In view of the heated controversies that have been precipitated by the new translation of the Torah, TRADITION has invited Professor Sidney Hoenig, an eminent historian and scholar, to prepare a preliminary evaluation which may serve as the basis for further discussion in these pages. Dr. Hoenig, a member of our editorial board, is Professor of Jewish History at the Graduate School of Yeshiva University and serves as director of Yeshiva's Department of Adult Education. A noted author, Dr. Hoenig has written a number of major books as well as numerous articles on biblical and historical subjects. His essay on the "Halakhic Implications of the Dead Sea Scrolls," appeared in the Fall 1958 issue of this journal.

NOTES ON THE NEW TRANSLATION OF THE TORAH — A PRELIMINARY INQUIRY

The appearance of a new translation of the Torah has always been an occasion for rejoicing. Philo thus relates: "Therefore, even to the present day, there is held every year a feast and general assembly in the island of Pharos, whither not only Jews but multitudes of others cross the water, both to do honor to the place in which the light of that version first shone out, and also to thank God for the good gift so old, yet ever young."¹ The joy perhaps is due to the inner feeling that by means of a translation one comes closer to God’s word and understanding of the meaning of Holy Writ, thereby "serving Him with joy."

The publication of a new translation in any age also reveals historically the growth of Jewish communities, their achievements and affluence. It points to Jewish life reaching such a

status which demands a new translation or perhaps even new interpretation for a new generation. Thus we see the affluent ancient community of Alexandria, the growth in medieval Moslem countries, and the advanced structure of Jewish life in our own modern day. On the other hand, a translation also betokens factors of assimilation which seep into a Jewish community where many persons are unable to read the Bible in the original and are lacking the knowledge of Hebrew and Judaism.

Translations further augur new epochs in Jewish life and world civilization. The Septuagint aided in blending Greek and Jewish thought into Hellenism, giving rise to Christianity. Saadia's translation ushered in the glorious Spanish-Arabic period where Jews became the mediators between the Orient and Occident, and Mendelssohn's German translation strengthened and encouraged the Haskalah Movement.

With this historic background and precedent, the publication of a new translation of the Torah* in our own day naturally becomes the concern of all — clergy and laity, scholar and general reader. One begins to reflect: What will the new translation mean, or set forth for American Jewry?

The present translation issued by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) seems to have taken Rav Saadia Gaon as its guide; in fact the Preface notes on one point "... the present translation is merely following the example of Saadia." This is commendable, for Saadia's chief thought was to present the Bible in a rational, intelligible form as a book accessible to all, to Muhammedans as well as to Jews who had not sufficient learning to understand the original. He aimed at the greatest possible clarity and consistency and did not hesitate to insert words and phrases, or to divide and connect verses and sentences in his own way, when necessary to convey to the reader the intended sense. Hence he did not always bind himself to the rules of the Masorah, to grammar, or to common usage.2

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All of the above is also true of the present new translation: "We are the first authorized publicly sponsored translation of the Bible that has broken with the past, with unimaginative and courage-less conformity to the past. We have rejected the age-old convention of translating the Hebrew word for word, even letter for letter sometimes, mechanically into English." Thus the present translation is in response to a need "to make it more easily understood, substituting modern terms for words and expressions that have become archaic or unfamiliar . . . ."

It is known that scholars earnestly seeking the truth have spent close to ten years in their research and painstaking writing of the translation. Every word or phrase was carefully weighed over the academic table. There must have been many a battle until the final word was written down. In the files, the editor and his assistants no doubt possess all of their notes explaining their disagreement, vote, and final decision.

It is self-evident that difficulties in translation always persist. There has never been any translation that was not attacked and derided. One must only remember the rabbinic comments on the Septuagint (LXX) translation, where the event is compared to the day of the Worship of the Golden Calf. Yet tradition and history recognize that despite the difficulty, one cannot ignore the need for translation. Thus Ben Sira notes in his prologue . . . "You are urged therefore to read with good will and attention, and to be indulgent in cases where, despite our diligent labor in translating, we may seem to have rendered some phrases imperfectly. For what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have exactly the same sense when translated into another language. Not only this work, but even the law itself, the prophecies, and the rest of the books differ not a little as originally expressed."

So, also, when Jerome composed his translation he wrote:

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5. Soferim, I, 5. See also Megillat Taanit (8th day of Tevet): "When darkness descended on the world for three days."
"This is a labor of piety, but at the same time one of dangerous presumption; for in judging others I will myself be judged by all; and how dare I change the language of the world’s old age and carry it back to the days of its childhood? Who is there, whether learned or unlearned, who, when he takes up the volume in his hands and discovers that what he reads does not agree with what he is accustomed to, will not break out at once in a loud voice and call me a sacrilegious forger, for daring to add something to the ancient books, to make changes and corrections in them?"7 Such outcry, unfortunately, has already come.

Today the imprecations and bans have been heaped upon the translators and aspersions cast upon their religiosity.8 This is regrettable, for surely, it is predicated, translators act and serve with integrity, seeking the truth as they see it, in their scholarly judgment; striving, thus, to produce a commendable translation on the basis of their research.

But attack of the “new” is a human frailty. Even in ancient days there must have been some uproar which many sought to curb, for we read in the Letter of Aristeas:

When the rolls had been read the priests and the elders of the translators and some of the corporate body and the leaders of the people rose up and said, “Inasmuch as the translation has been well and piously made and is in every respect accurate, it is right that it should remain in its present form and that no revision of any sort

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7. Jerome (c. 384) to Pope Damasus (Cf. F. C. Grant, Translating the Bible, p. 38).

8. To quote Gittin 45b, — Rashi’s view and the discrepancy noted by R. Zevi Chayas or compare this with Maimonides’ notation — and then include translations into this category of Sefer Torah, giving translations the dignity of a Sefer Torah, may be a guzmah — farfetched.

The views of Rabbenu Hananel and Rashi in Shabbat 116a are also to be regarded, with reference to this problem.

Apparently “the Sefer Torah in the Hebrew tongue and “translations” cannot be put into the same class for purposes of imprecation or evaluation of sanctity.
take place." When all had assented to what had been said, they bade that an imprecation be pronounced, according to their custom, upon any who should revise the text by adding or transposing anything whatever in what had been written down, or by making any exclusion; and in this they did well, so that the work might be preserved imperishable and always.9

Our present purpose is to see whether a full consent (haska-mah) can be given the 1963 New Text or whether revision is necessary. Above all, a spirit of fairness ought to prevail, even when there is sharp disagreement. Scoffing from any corner, becoming emotional over, or vindictive about, the translation, can hardly be considered gentlemanly or in keeping with that objective, dispassionate attitude that is the hallmark of genuine scholarship.

The present translation has been commissioned by JPS; it has not been "authorized" by the Jewish community, nor by any Jewish denomination like the Revised Standard Version (RSV) which "was authorized by vote of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A. in 1951" (See Preface, RSV, p. v). Perhaps in years to come this NT (New Translation) may be accepted in Jewish homes and Synagogues even as the old JPS Bible had been, with all of its inaccuracies and deviation from rabbinic norm and despite the issur of the Agudat ha-Rabonim then, as recorded by J. D. Eisenstein:

The magnate Jacob H. Schiff of New York had contributed fifty thousand dollars to the Jewish Publication Society of Philadelphia for the purpose of an English translation of the Bible in accordance with the spirit of Israel. However, the two volumes which have already appeared, Psalms by Dr. Kohut and Micah by Dr. M. L. Margolis — were not satisfying. The writer of these lines (namely J. D. Eisenstein) in his reviews has demonstrated the deficiencies of this translation in the light of the Masorah and the spirit of Judaism. No doubt the other volumes will not be much better. This is because the scholarly members of the Committee designated by the Society to supervise this translation are Reform Rabbis and others known as Liberal Orthodox, young and old. The majority of them does not understand the nature of the Hebrew language and the whole spirit of true Judaism is foreign to them; hence they are not fit at all for this work.

As a result of a motion by Rabbi Hayim Hershensohn before the Orthodox Agudath ha-Rabonim on the 26th of Sivan 5673 (1913) it was decided to protest against this English translation. In this protest, the Rabbis aim not to argue about the mode of the translation, — to find therein deficiencies. Even if the work were perfect, it would not be acceptable since they (i.e., these Rabbis) are specifically opposed to the translation: It shall not be considered an authorized (official) translation of the people of Israel as the Luther translation is for Germans, or the King James for Englishmen. This project, the members of the Agudah held, is in opposition to the spirit of Israel which disregards translations in general; as even concerning the Septuagint, did the Sages assert, that darkness descended upon the earth for three days. The Rabbis therefore announce that the Translation and the commentaries of these translators are their own undertakings. All Israel has no responsibility to them, in any manner. For the people of Israel the only official or authorized translations are Targum Onkelos and the Commentaries on the Bible as based on the Talmud.¹⁰

In the Jewish Forum volumes of 1928, a series of three articles (plus an additional note), called “The Conservative Halacha”¹¹ was written by the late Rabbi Samuel Gerstenfeld, one of the Roshe-ha-Yeshiva of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary.

Rabbi Gerstenfeld focused his attention on the legal parts of the five Books of Moses: “I must say that in this translation is found material sufficient to construct a new sect and germs enough to breed many a change in the religious life of Israel . . . Besides the objections to the detailed variations from the oral law, the act of differing in itself is to be objected to as a gross error.”

Rabbi Gerstenfeld listed many passages to which Orthodox Judaism objects. He shows “many flaws in the rendition of the Divine Name . . . and grave deviations from Halacha.” He sums up: “These are the variations from the oral law which I detected during my cursory reading . . . May these notes offend no one but may they serve a useful purpose . . . May He in His Goodness open the eyes of His erring children to see the truth of the oral part of the Divine Torah so that no schism be created in Israel . . .”¹²

¹⁰. Otzar Yisrael, X, 309.
¹². Ibid., Nov. 1928, p. 576.
The fact that the criticism of 1917 has been forgotten, or that many observant rabbinic scholars of that decade refrained from retorting, or because of lack of knowledge of English they ignored that rendition in their houses of worship does in no wise mean that, due to its popular acceptance in the course of years, one cannot today still inveigh against it. The silence over the 1917 translation with its errors cannot serve as an argument for further silence or for full acceptance of the new translation which is generally believed to be superior to the old one.

At present, the criticism is given with the viewpoint of "tikkun," betterment for the future. We come not to condemn, but also not to commend. Moreover, objection should never be raised without also suggestion; one should not destroy if he cannot build. It is in this mood that these Preliminary Notes are collated.

Analysis and evaluation of the New Bible Translation of the Torah fall into seven different categories which are discussed in the pages which follow: 1) Language 2) Scholarly research 3) Masorah 4) Tetragrammaton (Lord) 5) Rabbinic tradition 6) Comparison with recent translations and 7) Procedure in preparation of the Text. The conclusions reached are presented with the sincere and fervent thought of maintaining the Bible as the Eternal Book of Israel and humanity, for "the Torah which Moses had commanded us, is the heritage of the Congregation of Jacob" (Deut. 33:4).

I

The general reader will be concerned first with understandability, clarity and intelligibility of the translation. Numerous examples of such excellent passages with easy flow of expression, will be found, such as Gen. 6:2: "divine beings" instead of "sons of God"; Numbers 6:26: "The Lord deal kindly and graciously with you" instead of "The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee."13

Most commendable are the many fine, concise, clear statements which follow traditional interpretation and do not be-

13. "Shalom" (peace) in the Priestly benediction is rendered in a note as "friendship."
fuddle the reader as to exact meaning. As examples we have:

Ex. 10:10: “Clearly, you are bent on mischief,”¹⁴ which follows the Targum.¹⁵
Ex. 12:41: “to the very day,”¹⁶ following Rashi.¹⁷
Ex. 13:8: “and you shall explain to your son”¹⁸ as interpreted by Mekhilta.
Ex. 13:14: “and when in time to come, your son asks,”¹⁹ as explained by Rashi.²⁰
Ex. 12:11: “Passover offering”²¹ (or the note, “protective offering”) follows Rashi, Targum, and Jonathan ben Uziel.²²

Other examples of such fine understanding of the text are:

Ex. 19:12-13: “Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death; no hand shall touch him, but he shall be either stoned or pierced through.”²³ This means that no one shall touch the person. He shall be stoned or pierced through (from afar), as explained by Ibn Ezra and Rashbam. Ex. 19:10: Warn them to “stay pure,”²⁴ as explained by Nachmanides,²⁵ is better than the old rendition of the JPS: “sanctify them.” Further samples of interpretation may be also seen in Gen. 49:21:²⁶

JPS: Naphthali is a hind let loose. He giveth goodly words.
AT (American Translation): Naphthali is a free ranging deer that bears fawns.
RSV: Naphthali is a hind let loose that bears comely fawns (note: or who gives beautiful words).
NT: NaphthaIi is a hind let loose which yields lovely fawns.

The usage of the Aramaic m-r as “lamb” (doe) instead of the Hebrew homonym “word” is very fitting to the context.

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¹⁴ רוא כי רית עץ פינוים.
¹⁵ ביבא ראותש סבירין לעפונים.
¹⁶ ייזה ב Artículo חובה.
¹⁷ לא עבוב חורף עיו.
¹⁸ ונתקית לכת.
¹⁹ ... כי ישלאם בכל חור.
²⁰ ניס חמה ששווה לאמור גון.
²¹ מפת חמא.
²² הופל, חומ, חיות.
²³ לא תן בו ידכי סקול פסקל ואור היהו.
²⁴ נוכחשו הים פAJOR.
²⁵ הנושר כולה קטארה מקדוש.
²⁶ כחליל אולתי, שלודויה הדרתך זכרית שפת.
Translations derived from Ugaritic affinities also enhance the meaning of the biblical text. Thus Ex. 15:2: “The Lord is my strength and might,” stems from the Ugaritic d-m-r, “strength” and not the Hebrew z-m-r, “song.” Further examples of “reading ease” are:

Ex. 2:6: “when she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying.”

Ex. 8:5: Moses said to Pharaoh, “you may have this triumph over me: for what time shall I plead.”

Ex. 9:34: “Pharaoh reverted to his guilty ways, as did his courtiers.”

Other evidences of modern improvement based upon meaning of words may be commended, as in the case of Deut. 2:13: “Up now! Cross the wadi Zered” or Gen. 49:14: “Issachar is a strong boned ass, crouching between the saddle bags.” Though the Targum renders mishpetaaim as “boundaries,” it is Seforno who hints at “saddlebags,” which the NT translators may have used, though the usage of the same Mishpetaaim in the Song of Deborah may mean sheep folds.

Simplicity in using English words may likewise be seen in Gen. 25:27; but, one may inquire: was Jacob a mild man (as rendered in NT) or a sincere, perfect individual? The tam of Jacob or tamim of Noah (correctly rendered as “righteousness”) surely cannot be mildness; such usage of tam may be considered a colloquialism, a popular folk usage, as in the Yiddish.

The multitude of gratifying renditions with clarity, which naturally one cannot list in an appraisal, are however marred at times by puzzling phrases. Such, for example, is Ex. 19:19:


28. התואות אשת נחלות abbreviation not in text.
29. התפארת עני, לאמר את הגים כל.
30. יוכבד לבר והושבונות.
31. נחל זרד.
32. בון המשפתיות.
33. המקווה.
34. ר僻ך בני המקהלות השפתיים לשמא.
35. ינוקא שימ חוה.
36. נא איש ברום המים חוה.
NT: “God answered him in thunder”37 So also is the translation by RSV. However, JPS has “answered him by a voice.” The Commentaries remark — “in the sound of the Shofar.” Rashbam explains “in a loud voice to overcome the sound of the Shofar,” a rendition which Moses Mendelssohn adopts in his Biur and translates as “Gott antwortete ihm mit lauter Stimme.” Joseph Hertz, too, explains “God answered with a voice loud enough to surpass the ever increasing sound of the horn.” One may therefore ask, what is the source for the translation “in thunder?”

Nevertheless no criticism can or should be made of any usage by the translators till one sees whether a text which at the surface seems peculiar in its rendition has as its basis some medieval commentary. The translators have truly displayed their erudition in their consultation and probing into the medieval commentators. Alas, that the Notes and Sources were not given together with the translated text! The question arises — if a medieval commentator, like Ibn Ezra, Kimchi, or Rashbam, has a strange interpretation, are we to ignore the usual, if it is still intelligible and also supported in other sources such as Talmud or Midrash? Choosing the rare (or chiddush) is not always the desideratum.

Comparison of these translated passages or of the poetic selections, as the Song at the Red (elongated e) Sea,38 with the renditions in the old JPS or King James version will reveal superiority in the present simplicity of language, though one may disagree about “poetic elegance.” The attempt is commendable, but this is not the “final word.” English stylists and those concerned with conveying “understandability” may find many passages confusing and unacceptable. One may ask: is it modern English to say: “Adam knew (or “experienced”) his wife and she conceived.” Why not say “cohabited” or “had conjugal relations with,” if intelligibility and modernity are the criteria. The American Translation, seeking all of the same purposes, was bold enough to translate “had intercourse with.”

37. ינוגד בקוה.
38. ינוגד בקוה.
On the other hand, if we seek elevating, lofty speech, is it spiritually uplifting to say in Balaam's speech (Numbers 23:8): "How can I damn whom God has not damned."  

Moreover, it is apparent that just as in ancient translations the attempt was to do away with anthropomorphisms, so here one notes an attempt to do away with a sense of harshness. The following passages show the trend in Ex. 20:5: Instead of "hate" we read reject; "sin" — guilt; "jealous" — impassioned; in Ex. 18:16,22: "judge" — arbitrate, exercise authority; The word "hate" is even deleted in the new translation of Genesis 50:15:

JPS: It may be that Joseph will hate us and requite us all the evil.  
RSV: It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all evil.  
But NT: What if Joseph seeks to pay us back for all the wrong.

The following examples of changes of words will also show the modern trend, as compared with the other translations:

Gen. 4:10: AT and NT — Hark, your brother's blood cries.  
RSV — the voice of your brother's blood is crying.

One may ask: Is Kol, voice or hark? Likewise, Ex. 21:1: "These are the norms." Are norms laws?

Sometimes to give intelligibility, Hebrew words are dropped or others not found in the text are inserted: Thus, Gen. 44:19: My Lord asked his servants, 'Have you a father or another brother.'

At times there is even a reversal in expression from the Hebrew idiom: Gen. 44:26 RSV, "for we cannot see the man's face." So also 43:3. But in NT we read "for we may not show our faces to the man." "Do not let me see your faces." (Note: lit. "Do not see my face."). Similarly in Gen. 27:18: "Which
of my sons are you" is the translation, instead of the Hebrew, "who are you, my son."

Especially interesting, as one of the peculiarities of translation, is the different usage of a similar word, e.g., k-l-l (curse) in the various passages.

Lev. 19:14: You shall not insult the deaf; RSV: you shall not curse the deaf.
Lev. 20:9: If any man repudiates his father or mother.

The word k-l-l basically means "to make light, dishonor"; k-b-d, "to give weight, honor"; hence, rabbinic law (Sanhedrin 85a) notes that even after death there may be "no dishonor of a parent." This rule is aimed as a continuity of respect from son to father, back to early generations, thus preserving the weightiness and respect of ancient tradition. The phrase "repudiate" perhaps bears this connotation, especially in its meaning "to refuse to acknowledge, disclaim, disavow, refuse to have dealings with, reject; to put away, abandon, renounce, to refuse to accept as authentic, such as to repudiate authority." But the word curse has even stronger implications for those who break tradition. As Ibn Ezra notes: the repetition in the verse of "he has cursed his father and mother" means he has done a most "abhorrent act." "Repudiate" does not imply such bloodguilt; "curse" does.

One can go through every page of the New Translation with a fine comb and point out lack of clarity, or inconsistency in many passages, despite its superior simplicity. But no journal is the place for such detailed study. Moreover, reactions to various translations are in the realm of "de gustibus non est disputandum."

The question still unanswered is: Should the Bible be in a lofty, inspiring language that one is accustomed to find in the

47. נא קלה
48. ומכם אביכם כלם קלא ממומ חויות הבינה עשה
49. If the usage of k-l-l, having other meanings besides "curse," is based on Akkadian Code Laws, it is absolutely wrong and inconsistent with Jewish tradition to prefer such interpretations to the rabbinic interpretations — when preparing a Bible edition for Jews.
Bible, or should it be presented in the vulgar, profane language, the *lingua franca*. (These terms are used not in derision but as in Vulgate, *chol*).\(^{50}\) One is struck by the fact that the AT and RSV retained “Thee” and “Thy” when they occur in language addressed to God since they convey a more reverent feeling than the blunt *you* (cf. AT, preface VI). Thus Gen. 3:11: RSV I heard the sound of *Thee* in the garden and I was afraid. NT, however, has a similar reading to the AT rendition: I heard the sound of *You* in the garden and I was afraid.\(^{51}\) Besides the awkwardness of the phrase “sound of *you*,” it seems that *Thee* should be used when addressing God and *you* for man, as accepted even by modern Christians. We know that “the Torah speaks in the language of man.”\(^{52}\) Hence, are we to translate both *you* and *You* for Hebrew *atah*?\(^{53}\) Is this modicum to be applied only to the ancient Hebrew or does it also refer to translations in the common language of our contemporaries who seek “intelligibility” when reading a rendition?

Perhaps the scholars who did the spade work, knowing the reason chosen for every word, after the many revisions they made, would have gained immeasureably by submitting this *magnus opus* to a stylist, — to one who appreciates English style and has a feeling for elegance in poetry. Dry scholarship must be whetted with the flavor and flow of literary style. Though Jewish literature abounds in many scholarly descriptions of historic occurrences of our people, *only* a Yehudah Halevi could write the Zionides in an *elegant* style. The question then is, does this new Jewish version also possess elegance, loftiness and sanctity in phrase?

The answer must await the verdict of the *vox populi*.

II

A major item of interest in this new translation is the scholarly research and accuracy. It displays aptly evidences of the new Near East, Akkadian, and Ugaritic studies. Thus the trans-
lation of Genesis 34:10: “You will dwell among us and the land will be open before you; settle, move about,54 and acquire holdings in it” is based upon the Aramaic and Akkadian s-h-r. The new translation, “move about,” based on knowledge of Near East etymology and customs is better than the word trade used in the older translations. It is interesting however that the Aramaic Targum Onkelos renders s-h-r as “trade.” One may then well ask: is the Aramaic-Akkadian source preferable to the Aramaic-Targumic rendition? Moreover, can one trade without moving about freely? Does such rendition truly change our perspective and yield a better understanding of the text?

Another instance of translation for modern understanding is in Numbers 34:3: “Great Sea” is in a note: Mediterranean; “Sea of Chinnereth” is in a note “Sea (or Lake) of Galilee”; but Yam ha-melach55 (in a note, Gen. 14:3 “Salt Sea”) is translated “Dead Sea” in the text. Jews never called it Dead Sea, Yam ha-ma-vet (?); it was always yam-ha-melach, as used by Josephus and others: The Asphalt Sea. Calling the Salt Sea — Dead Sea in the Bible Text is a modernity,56 influenced no doubt by the finding of the Scrolls. A consistency should have been adopted by noting the correct name in the text, and below it the modern name, for the purpose of identification today.

Similarly, in the translations of Numbers 23:10: “Who can count the dust of Jacob; number the dust-clouds of Israel.”57 Old JPS renders: “Who hath counted the dust of Jacob or numbered the stock of Israel.” RSV: “Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel (in note — or dust clouds).” AT: “Who can count Jacob’s masses or number Israel’s myriads.”

In comparison we see that the NT is close to the RSV, except that what is in the note in the RSV is in the text of NT. (Other examples of this practice are given below). No doubt the rendition “dust clouds” is based on scholarly research. The question

54. שב ופשגורות.
55. ים המלח.
57. זומסר אתי רבי יוסלבן.
is, does an academic suggestion in a scholarly paper that r-b-a is a “dust cloud” outweigh r-b-a as seed, stock, or quarter? Moreover, “counting the dust of Jacob” is a biblical idiom; “counting clouds” is not.

There are similar puzzling phrases, as in Ex. 22:17:

AT: “you must not let a sorceress live.”
RSV: “you shall not permit a sorceress to live.”
NT: “you shall not tolerate a sorceress.” (note, lit., “let live”).

The NT text apparently ignores the incident of Saul and the witch of Endor, where the woman said (I Samuel 28:9): “Surely you know what Saul had done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land, to bring about my death.” The Talmud, (Sanhedrin 67a), notes that the punishment was “stoning.” Rashi likewise remarks that there was a death penalty administered by the Court. As such, one may ask: Should not objective truth, pertaining to an ancient practice, be adhered to without “whitewashing by tolerance?” However, if indeed the translators aimed at “whitewashing” or moderating unseemly instances in the Bible, one is puzzled why, Genesis 4:7 is translated, “Sin is a demon at the door,” emphasizing demonology in the Bible. Surely the Jews after Ezra, studying the Bible, did not know of the Akkadian rabisu. The term rovetz, “crouch,” is already commonly used in the Bible, as in Gen. 49:14 and may also stem from a Ugaritic root referring to the main objective in the translation, why read in Ex. 21:6: “His master shall take him before God,” if basically it means “before the judges.”

In general, the use of basic language roots or new knowledge of the Near East may improve “neglected insights” through understanding the mode of living and thinking of the ancient Israelites, but it cannot always be a criterion for exact translation. One wonders why in Ex. 7:1 Aaron is a “spokesman”
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(新型) while in Ex. 15:20 his sister Miriam is recorded as a “prophetess” (nevi'im) and in Num. 11:26, Eldad and Medad “spoke in ecstasy (va-yit-nabu)?

The root k-n-h is used in Gen. 4:1 (re: birth of Cain) to read, “I have gained” in Gen. 14:19 (re: Abraham and Melchizedek) as Creator and in Ex. 15:16 (re: Song at the Sea “whom you have ransomed.” Apparently the Hebrew connotation of k-n-h “possession” could not easily be conveyed throughout by the translators.

Similarly, the root r-r is taken as the basis for the translation in Gen. 3:14: “Banned shall you be from all cattle” and is also applied to Ex. 14:20 “it cast a spell upon the night”; only in a note do we see: “others ‘and it lit up.’” Such freedom of translation, changing light to ban, may lead one to wonder whether Numbers 6:25, traditionally translated as “light up, or shine (His countenance)” should be rendered instead as “ban” bringing it in conformity with Exodus 33:23, “But my face must not be seen.”

Another puzzling usage is Lev. 24:16: “But if he pronounce the name Lord he shall be put to death.” It is true that the context refers to blaspheming and the Targum uses the term yefaresh, “pronounce.” But the Talmud (Sanh. 56a) and such commentators as Rashi (ad loc.) expound upon it and stress that the meaning is curse. Moreover it is awkward to translate “if he pronounce the name Lord, he shall be put to death.” The NT reader is doing this very thing as he reads the text, which is replete with references to the name Lord. Likewise, the translators could have used, as suggested by Rashi, the root k-b-h (instead of n-k-b) as in Numbers 23:8 in the utterance of Bala-
am. It is known that only the High Priest was permitted to announce the Ineffable Name on the Day of Atonement; hence the present NT reading is hazy when it renders as a separate phrase: “but if he pronounces the name Lord, he shall be put to death.” Rather, verses 15 and 16 are one and should for clarity be thus connected: “Anyone who blasphemes his God shall bear his guilt if he pronounces the name Lord: he shall be put to death.”

Moreover, the present rendition of this verse brings to mind Karaitic tendencies as revealed by J. Mann in “An Early Karaic Tract”: “There follows in our work a long discourse about the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton. The writer’s chief contention is that n-k-b in Lev. 24:16 does not mean cursing, as many explain the word, but uttering, pronouncing. Thus the pronunciation of the divine name involves capital punishment.” One surely would not want to regard this NT as Karaitic!

The Preface notes, “In accuracy alone we believe this translation has improved on the first JPS translation in literally hundreds of passages.” To read Gen. 49:22 “Joseph is a wild ass” (from pera) as in AT: “Joseph is a young bull, a young bull at a spring, a wild-ass at Shur,” instead of RSV, or old JPS: “Joseph is a fruitful bough,” may be open to question as to “improvement.” Not every son of Jacob in this blessing is compared to an animal; reference is also made in the blessing to ships and bread; could not vine also be appropriate in the context when one seeks “accuracy?” Deut. 33:17 is not the criterion since Joseph is called there shor (bull), not pera (ass).

One of the questions of accuracy that has already aroused controversy pertains to the use of the word ruach in the opening passage of Genesis; AT renders: “a tempestuous wind raging over the surface” but NT is milder, “a wind from God sweeping over the water.” What prompted the usage of wind instead of spirit was Gen. 8:1 describing the flood: “God caused a wind to blow across the earth and the waters subsided.” It is true that

73. מות אֵין קַמָּה
74. JQR, XII (Jan. 1922), p. 263.
75. בְּנֵי פֹּרְטָה יִהְיֶה.
76. בְּכַל פָּלוֹר.
the Targum renders “a wind before God,” but Rashi makes reference to “the heavenly throne or word of God,” implying the Spirit — and this cannot at all be considered a Christian notion. Interestingly, all other passages in the Pentateuch mentioning ruach elokim (Gen. 41:38; Ex. 31:3; Ex. 35:31, Numbers, 24:2) refer to Spirit and not wind. On the other hand, in the instances of the locust plague (Ex. 10:13) or the quail (Numbers 11:13) we do not find the phrase ruach elokim, but “God drove an east wind” or “a wind went forth from God.”

Objection to spirit in the first verse of Genesis is noted in the JPS publicity on the ground that “it is ‘Christian’ and implies a secondary, or intermediary power participating in the Creation, . . . an implication totally unacceptable to Judaism.” One wonders whether Ruach in the prophetic “Not by might or power by My spirit” is also a non-Jewish spirit. Surely the theological argument against the implication of an “intermediary” is not valid since the Targum already mentions the notion of Memra. Moreover, the notion of Beginning, i.e., Maaseh Bereshit has become a religious concept which tradition enunciates constantly. It is stressed in Mishnah Chagigah. Could not it be maintained in this new translation? Following Rashi’s suggestion, we could easily read: “In the beginning of God’s creation of heaven and earth . . .,” without tampering with tradition and thus retaining Bereshit, In the beginning, as the opening of our Bible.

Another puzzling element in scholarly accuracy, among the many difficult to list here, is Gen. 48:6-7 pertaining to Jacob’s blessings of his grandchildren. Old JPS: Ephraim and Manas-selah, even as Reuben and Simeon shall be mine. And thy issue, that thou begettest after them, shall be thine; they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. AT: . . .

upon receiving their heritage they shall be called by the names of their brothers.

RSV . . . They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. But NT . . . they shall be recorded instead of their brothers in their inheritance (Note — a lit., by the name).

The usage of the phrase “instead of” in lieu of “by the name of” implies that the younger brothers of Ephraim and Manasseh are not to be included (or listed) in the older brothers’ record; rather, their inheritance supplants that of the older brothers; they are to be substitutes. This is not at all so; their inclusion is definitely the meaning of the verse, even as Rashi notes “they are included within Ephraim and Manasseh.” Hence the translation of the NT is wrong here, unless the reading implied is “in the stead” (dialect, place) meaning “within the province of,” i.e., “inclusion.” All this, however, would be contrary to the intent expressed in the Preface. “A translation which is stilted where the original is natural . . . is the very opposite of faithful.”

III

A further point of investigation in this translation is the Masorah. In the Preface, the Editors note that they have followed Saadia Gaon who “joined separate verses of the masoretic text (whose authority he did not question) into single sentences when the sense required it.”

The adoption of Saadía’s method in this translation may be of commendable value when it applies to joining parts of sentences together. But does it also apply to paragraph division, i.e., taking a sentence from one paragraph and inserting it into the next or beginning a paragraph with the middle of a Hebrew verse? There are traditional rules of open (petuchah) and closed (setumah) in the Torah which refers to the mode of paragraph beginnings. This traditional rule was disregarded by the Editors, though Maimonides (Yad, Hilkhot Sefer Torah, 8:3) notes

\[82\]
that any Torah which is not in accordance with the list he gives is not a valid one.  

Thus *petuchah* is ignored: Genesis 2:4-5:  

"...such is the story of heaven and earth as they were created.  
*"When the Lord God made earth and heaven — *no shrub, etc.

Thus NT breaks up the Hebrew sentence, contradictory to the Masorah.

Another example of ignoring the traditional *petuchah* is Ex. 40:34: (p. 175 bottom) where NT joins two Hebrew sentences from two separate paragraphs:

"When Moses had finished the work the cloud covered the tent, etc."  

An example of ignoring *setumah* is in Num. 16:20: (p. 278) where again the NT makes a combination from two adjoining paragraphs:

Then the presence of the Lord appeared to the whole community, and the Lord spoke to Moses . . ."

It is known that in the State of Israel today every effort is being made by Koren Publishers (Jerusalem) to produce a Hebrew Bible following the mode of the Scribes in the Torah. Should not a Jewish version, which is now aimed to give accuracy, also follow such a mode, even in translation for the Jews in the Diaspora?

The translators have followed the consonantal Masorah, apparently at times ignoring vocalization. To their credit, it should be emphasized, caution was followed, as in Gen. 10:10 a note to "Calneh" (a place) reads "better vocalized *we-kh'ullanah, all of them being*" in the land of Shinar. The suggested rendi-
tion was not inserted in the text. The attempt to refrain from changing the text is therefore to their merit. But a change of a letter d to r may be noted in Gen. 22:13: a *ram*;88 and an instance of changed vocalization is seen when one studies a comparison of Lev. 8:31 with 8:35.89

We also find often in translation that the Hebrew passive voice is used instead of the active, such as Gen. 50:8: "their herds were left" or Gen. 50:20 "he (Joseph) was embalmed" or Ex. 18:5: "Jethro . . . brought Moses' sons and wife to him." Though this seemingly is a minor point it may cause much difficulty if ultimately, as planned, the Hebrew text is printed by the side of this new translation.

IV

Another matter of concern is the usage of the word *Lord* as the translation of the Tetragrammaton. Though this mode of rendition is the common translation of *Ado-nai*, as the *Shem ha-va-yah* is pronounced today, stressing *adnut* — Lordship, one feels that the Jewish Publication Society had the opportunity here of making this Bible (The Torah) truly a version in the full Jewish spirit. In the State of Israel it is the practice today with rabbinic sanction, to print the Divine Name in Hebrew texts, by breaking the combination of letters. Instead of utilizing the common usage: *Lord*, why could not the translators have used *Ado-nai* throughout for the Tetragrammaton? It is singularly printed in Hebrew characters in Exodus 6:3 (p. 107) and in English, Exodus 17:5. Instead of the common terminology: *God*, for the translation of *Elokim*, its basic meaning, *Almighty*, could have been now introduced. As such, we would have "*Ado-nai*, our Almighty," — "your Almighty," — "our Almighty." "*Ado-nai* is the Almighty." Such rendition would definitely be more in the Jewish spirit than any other present usage.

Similarly, the phrase (Lev. 22:2) "Mine the Lord's"90 is puzzling because the sentence deals with profaning "My holy

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88. See note a on page 36 of NT.
89. 88. See note a on page 36 of NT.
90. 88. See note a on page 36 of NT.
name.” In the entire context of Leviticus (chapter 22) there is a constant declarative emphasis “I am the Lord.” This is no doubt more majestic in meaning, and better for conveying the thought that the Law emanates as a directive from Ado-nai.

A further perplexity is the omission of the word Israel in Deut. 22:22. It may be an inadvertent error, because the context (Deut. 22:20-23) in a number of repetitions has the phrase “sweep away evil from your midst.” Nevertheless, the middle verse, containing the word Israel, should have been carefully checked before publication, and Israel not deleted.

V

One of the major concerns to the traditional Jew is the rendition of the Bible in accordance with Halakhah and rabbinic tradition. Otherwise its spirit is Sadduceean or Karaitic. The late Rabbi Samuel Gerstenfeld has already pointed this out in his articles on “The Conservative Halacha.” Moreover, in the posthumous volume Eisenstein’s Commentary on the Torah: A defense of the Traditional Jewish Viewpoint, 1960, p. 19. four “examples” of faulty translation in the Jewish Publication Society text are listed:

1 — Ex. 21:19: “on his staff.”
2 — Lev. 23:15: “morrow after the Sabbath.”
3 — Deut. 18:3: “from them that offer a sacrifice.”
4 — Deut. 25:9: “spit in his face.”

Other examples of such questionable renditions may be noted here, leaving a full listing for some future occasion.

Ex. 12:15: “only what every person is to eat,” AT reads “only what every person has to eat” . . . Halakhically this refers even to food for animals, as Rashi indicates. The reading should

\[
\text{תבכיה חרב מויושב. 91.} \\
\text{תבכיה חרב מבכר. 92.} \\
\text{See above notes 11, 12. 93.} \\
\text{המפתוכל ביהי על משלוחה [וֹיִךְ בֵּיתָן]. 94. Subtitled: A defense of the Traditional Jewish Viewpoint, 1960, p. 19. 95.} \\
\text{מסמחת טובות [מסמחת טובות]. 96.} \\
\text{מתכובד חרב. 97.} \\
\text{ירק ופנימי. 98.} \\
\text{אשת יאכל ולא נשמ. 99.} \\
\]
therefore be "only what every being is to eat . . ." RSV has "what every one must eat" which seems to be better, for even the old JPS had the error "save that which every man must eat."

Ex. 12:17: "you shall observe the (feast of) Unleavened Bread." So also JPS and RSV. The text traditionally refers to the matzah, not to the festival. Rabbinically it indicates careful preparation (the watch-over or the vigil) that the matzah does not become susceptible to leavening. The Targum reads petira. Interestingly AT reads "You must observe this command," touching upon the rabbinic concept of Mitzvot, as a play on matzot.

Ex. 12.45: "a resident hireling." Is it a reference to one person or to two? Rabbinic commentaries set it as two. RSV has "sojourner or a native." JPS: "sojourner and hired servant." AT: "serf or laborer."

Ex. 13.4: "you go free on this day in the month of Abib," so also RSV. A note below reads: "on the new moon." So also AT reads: " on the moon of Abib." This note is perplexing for the day definitely refers to the 15th of the month. See Targum Jonathan, ad. loc.

Ex. 13:16: "and a as symbol on your forehead." The usage of "forehead" instead of "between your eyes" demonstrates an attempt at a traditional rendition, since the phylacteries are placed exactly midway between the eyes on the forehead where the hair begins to grow. But, one may ask, why not use (in a Jewish Bible) the word Tephillin and read "These shall be a sign upon your hand and Tephillin on your forehead that with a mighty hand Adonai freed us from Egypt." Even the (Protestant) Interpreter's Bible speaking of Totafot, notes: "The etymology is uncertain but it is this word which is rendered by tephillin in the Targum . . ." If in Lev. 23:40 because of un-

100. [Footnote]
101. [Footnote]
102. [Footnote]
103. [Footnote]
104. [Footnote]
106. [Footnote]
certainty of the original meaning, the translation is rendered product of hadar trees” (which we believe to be etrog), why could not this new Jewish version write totafot (tefillin), as well? Moreover, where uncertainty abounds, as in many instances, recourse to traditional usage and rabbinic interpretation should have been taken with good reason.

The perplexity of translation in halakhic elements is apparent in other cases too:

Ex. 12:15: “on the very first day you shall remove leaven.”  
It is well known that this verse refers to the removal of leaven before the commencement of the festival. Rashi has, “before the holiday.” The reading should be traditionally: “By the first day you shall remove . . .” Even Moses Mendelssohn did not alter the rabbinic tradition, for he translated “jedoch am ersten Tage muess Ihr schon den Sauerteig aus Euren Häusern geraumt haben.” The RSV ignores the Hebrew ach, but NT translates it “the very.” Indeed, where laws are involved, like those of Passover, these should be explained, at least in a note. Translators generally may be free to render the sense of the Bible as they see it, but they are not free to upset rabbinic authority in rendition of verses pertaining to actual practice of Judaism.

Very interesting also is the following comparison of the different renditions of the biblical section dealing with “support of the poor” (Lev. 25:35-36):

JPS

And if thy brother be waxen poor, and his means fail with thee; then thou shalt uphold him: as a stranger and a settler shall he live with thee. Take thou no interest of him or increase; but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

RSV

And if your brother becomes poor, and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall maintain him; as a stranger and as sojourner he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or increase, but fear your God; that your brother may live beside you.
If a fellow-countryman of yours becomes poor, so that his ability to meet his obligation with you fails, and you force on him the status of a resident alien or a serf, and he lives under you, take no interest from him in money or in kind, but stand in awe of your God, while your countryman lives under you.

By translating “and you hold him as though a resident alien” the NT like AT (unlike JPS and RSV) sets aside the mitzvah of “maintenance,” which is so emphatically stressed by Rashi and Seforno. Moreover, the whole rabbinic concept “let thy brother live with thee” is ignored here.

A further interesting rendition, perplexing to the talmudic student, is the beginning of Exodus 23. It reads: You must not carry false rumors; you shall not join hands with the guilty to act as an unjust witness. Do not side with the mighty to do wrong, and do not give perverse testimony in a dispute by leaning toward the mighty; nor must you show deference to a poor man in his dispute.

AT and RSV translate rasha as wicked person, not a guilty one: rabim is multitude, not mighty (“multitude” is mentioned in a note). To read “Do not side with the mighty to do wrong” and not “Do not follow a multitude to do evil” (AT: “you must not follow a majority by doing wrong”) upsets the whole rabbinic notion of rabim, majority rule. What prompted the choice of rabim as “mighty”? Moreover, to translate “carry false rumors” is contrary to Targum and Rashi, as based on the Mekhilta.
The text means “not to accept or tolerate false rumors.” “Carrying false rumors” is in the realm of “talebearing” recorded in Lev. 19:16, which is here translated, “Do not deal basely with your fellows.”116 This phrase, too, is followed by the strange reading, “Do not profit by the blood of your neighbor,” when its precise meaning, talmudically, and in accordance with the commentators, is, “Do not stand by the side if your neighbor’s life (blood) is in danger.”

To argue that to follow rabbinic notion one would have to translate such passages as “eye for eye” as “money indemnity for an eye” is not convincing. It is already widely recognized that “eye for eye” is not to be taken literally; lex talionis is to be interpreted only as meaning compensation. Hence, there is no fear of miscomprehension here as in the case of the many other mistranslations which may cause confusion as to the manner of Jewish teaching and tradition unless one follows the traditional rabbinic interpretation.

Another instance involving rabbinics is Deut. 25:9 translated as “spit in his face,”117 the same as the old JPS and other renditions. One wonders, in this new attempt, being “not a revision but a new translation,” why not use “before their face” or “in his presence” even as be-fanav118 is rendered in Deut. 4:37. Would such rendition in accordance with rabbinic tradition have spoiled the present rendering or understanding of the text?

Another important halakhic point is in Deut. 25:5; “When brothers dwell together and one of them dies and leaves no son.”119 The old JPS reads “and has no child” which is halakhically correct. But NT ignored the tradition.

Though one may argue that a Bible translation need not defer to rabbinic interpretation, we must recognize that a Jewish version implies not merely search for truth as scholars see it, but especially adherence to the Jewish mode of explanation. If it is only “scholarly research,” Jewish funds may encourage it but such does not fulfill the main aim: to guide Jewish life.

116. ...119. ...
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therewith. Gentiles seek inspiration in their christological notions; should not a Bible for Jews, on the other hand, be in the spirit of full rabbinic teachings? Judaism is rabbinic in perspective and mode of conduct, not biblical. A “New Translation” therefore should be in the full spirit of rabbinic Torah (Instruction).

Two other examples of basic concern to Jewish tradition must also be considered:

Gen. 2:2: “He ceased on the seventh day from all the work which He had done.” Utilization of the text of the words “He rested on the seventh day” (as given in the note) would have better conveyed the spirit of tradition pertaining to Sabbath, even as interpreted in Megillah 9a concerning the Septuagint rendition. Similarly, one fears the misunderstanding of the prohibition of labor on the festivals. When reading, for instance, Leviticus 23:8: “you shall not work at your (italics mine) occupations.” Does it imply that other activities are permitted?

In Exodus, Chapter 20, verses 2 and 3 of the Decalogue are given as part of one commandment, separated by a colon (:), thus, “I the Lord am your God . . . : You shall have no other gods beside Me.” Then verse 4, beginning a new paragraph, is “you shall not make for yourself a sculptured image . . . ,” thus apparently considering it the Second Commandment. Though a note delineates that “Tradition varies as to the division of the Commandments” it is to be remembered that “I the Lord am . . .” is the First and “You shall not have . . .” is the Second Commandment, even according to Rabbi Ishmael’s view in Sifre Numbers 15:31 and Sanhedrin 98b. Jewish tradition has so recognized it also in the listing inscribed on tablets placed over the Ark of the Law in the Synagogue or on the Parochet (curtain). Non-Jewish works, however, seem to reckon verse 2 and 3 together as the first Commandment about Unity, and “the second Commandment prohibits all forms of Idolatry. No image of the deity is to be made.” (See Ten Commandments, Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. IV, p. 570). The old JPS correctly begins the second Commandment (verse 3) as a separate paragraph, including therein verses 4 ff., thus
making us question where “this translation has improved on the first JPS translation” (see Preface to NT, p. 1).

A comparison of the recent translations of the past decades is in order for the purpose of determining modernity of language, as well as the accomplishments of the NT above all others, as the ‘last word’ in translation.

Below is the first paragraph of Genesis as rendered in

**AT**
(American Translation, 1927)

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was a desolate waste, with darkness covering the abyss and a tempestuous wind raging over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light!” And there was light; and God saw that the light was good. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness night. Evening came, and morning, the first day.

**RSV**
(Revised Standard Version, 1952)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

**NT**
(New Translation, 1963)

When God began to create the heaven and the earth—the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over water—God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. God saw how good the light was, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

*Or when God began to create*

*Or wind*

*Or “In the beginning God created”*

*Others “the spirit of”*

*Or “one day”*
The comparison reveals that greater freedom in both approach and style is found in AT, — that which NT certainly could not have wisely permitted itself. But the ‘beginnings’ of the text are similar, nevertheless.

When, however, one sets RSV by the side of NT, it appears that RSV was conservative in its approach, putting its ‘revisions’ into the notes. NT, conversely, was bolder — putting that which the RSV has in its text into the notes at the bottom of the NT page, and the suggestions of the RSV Notes into the actual body of the text in the Jewish rendition.

Further comparison of the Shema (Deut. 6:4 ff.) in the new translations demonstrates the modern trend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AT</th>
<th>NT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen, O Israel; the LORD is our God, the LORD alone; so you must love the LORD your God with all your mind and all your heart and all your strength. These instructions that I am giving you today are to be fixed in your mind; you must impress them on your children, and talk about them when you are sitting at home, and when you go off on a journey, when you lie down and when you get up; you must bind them on your hand as a sign, and they must be worn on your forehead as a mark; you must inscribe them on the door-posts of your house and on your gates.</td>
<td>Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You must love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these words with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.</td>
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</table>

These differences and similarities of the recent translations may be multiplied, and the wisdom of the choice is debatable. Thus, does alone mean “He, alone is our God, none other,” i.e., “excluding all others” or “unparalleled,” “only” “solely”; where then is the teaching of monotheism?120 Where is the concept of the uniqueness, the Oneness of God, His Unity, which

120. See Rashi’s explanation of first verse of Shema. Cf. also Ibn Ezra, Rashbam and Malbim:

200
Maimonides stresses so emphatically in his creeds, in his Introduction to Chelek (Chapter X, Sanhedrin)? Tradition teaches: God is one, there is none besides Him.

Using the best of other translations is commendable. But NT sought often to introduce a “modernity” far beyond the actual biblical practice. Such, for instance, is the rendition of the law of interest, Deut. 23:20:

\[
\text{AT} \quad \quad \text{NT}
\]

You must not exact interest on loans to a fellow-countryman of yours, interest in money, food, or anything else that might be exacted as interest. On loans to the foreigner you may exact interest, but on loans to a fellow-countryman you must not, that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings in the land which you are invading for conquest.

You shall not deduct interest from loans to your countryman, whether in money or food or anything else that can be deducted as interest. You may deduct interest from loans to foreigners, but not from loans to your countryman—so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings in the land which you are about to invade and occupy.

Does the phrase “deduct interest,” at the time of taking a loan, reveal an old practice or a “modern banking process” derived from the discount of medieval Italian bankers? Traditionally it means here that the borrower should not give or add interest. See Rashi ad loc., and compare also the translation in Lev. 25:37: “Do not lend him money at advance interest,” referring to the lender.

It is to be remembered, as noted in the Preface, “While the committee profited much from the work of previous translators, the present rendering is not a revision, but essentially a new translation,” citing briefly the obvious differences. A detailed comparative study therefore would have to be made to see the influence of the previous translations and in what manner this NT excels.

121. See Woodward & Rose, A Primer of Money, p. 35; Graham & Seaver, Money, pp. 147-148: “Italians began to advance large sums . . . and receive interest until the money advanced was repaid.” Cf. also Encyclopedia of Banking and Finance, 1924, p. 159: Bank Discount: Interest paid in advance . . . ; p. 314 Interest: The excess payment made when the borrowed dollar is returned . . .
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VII

One of the most distressing of features in the NT is the mode of its preparation and the procedure followed. The working members of the Committee "arrived at decisions by majority vote" (Preface). Are decisions in matter of "principle" to be reached on basis of vote? Can democratic procedure be applied to deciding the truth as to the meaning of the Bible? The Septuagint procedure, it seems, displayed practical action: Though each translator was closeted in his own room making his translation, there was finally unanimous opinion and agreement. It was not on the basis of a vote, which certainly may vary with circumstances; especially if, for instance, one of the traditionalists or liberals was away from a particular meeting at the discussion table. The absence of a member of the committee might influence the "decisive" truth. The procedure of deciding the truth for the Bible, hence, is a matter of great concern. It was already called to the attention of the Jewish Publication Society more than a half-century ago. In the American Hebrew, Oct. 27, 1905, J. D. Eisenstein suggested a plan of action and considered the method adapted by the Society then as inadequate.¹²²

Another matter of concern to the reader who wishes to abide by the traditional Hebrew Masoretic text is the mode of reference in the notes to "uncertainties," "other ancient versions" and "other readings." These are not the traditional Kri and Ketiv which are given, for instance on page 53. Rather, these notes are suggestions of readings different from the accepted Masorah. Thus, Samaritan, pp. 105, 296, 350: Greek Septuagint, pp. 288, 381. To the general reader this may suggest an emendation process for the Bible, though the translators have conscientiously and traditionally refrained from it. It is believed that such suggestions have no place in the NT for the general reader. Such should be contained in Full Notes or in a Scholarly Appendix. One may also be disturbed by

¹²². See also his Critical Notes on Psalms, 1906.
reading "traditionally, but incorrectly Red Sea." This jars the ears; there was no need of joining "traditionally" with "incorrectly." Were the text to contain simply the words "Traditionally, the Red Sea" it would have sufficed to convey the translator's new rendition.

Finally, it is noteworthy that in both the case of the Septuagint and the Targum Onkelos, reference is made to approval of the translation: The reference to the Septuagint approval is in the Letter of Aristeas,\(^{123}\) and that pertaining to Onkelos is in the Talmud (Megillah 3a), stating that the Targum was "with the approval of Rabbi Eliazer and Rabbi Joshua.\(^{124}\) One wonders, what is or will be the nature of approval for this New Translation of the Torah?

One of the beneficial results of the New Translation and its publicity is the stimulus it has given to Bible study. Jewish laymen are now devoting attention to the Bible; adult classes and lectures on the subject have been well attended. It is even expected that in the Fall, with the renewal of Adult Education Institutes, the study of the Bible, as a result of this edition, will advance immensely. The battle of the Torah, (milchamat shel torah), with pro and con, attack and defense, is before us. As students of the Torah we welcome this, for even from the criticisms much will be learned, to sharpen the minds and pencils for the future.

The present writer concludes that while the new JPS translation represents an improvement in many respects, which is commendable, it still falls short, as delineated above, and needs tikkun — further revision. In many aspects the work is to be recognized more as a paraphrase, "sense for sense" than a literal translation, "word for word." As such, the "paraphrased text" cannot be utilized by the side of a proposed Hebrew edition, for it may bring confusion into the minds of students, studying the Hebrew text grammatically and etymologically in a classroom. For the general reader, who wishes to know the contents of the Pentateuch from a free and cursory reading, to read

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123. See quotation above, Aristeas to Philocrates, 308 ff.
124. תרجمו של תורת אונקלוס תנה אמור เมסי ר' אליעזר ור' יוחנן.
it like a novel, gracefully and meaningfully, without careful
study and comparisons, this rendition may serve admirably.
But a concept of the traditional interpretation will be inadequate,
and cannot be gained therefrom. Its utilization for inspirational
purposes in school and synagogue is also questionable. The
RSV was prepared “for use in public and private worship, not
merely for reading and instruction.” Does the New JPS
Torah Translation also make that assertion?

Moreover, a perplexing question remains: should the Bible
translated for Jews be interpreted archaeologically, as scholars
objectively see it, or shall it be definitely set in a Jewish tradi-
tional manner? Our view is: Judaism is a rabbinic product
and discipline, not a biblical way of life. Hence, for the message
today, not only, for objective truth, the Bible must be inter-
preted according to rabbinic standards.

To assert, as has already been done by some rabbinic or-
ganizations, that a new translation should and will presently be
prepared, because of the alleged Apikuros in this new JPS
rendition, is alarming. Scholarly study of the text, weighing
all phases of commentaries in the line of tradition, and sugges-
tion of revision in accordance with rabbinic, scholarly approach
should be undertaken. It is unrealistic to ban, to condemn, and
to begin producing newer, competitive translations. The fin-
ished, basic work is here; with the experience of careful re-
search it can and should be revised with the honest intention of
making it valuable and useful. The efforts of the present trans-
lators, who are recognized scholars, cannot and should not be
invalidated, resulting in disunity in the Jewish community. A
waste of Jewish funds will ensue if a ‘second’ new translation
is undertaken by a rabbinic body. Cooperation by sending in
suggestions and comments, and a re-evaluation of the NT for
full acceptance by all groups, leading to united recognition,
should be the process. At present the work is a scholarly re-
search, but bears no distinct official Jewish imprimatur. How-
ever, the inclusion of rabbinic interpretation into the text as
well as following carefully the Masorah in all its details, to-

125. See Preface, RSV, IV.
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together with the usage of Ado-nai for the Tetragrammaton, will give this work “the Jewish flavor” not found in previous translations.

Moreover, a translation cannot be published without full annotations to explain the reasons and details of choice and to forestall criticism. Hence, a new edition should include full notes and comments. One recalls Saadia’s medieval Tafsir — translation and commentary — which was directed to such a purpose. A modern translation, therefore, must especially utilize that approach — “comments for better comprehension.”

The Jewish Publication Society, surely, in a cooperative manner with rabbinic organizations, can accomplish this, not relying merely upon individual “commissioned” scholars. One therefore looks forward in time to the betterment of the text, remembering on the one hand Avot 2:16, “we are not to free ourselves from the task,” and on the other, Soferim 1:5 that “the Torah cannot be perfectly translated.” It is hoped that in the very near future this new publication of the Torah translation will be carefully revised so that it may become a valued contribution to expanding Jewish life in America.

126.  לא עלוות המלאתו ל ULONG. ולא אתה ב ווריין ליבשל Macron
127. שלח חיות התורה ויבלו לתחנות מלחアクセה.