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A Look at Biblical Hebrew

The Masoretic Text

בראשית
Genesis

1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת

הָאָרֶץ:

2 וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתְּהָ תְהוֹ וְבָהּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם

וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי־אוֹר:

4 וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאוֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים

בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ:

5 וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד: פ

6 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהִי

מַבְדִּיל בֵּין מַיִם לְמַיִם:

An Interlinear Translation

CHAPTER 1

1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם
 ב · ראשית ברא אלהים את השמים
 in · beginning create^a God the · heaven^b [obj]
 the · heaven [obj] God (he) created in · the beginning (of)¹

וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

ו · אות ה · ארץ
 and · [obj] the · earth
 the · earth and · [obj]

2 וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתְּהָ תְהוֹ וְבָהּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ
 ה · ארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך
 and · the · earth and · empty formless be and · the · earth
 and · the · earth and · empty formless she·it was

וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם
 ו · רוח אלהים מרחפת על פני תהום
 and · spirit/breath^c the deep over · surface
 God and · the spirit|breath of the deep over · the surface of

וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ:

ה · מים ה · ארץ
 the · waters over · surface
 the · waters over · the surface of [was] hovering

A Look at Biblical Greek

The Greek Text

ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ

1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. **2** οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. **3** πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν **4** ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. **5** καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

6 Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος, ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννης. **7** οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ. **8** οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.

An Interlinear Translation

1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ ἐν ἀρχῇ εἰμί ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος εἰμί πρὸς ὁ θεός καὶ
In beginning was the word and the word was toward the God and

θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. **2** οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. **3** πάντα θεός εἰμί ὁ λόγος οὗτος εἰμί ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς ὁ θεός πᾶς
God was the word This was in beginning toward the God All

δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν . ὃ
through him became and without him became but not one thing That

γένετο **4** ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν
γίνομαι ἐν αὐτός ζωὴ εἰμί καὶ ὁ ζωὴ εἰμί ὁ φῶς ὁ
had become in him life was and the life was the light of the

ἀνθρώπων **5** καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ
ἀνθρώπων καὶ ὁ φῶς ἐν ὁ σκοτία φαίνω καὶ ὁ σκοτία αὐτός
men and the light in the dark shines and the dark it

οὐ κατέλαβεν .
οὐ καταλαμβάνω
not overtook

An Historical Effort

“I had perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to stablish the lay people in any truth, except the scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text.”



—William Tyndale, *Preface to the Pentateuch*, 1530

Milestones in Translation (1)

- **Septuagint (LXX):** Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures completed between the 1st and 3rd century AD
- **Vulgate:** Latin Translation of the entire Bible completed in the 4th century, eventually becomes the basis for translations officially sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church

Milestones in Translation (2)

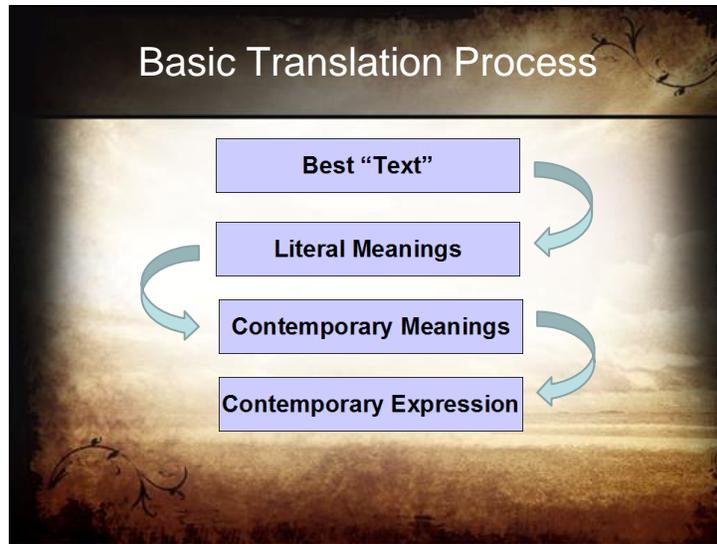
- **John Wycliff's English Bible:** Completed between 1380 and 1384, Translated from Latin Vulgate. Posthumously declared a heretic.
- **Erasmus' Greek New Testament:** Originally Published in 1516, first modern attempt to reconstruct the original Greek text, later became known as the "received text," and was the basis for the King James translation.

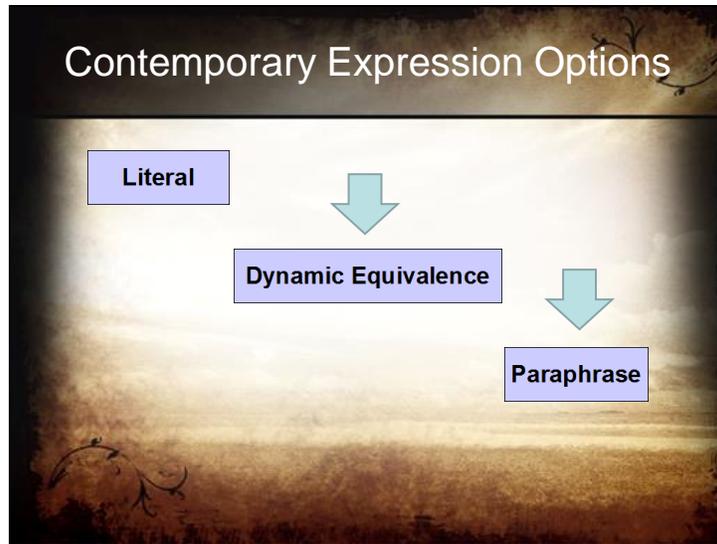
Milestones in Translation (3)

- **Luther's German Bible:** Fully printed in 1534, a Reformation attempt to put the Bible in the hands of the common person; Translated from original languages.
- **King James Bible:** First published in 1611 as the official version of the Church of England.

Milestones in Translation (4)

- **Wycliff Bible Translators:** founded in 1942 by William Townsend. Now claim some 740 translations, affecting more than 80M people.
- **RSV (1952), NASB (1967), NIV (1978, etc):** First major modern attempts to use later manuscript evidence and use more contemporary English





A Sample: Literal

1 Παῦλος δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφωρισμένος εἰς
Paul slave of Christ Jesus called delegate having been separated into
εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, **2** ὃ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις
good message of God who promised before through the spokesmen of him in writings holy
3 περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, **4**
about the son of him the one having become from seed David according to flesh

A Sample: Dynamic Equivalent

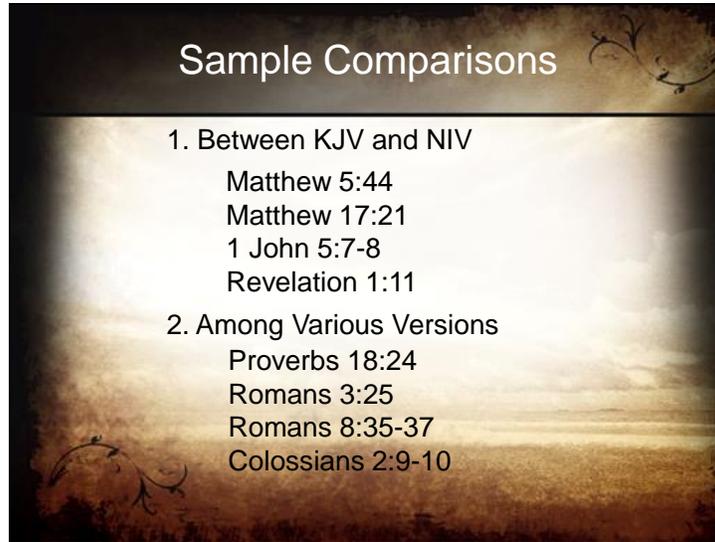
NIV Translation: Romans 1:1-3

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David....”

A Sample: Paraphrase

The Message: Romans 1:1-3

“I, Paul, am a devoted slave of Jesus Christ on assignment, authorized as an apostle to proclaim God's words and acts. I write this letter to all the believers in Rome, God's friends. The sacred writings contain preliminary reports by the prophets on God's Son. His descent from David roots him in history...”



Sample Comparisons

1. Between KJV and NIV
 - Matthew 5:44
 - Matthew 17:21
 - 1 John 5:7-8
 - Revelation 1:11
2. Among Various Versions
 - Proverbs 18:24
 - Romans 3:25
 - Romans 8:35-37
 - Colossians 2:9-10

Concluding Thoughts

- While we will naturally drift toward a favorite translation, we should always bear in mind that this is a “translation” and that other translations are also valid.
- Deeper study requires a closer touch with the original language, but this does not require us all to know Hebrew and Greek. Consulting study bibles and various other translations will help in this area.
- Don't forget the internet. A lot of free translations are available there. For example:
www.biblegateway.com and www.scripture4all.org