

Which Translation is Best?

GNM vs. CJB



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There are many new translations of the Scripture claiming to be “Messianic” or “Hebrew Roots” versions. But there is only one version that offers a comprehensive answer to the usual Protestant and Catholic versions for the Messianic Faith. This version is the *Good News of Měssiah*, translated by Daniel Gregg. In this paper, I will begin to compare other versions claiming to be Messianic with the GNM to show why GNM is the genuine comprehensive answer and why no other translation is. In this first paper, I will compare the GNM with the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) formerly known in its New Testament version as the *Jewish New Testament*, by David Stern.

When Christians ask what the best Bible version is, they often get the answer from Messianic leaders that some such version as the ESV or NASB is the best. This answer is certainly better than not reading the Scripture at all. But for the Messianic Faith, which is Torah observant, this answer is like asking the faithful to depend on versions translated and produced by a cult. In this case it would be the largest cult in the world, which is the numerous denominations and schools all claiming to be Christian, and claiming to follow Christ, except they do not, and they deny his law.

What traditional lawless Churches produce is lawless translations of the New Testament. They cannot do otherwise because they have rejected Torah. An apt comparison would be like depending on the Communist Party in China or Russia to translate and provide commentary on the Constitution of the United States or the Declaration of Independence.

So clearly the faithful are drawn to Messianic versions. Why would anyone trust a non Torah observant scholar to produce a translation which is supposed to uphold Torah? So Torah observant scholars are beginning to produce Messianic versions. And this brings up a new problem. Some of these Messianic versions merely make cosmetic changes. Some of their authors have no competence in the original languages. Some of them have a false theory of the original text. And some of them are frauds. For this reason a comparison has to be made.

I will proceed to make comparisons in such a way that the average reader can judge which is best without any prior knowledge of Hebrew or Greek. I may have to teach you a bit.

The CJB is probably the best any other Messianic version has done in a broad sense. Everything following it is downhill, except for the GNM. But it has many serious flaws. And I will have to take the issues one by one.

Romans 1:17: CJB, "For in it is revealed how God makes people righteous in his sight; and from beginning to end it is through trust-as the *Tanakh* puts it, 'But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust.'"

Stern uses italics for emphasis. Let us now underline every word in his translation that has no direct equivalent in the Greek text, and strike out every word which is not the best choice or is wrong, and add a ^τ mark for every word in the original that is omitted: "For in it is revealed how God makes people ^τrighteous in his sight; and from beginning to end it is through trust-^{τττ}as the *Tanakh* puts it, 'But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust.'"

Analysis. The added words are easy to detect with a Greek interlinear or a program like BibleWorks. When the omitted words are restored and the the incorrectly translated words are corrected, the added words are entirely unnecessary!

The first error is "righteous." Stern has rendered it an adjective in a verb phrase, but it is a noun in the original, taking a definite article (which Stern omitted). Further, the word is best translated "justice" as N.T Wright has it, and as all other Romance language versions have it. The second error is the translation "trust." Paul's meaning is obviously taken from Habakkuk 2:4 (which is quoted in Rom. 1:17), where even Stern puts "trusting faithfulness" in the source text Hab. 2:4. It seems that Stern's theology underwent revision between Hab. 2:4 and Rom. 1:17. Faithfulness got deleted. No doubt this change is caused by the incompatible definition for "faith" given in Hebrews 11:1. The footnotes of many Bibles specify "faithfulness" as a translation of Hab. 2:4, and at least 12 versions put "faithfulness": AMPC, EXB, GW, LEB, NOG, NET, NIRV, NIV, NIVUK, NLT, VOICE. All of these versions repent of the translation "faithfulness" when they arrive at Rom. 1:17 as if somehow the definition of the word underwent a dispensational change between the two texts.

So these versions translate "faithfulness" in Hab. 2:4, but when it is being quoted in Rom. 1:17 they fail to translate the same word "faithfulness"! Likewise, the CJB has faithfulness in Hab. 2:4, but then entirely omits it in Rom. 1:17. Consider the much improved translation of N.T. Wright, "This is because God's covenant ^τjustice is unveiled in it, from faithfulness to faithfulness. As it says in the Bible, 'the just shall live by faith'" (*The Kingdom New Testament*). We see here even Wright bows to tradition and translates the quotation of Hab. 2:4 as "faith." Yet, it is clear his literal translation of the previous clause requires it. For if "faithfulness to faithfulness" is to have a proof text in Hab. 2:4, the quotation should accordingly read "faithfulness"! As you can see, the markup of Wright's translation is much less than Stern's. And Wright is not even a Torah observant translator!

Now let us take a look at the *Good News of Messiah*: “¹⁷because the justice of the Almighty in it is revealed from faithfulness to faithfulness, even as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS ONE BY HIS FAITHFULNESS WILL LIVE.’”

Firstly, note that “justice” is a definite noun because it stands in a genitive relation to another definite noun. The proper noun “Almighty” is definite so the head noun is also definite. In the grammatical construction, “x of y” where y is definite, then x is also definite. This also works with the construct in Hebrew.

The GNM can be improved, but only pendentally so. “It is written” is perfect in Greek, thus “it has been written.” The adjectival substantive “the righteous one” could be rendered a simpler substantive “the righteous...” The added word *his* is honestly putting italic.

So we see the *Good News of Messiah* translation is better than every other version including the CJB: “¹⁷because the justice of the Almighty in it is revealed from faithfulness to faithfulness, even as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS ONE BY HIS FAITHFULNESS WILL LIVE.’”

The explanation of the verse is rooted in the pre-reformation, pre-Augustinian, primitive Messianic Faith. The good news is the punitive justice of the Almighty against our sin was by his mercy assigned to the Měssiah. The Měssiah by his faithfulness to the covenant plan suffered instead of us. This change in judgment is the Almighty’s way of forgiving us. He wanted to forgive us, but not without an example of what we would have had to suffer had he not forgiven us.

There are two faithfulnesses here. The first is the Almighty’s faithfulness in Měssiah. The second is our faithful response. Therefore the good news is “from faithfulness to faithfulness.” The good news is supposed to be embraced with repentance. That is where our faithfulness comes into the picture. So the significance of “faithfulness” is that it is both divine faithfulness and our faithfulness working together. The *his* in ‘the righteous one by *his* faithfulness will live’ may refer first to the Almighty’s faithfulness and second to our faithfulness. The word *his* may mean either Gōd or the righteous person. In fact the LXX seeks to interpret the Hebrew text by putting “My faithfulness” instead of “his faithfulness” which is the reading of the Hebrew text. Paul omits the *his* because he wants his readers to notice this and say *his* belongs. Paul then explains it as Měssiah’s faithfulness in Rom. 3:22 and also our faithful response, which is summed up “from faithfulness to faithfulness”!

Our faithfulness does not earn us forgiveness, but it does cause us to remain in it. For Paul warned that those who continue in transgression will not enter the kingdom of the Almighty! And Měssiah warned that he could and would erase the names of the unfaithful from the book of life.

The complex and convoluted theology of the reformation must be repudiated because it is lawless. David Stern believed very much in this theology. Why does he render “through trust”? This is because he believed that the faithful only become righteous through the alien imputed righteousness of Christ. For example, he translates Romans 3:24, “all are granted the status of being considered righteous before him.” Now this is incorrect, and the faithful become righteous through faithfulness to the Almighty and not through trust being regarded as key to unlock a legal reckoning of righteousness. This is because the Torah says that it will be righteousness for us when we keep watch to do all his commandments.

But why do the righteous need to have a status of being counted as perfectly

righteous? Does this somehow compensate the Almighty for sin? Hardly. He is not interested in legal tricks. He is only interested in our loving and faithful response, and not in a legal fiction. Sadly, David Stern was deceived by the tradition he was taught, and he inserted it into his translation of the New Testament.

