermons delivered in this era that emphasised being **‘at one’** with God. Hence the verb **‘atone’** developed which then became **‘atonement’** in noun form.

This word has been placed many times in our English Bibles when the Hebrew word **‘kaphar’** occurs. The word **‘kaphar’** actually means **‘to cover over’** or **‘take away’** and has no resemblance to the common much broader meaning we have given to the word **‘atonement’**. Today people use the word **‘atonement’** to describe God’s entire plan of redemption including the **‘nature of man’**.

‘Kaphar’ though simply speaks of a **‘covering’** and is first used to describe the pitch that covered Noah’s ark and later in Scripture to speak of the covering or taking away of sins by forgiveness. If translators had used the word **‘cover’** or **‘take away’** every time the word **‘kaphar’** occurs in the Hebrew we would have found much Scripture simpler and easier to understand.

So whenever you see the word **‘atonement’** in your English Bible, think of the principle of **‘covering’** or **‘taking away’**.

In the Authorised Version of the Bible the word **‘atonement’** has been placed over 70 times in the first five books. Here are some other Old Testament occurrences in the AV translation (2 Sam.21:3; 1 Chron.6:49; 2 Chron.29:24; Neh.10:33; Rom.5:11).

Transliteration

Transferring a word directly from the original language into our English Bibles
This is where the translators take a word from the original Hebrew or Greek and do not translate it. The word is transferred directly from the original tongue into our English Bibles. We have already seen how the translators in NKJV have transferred the **Hebrew word ‘Sheol’** into our English text rather than translate it.

Here is another example:

Satan

Some may be surprised to know that the word ‘satan’ is neither an English word nor a proper name. ‘Satan’ is a Hebrew word that has been transferred directly out of the Hebrew into our English Bibles. This has been done in both the Old and New Testament translations. In the New Testament the word is ‘Satanas’ from the Aramaic (popular language in NT times), very similar to Hebrew.

(‘saw-tan’ and ‘saw-tawn’ are two ways that a Hebrew person pronounces the word satan)

Correct translations

There are some occurrences though, where the word satan has been translated into the correct English word ‘adversary’ which is the actual literal meaning of the word. If translators had been consistent they would have translated satan as ‘adversary’ every time it appears in Scripture. One wonders how successful the theory of the ‘super-natural’ devil would have been if the translators had consistently translated this word correctly.

Examples where ‘satan’ has been translated

Here are some examples where the Hebrew word ‘satan’ has been properly translated into the English word ‘adversary’. The numbers next to the word ‘satan’ are Strong’s Concordance numbers so that you can check and see that we are being truthful and that the word was actually ‘satan’ in the original Hebrew Scriptures. The first example below may come as a surprise to you.

The Scripture	Hebrew	translated as	refers to
Num.22:22	satan Strong's 7854	adversary	An obedient Angel opposing Balaam on God's behalf
1 Sam.29:4	satan 7854	adversary	King David is feared as a potential ‘satan’
1 Kings 11:14	satan 7854	adversary	Hadad who would be Israel's future enemy
1 Kings 11:23, 25	satan 7854	adversary	Reson the son of Ediadah who opposed Solomon
2 Sam.19:22	satan 7854	adversaries	The sons of Zeruah who opposed David
Psalms 71:13	satan 7853	adversaries	Enemies of King David who sort to kill him

Here are some more references where ‘satan’ is translated properly:

1 Kings 5:4; Psalm 38:20, 109:4, 20, 29.

Two other transliteration examples

In the Authorised Version of the New Testament we find two transliterated words in the one verse.

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha” 1 Cor.16:22

“Anathema” means ‘to be set aside’ or in this case maybe, ‘excommunicated’ or ‘accursed’. This word can refer to anything consecrated to the temple of a false god. Maybe this is the underlying message; if you don’t love Jesus then you may as well dedicate yourself to a false god.

“Maranatha” is an Aramaic word meaning ‘our Lord has come’ or simply, ‘our Lord, come!’.

Modern versions of the Bible do varying English translations of these words.
