

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: *Greek New Testament*
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: *King James Version*
Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: *Septuagint*
m. Mishnah
MT: *Masoretic Text*
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJSB: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*
OT: *Old Testament*
REB: *Revised English Bible* (1989)
RSV: *Revised Standard Version* (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
TNIV: *Today's New International Version* (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: *United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition*
v(s). *verse(s)*
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: *Latin Vulgate*
YLT: *Young's Literal Translation* (1862/1898)
WMB: *World Messianic Bible* (2020)

Bible Versions, Messianic

I have seen a variety of Messianic Bible versions on the market. Is there any particular one which you recommend? What is your opinion of them?

There are a wide variety of Bible versions available on the market, which to various degrees have been produced with a Messianic audience in mind. Some of them are good, and some of them are questionable, perhaps no different than the many Christian Bible versions which are available today. Some of them represent a good, conservative theological position, and affirm foundational doctrines of the faith, and some of them may skew foundational doctrines of the faith.

The most commonly encountered Messianic version today, used within a great deal of Messianic Judaism and many sectors of the independent Messianic movement, has to be the **Complete Jewish Bible** translated by David H. Stern (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998). The CJB uses a wide array of Hebrew and Jewish terms, including personal names of Biblical characters, place names, and terms used for ritual objects and practices. “Torah” is most often used for “Law.” One feature of the CJB which all readers need to be aware of, is that even though it is commonly used throughout the Messianic world, it is nevertheless a paraphrased version, and is not as literal as Christian versions such as the NASB/NASU, RSV/NRSV/ESV, or even NIV/TNIV, and because of this, our ministry has only used the CJB in a secondary capacity. It is most appreciated, though, that the reasons for some of Stern’s renderings are offered in his valuable companion, the *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995).

In 2014 the **Tree of Life Version** was released, a new Messianic version of the complete Bible. The TLV is the product of a translation and editing team, with wide array of well known Messianic Jewish leaders having served on its board. The TLV uses far less Hebrew and Jewish terms than the CJB, sticking primarily to Yeshua, Messiah, Torah, and various ritual items. More customary English names like Jacob (for James), Peter, John, Paul, and Moses have been used. Those Bible readers who are used to a relatively literal version like the NASB/NASU, or even a dynamic equivalency version like the NIV, should very much appreciate the TLV. The TLV can be easily used as a close second version, alongside of the more well known Protestant Bible versions employed today.

Aside from the Complete Jewish Bible, which is used throughout mainline Messianic Judaism, the next most common version one is likely to encounter is *The Scriptures*, published by the Institute for Scripture Research of Northridge, South Africa. It should be noted that the ISR Scriptures has both a 1998 second edition and 2009 third edition, with some changes made in the third edition. Unlike versions such as the CJB or TLV, the ISR Scriptures represents a Sacred Name theology, seen by their usage of YHWH/YHVH in Hebrew letters for the Divine Name YHWH/YHVH, instead of either “the LORD,” “ADONAI” (CJB), or “HASHEM” (ATS) per the widescale Jewish practice of not speaking God’s proper name. The Hebrew title Elohim is used instead of “God.” Hebrew character and place names, as witnessed in versions like the CJB, are also used in the ISR Scriptures (even though the exact transliterations might differ). Unlike either the CJB or TLV, though, the Institute for Scripture Research has not been forthright in saying who served on its translation or editorial team, and as they have stated on their website (isr-messianic.org), “The ISR will not respond to doctrinal questions.” This means that there is no real way of knowing why certain things in the ISR Scriptures have been rendered the way they are. Usage of the ISR Scriptures has doubtlessly grown because of how versions like the CJB were paraphrased, and the ISR Scriptures was far more literal. Still, because of the Institute for Scripture Research not holding to any definite doctrinal views, we must advise a high level of caution in using it.

Many of the other “Messianic” Bible versions one may encounter (more likely being versions produced by the Sacred Name Only movement), tend to be little more than modified editions of the King James Version, with the Elizabethan period English updated with more modern terminology—and then with selective edits here and there, sometimes with Hebraic terms subjectively inserted with no substantial theological justification. Furthermore, a few of those who produce Messianic Bible versions exhibit no formal training in the Biblical languages of Hebrew or Greek, and appear to be nothing more than eclectic re-writings of Scripture to fit some kind of sectarian bias. Interesting renderings of various controversial verses may be offered, but they are frequently not joined with any kind of strong theological or exegetical defense, in the form of associated research papers or substantial commentary.

Generally speaking, if today’s Messianic Believers can be aware of some specific places within mainline Christian versions like the NASB/NASU or the RSV/ESV—which tend to reflect an anti-Torah bias—then they should be able to get by for most reading fairly well. Verses to definitely be aware of in the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament include:

- **Mark 7:19**, where “*Thus He* declared all foods clean” (NASU) appears, but where the clause *katharizōn panta ta brōmata* can be legitimately rendered as “cleansing all food” (TLV) or “purging all the foods,” referring to the process of excretion.
- **Romans 10:4**, where the word *telos* is often rendered as “end,” in “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness” (NASU), has widely been recognized in theological studies as also meaning “goal” (CJB, Common English Bible, TLV), or at the very least something akin to “culmination” (TNIV), and not necessarily “end” equaling “termination.”
- **Romans 14:14**, where Paul said, “I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean” (NASU), the term rendered as “unclean” is *koinos*, which “**pert. to being of little value because of being common, common, ordinary, profane**” (BDAG).¹ In the food lists of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, the Hebrew *tamei* or “unclean” was rendered as *akathartos* in the Septuagint, which is obviously not the term which appears in Romans 14:14. Food to be regarded as *koinos*, then, should be regarded as either “unholy” (TLV) or “common” (LITV), which may be viewed as “that which ordinary people eat, in contrast to those of more refined tastes” (BDAG).² The situation in view would then have pertained to various human judgments about what was acceptable for eating, but did not have to do with the validity or abrogation of the kosher dietary laws.
- **Ephesians 2:15**, for most Bible readers, says that the work of the Messiah has been responsible for “abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which* is the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances” (NASU). Much of how one approaches what *ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin* actually is, is in recognizing how *nomos* or “law” does not always mean the Mosaic Torah or Pentateuch, and how *dogma* can relate to “*that which seems to one, an opinion, dogma*” (LS),³ or “**something that is taught as an established tenet or statement of belief, doctrine, dogma**” (BDAG).⁴ With the barrier wall of the Jerusalem Temple in view (Ephesians 2:14), and with this not at all specified by the Mosaic Torah, extra-Biblical regulations were instead targeted here. It would not at all be inappropriate to then render *ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin* as “the *religious* Law of commandments in dogmas” (my translation), with an italic “*religious*” specifying that man-made religious law and not Biblical law was in view.

¹ Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 552.

² Ibid.

³ H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 207.

⁴ BDAG, 254.

Bible Versions, Messianic

Other areas of potential disagreement among English Bible translations, in either the Tanach or Apostolic Scriptures, would then be those places where a spectrum of all interpreters and expositors—including Messianic teachers—do not necessarily see eye-to-eye. This is why there are a series of single translator/author versions on the market, such as *The New Testament in Modern English* by J.B. Phillips or *The Kingdom New Testament* by N.T. Wright. Robert Alter has released a specialty edition of the Tanach. The number of speciality editions of the Holy Scriptures, surely continues to multiply.