

# Bible Versions

**Is there any specific Bible version that you recommend that I use? I am new to the Messianic movement.**

Two valuable resources that we recommend if you are brand new to the Messianic movement, that you will probably find extremely helpful, are the *Complete Jewish Bible* translated by David H. Stern (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998) and the *Hebrew-Greek Key New American Standard* edited by Spiros Zodhiates (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1994). The CJB will familiarize you with many of the Hebrew words and Hebraic terms used throughout the broad Messianic community, and the *Hebrew-Greek Key NASB* has many words keyed to Strong's Concordance, with a Strong's dictionary in the Bible for easy reference.<sup>1</sup> There are also the two companion dictionaries, the *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003) and the *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Spiros Zodhiates, ed., Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), for Hebrew and Greek, respectively. These are some resources that will be most useful for any Messianic home, and/or those who are investigating their Hebraic and Jewish Roots on some level.

Most of the articles and publications produced by our ministry employ the **New American Standard, Updated Edition** (1995) as their default Bible version. This is because the NASU is widely considered to be the most literal evangelical Christian version available on the market. (The New American Standard Bible or NASB is the 1977 edition, which still employs some Elizabethan period English via the King James and American Standard versions, which has been removed from the NASU.) The NASU represents a theologically conservative and evangelical translation ideology, and the NASB and NASU together have a longstanding usage in much of Messianic Judaism and the broader Messianic world. An advantage of the NASU over many other Christian versions, is how *italics* are employed to denote most added words (usually "to be" verbs understood by Hebrew or Greek construction), pronouns and possessive pronouns for the Father and Son are capitalized, and SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS are used in the New Testament to indicate most Old Testament quotations or allusions.

Other major Bible versions that you will encounter our ministry use in a secondary capacity, include, but are not limited to, the Revised Standard Version (1952)/New Revised Standard Version (1989)/English Standard Version (2001) family, the New International Version (1984)/Today's New International Version (2005), and the Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004). The two major Jewish versions you will see us use are the Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999) by the Jewish Publication Society, and the ArtScroll Tanach (1996). Another Messianic version that has been released only very recently, is the Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible (2014), which we appreciate given its overlapping qualities with the NASB/NASU and NIV. Our ministry does appreciate how some of the newer versions do employ various degrees of inclusive language, such as using the clearer "humanity" or "humankind" instead of "man," "people" instead of "men," and "brothers and sisters" instead of just "brothers" when a mixed audience of males and females is definitely intended.

Ultimately, every English Bible translation has its limits. This is why we encourage everyone to have a wide array of useful tools to understand Scripture, including Hebrew and Greek lexicons, Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, and good commentaries. An English translation of the Bible cannot teach you how to read the Scriptures, nor can it investigate proper background and cultural issues germane to the ancient time period, the potential issues surrounding an intended audience of a text, and especially give you hints as to the relevant ancient literature that serves in a secondary or tertiary role for a reader understanding a text.

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<sup>1</sup> We do not recommend that you become too attached to either Strong's Concordance or the rather incomplete Strong's Concordance dictionary, though. Consult the author's article "Getting Beyond Strong's Concordance" for a useful discussion of various Hebrew and Greek language tools (appearing in *Confronting Critical Issues*).