

Hebraisms in Genesis

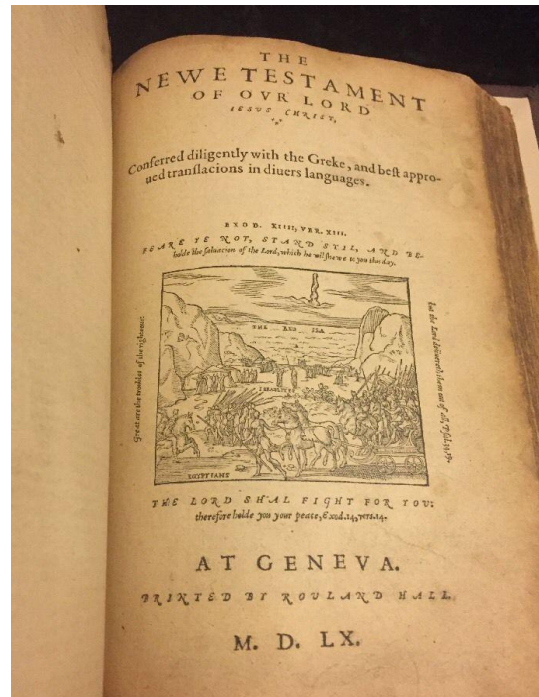
Comparing the 1537 Matthew and 1599 Geneva Bibles

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- The alleged deficiencies of William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale's Scripture translations (and therefore of the Matthew Bible) according to the 1560 Geneva Bible preface.
- Geneva's claim that William Tyndale neglected Hebraisms proven false.
- A comparison of the Geneva Bible notes on Hebraisms with the Matthew Bible.

The Geneva Bible (GNV) was a revision of the Scripture translations of William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale. It was an extensive revision, performed under John Calvin's oversight by English puritans living in Geneva during the Marian persecutions. The GNV New Testament was based on Tyndale's 1534 translation. The Old Testament was a revision of both Tyndale and Coverdale's work in the Great Bible. The Great Bible was itself a revision of the little-known 1537 Matthew Bible. The Matthew Bible (MB) is the original translations of Tyndale and Coverdale with commentaries and study aids added by a third man, John Rogers.¹ Rogers compiled and printed the MB in Antwerp.

The complete GNV was first published in 1560. A revised edition was made in 1599. The 1599 edition was recently issued in modern spelling and published by Tolle Lege Press.



In their 1560 Bible preface, with many fair words, the puritan scholars claimed that Tyndale and Coverdale's translations were inadequate and "required greatly to be perused and reformed" – that is, reviewed and corrected – due to the translators' poor knowledge of the biblical languages, lack of clear light, and other deficiencies:

We thought that we should bestow our labours and study in nothing which could be more acceptable to God and conformable to his Church than in the translating of the Holy Scriptures into our native tongue; the which thing, albeit that diuers heretofore have endeavoured to achieve [i.e. Tyndale and Coverdale], yet considering the infancy of those times and imperfect knowledge of the tongues, in respect of this ripe

¹ See my book *The Story of the Matthew Bible: That Which We First Received* (known as *Story Part 1*) (Canada: Baruch House Publishing, 2018), 244-45. It is the first book ever written just about the Matthew Bible. It sets the record straight concerning this martyr's Bible, which has been the subject of false histories and false criticism. Part 2, *The Story of the Matthew Bible: The Scriptures Then and Now*, is due for publication in early 2020.

age and clear light which God hath now revealed, the translations required greatly to be perused and reformed.

The Geneva preface also implied that Tyndale and Coverdale had irreverently “mollified” Hebraisms (Hebrew phrases or idioms) in the biblical text, and had not “kept the propriety of the words.” They said integrity required them to restore Hebrew phrases to the Scriptures. This would make the Scriptures “hard,” but this was the “constraining” method of the apostles:

We have chiefly observed the sense, and labored always to restore it to all integrity: so have we most reverently kept the propriety of the words, considering that the Apostles who spake and wrote to the Gentiles in the Greek tongue, rather constrained them to the lively phrase of the Hebrew, than enterprised far by mollifying their language to speak as the Gentiles did. And for this and other causes we have in many places reserved the Hebrew phrases, notwithstanding that they may seem somewhat hard in their ears that are not well practiced.

Among other things, it was false to suggest Tyndale and Coverdale did not keep Hebrew phrases. They did, as this paper will show. (I will also examine this issue more closely in Part 2 of *The Story of the Matthew Bible*). It was also false to say the apostles deliberately spoke a “hard” form of Greek. They spoke Koine Greek, a dialect that was the everyday language of the people. William Rosenau explained:

Upon examination, the language [of the New Testament] shows itself to be a Hebrew-Greek dialect.... That the writers of the N.T. literature should employ Greek with a distinctly Hebrew flavor is not surprising, when we bear in mind that they were for the most part natives of Palestine, made the O.T. the basis of their thought and utterances, quoted extensively from [the] Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa, and used Semitic dialects in their intercourse with one another, not to mention that many were born Jews.²

Rosenau added, “Had the writers used classical Greek, it is questionable whether the people, whom they sought to reach, would have understood them.”³

After thus misrepresenting the style and purpose of the apostles’ speech, the GNV preface promised to give the meanings of Hebraisms – meanings “agreeable” to the Holy Ghost – in marginal notes:

Yet lest either the simple should be discouraged, or the malicious have any occasion of just cavillation, seeing some translations read after one sort, and some after another, whereas all may serve to good purpose and edification, we have in the margent [*margin*] noted that diversity of speech or reading which may also seem agreeable to the mind of the holy Ghost and proper for our language with this mark <<. Again, whereas the Hebrew speech seemed hardly to agree with ours, we have noted it in the margent after this sort >>, using that which was more intelligible.

However, John Rogers had already given the meanings of Hebraisms in his marginal notes in the MB – hundreds of them, maybe thousands. I decided to do a little research and compare his notes and definitions with Geneva’s. I began with Genesis, which is the logical

² Wm. Rosenau, “Hebraisms in the Authorized Version of the Bible.” A dissertation presented to the Board of University Studies of the John Hopkins University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1902, at page 81. Viewed at <https://archive.org/stream>. Accessed Mar 20, 2018.

³ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

place for a Bible commentator to introduce readers to Hebraisms. The book of Genesis in the MB is William Tyndale's work, and it abounds with "Hebrew phrases" that Rogers defined in his notes. Initially I planned to compare his notes with the puritan notes, and next, to be impartial, do the same thing in reverse. However I did not perform the next step for three reasons:

- (1) The volume of notes in the GNV is too great, well over ten times that of the MB. Further, the notes are very wide-ranging and cover unrelated topics. To comb through them would have added pointlessly to my labour.
- (2) Often the GNV notes reinterpret the whole verse, and it is simply not possible to derive a proper definition. In contrast, Rogers gave succinct, focussed definitions.
- (3) In the book of Genesis alone, Rogers had over one hundred explanatory notes. This was sufficient to judge and compare the puritan treatment.

In the Table below are sixty verses in Genesis where Rogers explained a Hebrew idiom or expression compared with the 1599 GNV treatment at the same places. I did not cross-reference with the 1560 GNV; in 1599 the notes were increased and revised, and this would have added too much complexity. Only lexical idioms are reviewed (as opposed to grammatical idioms),⁴ since only they can be defined. It may be questionable if some expressions are technically idioms, but they are close enough. I avoided notes that leaned too much to doctrine or just gave the meaning of Hebrew names, and some of the least interesting ones.

My plan was to check (✓) the places where I found complete agreement between the MB and GNV in both translation *and* definition, but in the end I could only check one place. As will be seen below, in four cases the GNV itself "mollified" a Hebraism that Tyndale had kept. Of the sixty verses compared I found:

Similar commentary in the GNV with same or similar translation: 7/60 verses =	12%
No commentary in the GNV, but same or similar translation: 16/60 verses =	27%
Significant disagreement in interpretation, translation, or emphasis in 37/60 verses =	62%

The comparison manifestly reveals the different doctrines of the two Bibles (not to mention also their different spirit and tone). In some places the interpretations are shockingly different. They warrant closer examination than I can give here, but I discuss Genesis 20:16 at the end of the Table below, and will see more in *Story Part 2*.

It would make an interesting Bible study to read Genesis with reference to the Table.

The Table begins on the next page.

⁴ The puritans followed also Hebrew grammatical idioms, which Tyndale usually did not. This also will be fully discussed in *Story Part 2*.

Table

Comparing the 1537 Matthew Bible Treatment of Hebraisms in Genesis with the 1599 Geneva Bible

Notes:

1. "tr." means 'translation.'
2. "OED" refers to the Oxford English Dictionary online, which I accessed during October 2019.

Verse	1537 Matthew Bible	1599 Geneva Bible
Gen.	Hebraism & Rogers' definition	Geneva's treatment
1:6	<i>God said, Let there be a <u>firmament</u>.</i> Note: Or heaven. It is a Hebrew word and signifieth thrusting forth or spreading abroad. [OED: 'Heaven' = where stars, planets, clouds, etc. appear.]	Same tr. Note: Or spreading over, and air. [OED: "' Air' = the invisible gaseous substance which immediately surrounds the earth." It never included stars or planets.]
2:1	<i>Thus was heaven and earth finished, with all their <u>apparel</u>.</i> Note: The apparel of heaven is the stars and planets, etc.	New tr: <i>Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all <u>the host of them</u>.</i> Note: That is, the innumerable abundance of creatures in heaven and earth.
2:17	<i>Even the same day thou eatest of it, thou shalt <u>die the death</u>.</i> Note: Such rehearsals [<i>repetition</i>] of words doth signifieth sometimes a hastiness or vehemence, sometimes an assurance that the thing shall be performed that is promised.	Almost the same tr. Note: By this death he meaneth the separation of man from God, who is our life and chief felicity: and also that our disobedience is the cause thereof.
3:5	<i>Whensoever ye should eat of it, your <u>eyes should be opened</u>, and ye should be as God, and know both good and evil.</i> Note: To have their eyes open is to know and understand.	New tr: <i>When ye shall eat thereof, your <u>eyes shall be opened</u>, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.</i> No note.
3:8	<i>Adam hid himself and his wife also <u>from the face of the Lord God among the trees of the garden</u>.</i> Note: That is, from his presence.	"Mollified" & new tr: <i>The man and his wife hid themselves <u>from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden</u>.</i> No note.
4:4	<i>The Lord <u>looked unto</u> Abel and to his offering.</i> Note: That is, he was pleased with Abel and his offering.	"Mollified" tr: <i>The Lord <u>had respect unto</u> Abel and to his offering.</i> No note.

<p>4:5</p>	<p>... but unto Cain and unto his offering <u>looked he not</u>.</p> <p>Note: ... but with Cain nor his offering was he not pleased, and therefore he saith that he looked not thereto.</p>	<p>“Mollified” tr: ... but unto Cain and to his offering he <u>had no regard</u>.</p> <p>Note: Because he was an hypocrite, and offered only for an outward show without sincerity of heart.</p>
<p>4:10</p>	<p>The voice of thy brother’s <u>blood cried unto me out of the earth</u>.</p> <p>Note: Crieth: that is, asketh vengeance.</p>	<p>The voice of thy brother’s blood <u>crieth unto me, from the earth</u>.</p> <p>Note: God revengeth the wrongs of his Saints, though none complain: for the iniquity itself crieth for vengeance.</p>
<p>4:26</p>	<p>In that time began men to <u>call on the name of the Lord</u>.</p> <p>Note: To call upon the name of the Lord is to require [ask] all things of him and to trust in him, giving him the honour and worship that belongeth to him.</p>	<p>Same tr.</p> <p>Note: In these days God began to move the hearts of the godly to restore religion, which a long time by the wicked had been suppressed.</p>
<p>5:22</p>	<p>And Enoch <u>walked with God</u>.</p> <p>Note: To walk with God is to do his will and lead a life according to his word.</p>	<p>Same tr.</p> <p>Note: That is, he led an upright and godly life.</p>
<p>6:13</p>	<p>Then said God to Noah, <u>The end of all flesh is come before me</u>.</p> <p>Note: That is, the end of all men [people] is come before me.</p>	<p><u>An end of all flesh is come before me</u>.</p> <p>Note: Or, I will destroy mankind.</p>
<p>7:11</p>	<p>That same day were all the <u>fountains of the great deep broken up</u>.</p> <p>Note: All the waters that were on the earth sprang up, increased, and multiplied.</p>	<p>Same tr.</p> <p>Note: The waters in the earth did overflow.</p>
<p>7:11</p>	<p>... and the <u>windows of heaven were opened, and there fell a rain upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights</u>.</p> <p>Note: The windows of heaven were opened, etc.: that is, all waters above the earth descended and increased the flood.</p>	<p>Similar tr.</p> <p>Note: The clouds poured down.</p>
<p>8:21</p>	<p>And the Lord <u>smelled a sweet savour</u>.</p> <p>Note: The Lord’s smelling of savour is the Lord’s allowance [acceptance] of the works of the faithful.</p>	<p>New tr: The Lord <u>smelled a savour of rest</u>.</p> <p>Note 1: Or, sweet savour.</p> <p>Note 2: That is, thereby he showeth himself appeased and his anger to rest.</p>
<p>9:27</p>	<p>[May] God <u>increase Japheth, that he may dwell in the tents of Shem</u>.</p> <p>Note: To increase: that is, to rejoice or to be in peace and of good comfort.</p>	<p>New tr: God <u>persuaded Japheth, that he may dwell in the tents of Shem</u>.</p> <p>Note: Or, enlarge, or cause to return.</p>

<p>11:5</p>	<p><i>And <u>the Lord came down</u> to see the city and the tower.</i> Note: God is counted to come down when he doth anything in the earth among men that is not accustomed to be done: in manner showing himself present among men by his wonderful work.</p>	<p>Similar tr. Note: Meaning, that he declared by effect that he knew their wicked enterprise: for God's power is everywhere, and doth neither ascend nor descend.</p>
<p>12:5</p>	<p><i>And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, with all their goods which they had gotten and <u>souls</u> which they had begotten in Haran.</i> Note: Souls here are taken for his servants and maidens, which were very many.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>Then Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they possessed, and the <u>souls</u> that they had gotten in Haran.</i> Note: Meaning, as well servants as cattle. [OED: 'Cattle' = livestock]</p>
<p>13:8</p>	<p><i>For we be <u>brethren</u>.</i> Note: The Hebrews understand by this word brother all nephews, cousins, and neighbours, and all that be of one stock [ancestry].</p>	<p>Same tr. No note.</p>
<p>13:15</p>	<p><i>All the land which thou seest will I give unto thee and to thy seed <u>forever</u>.</i> Note: 'Ever' is not here taken for a time without end, but for a long season that has not his end appointed.</p>	<p>Same tr. Note: Meaning a long time, and till the coming of Christ as Ex. 12:14 & 21:6; De. 15:17, and spiritually this is referred to the true children of Abram, born according to the promise, and not according to the flesh, which are heirs of the true land of Canaan. [Cf. Gen. 26:22, 46:3.]</p>
<p>14:21</p>	<p><i>Then said the king of Sodom unto Abram, Give me the <u>souls</u>, and take the goods to thyself.</i> Note: Souls are men and women.</p>	<p>"Mollified" tr: <i>Give me the <u>persons</u>.</i> Note: Hebrew, souls.</p>
<p>15:1</p>	<p><i>The <u>word of God came</u> unto Abram in a vision.</i> Note: The word of the Lord cometh when he sheweth anything unto us by revelation, as it is used in divers places of the Scripture, and specially in the Prophets, and is a manner of speech of the Hebrews.</p>	<p><i>The <u>word of the Lord came</u> unto Abram in a vision.</i> Note: Or, the Lord spake to Abram.</p>
<p>15:14</p>	<p><i>The nation whom they shall serve, will I <u>judge</u>.</i> Note: To judge is here to take vengeance.</p>	<p>Same tr. No note.</p>
<p>15:16</p>	<p><i><u>In the fourth generation</u> they shall come hither again.</i> Note: A generation or an age is here taken for an hundred years.</p>	<p>Same tr. Note: Or, after four hundred years. ✓</p>

15:17	<p><i>There was a smoking furnace, and a firebrand that <u>went between</u> the said pieces.</i></p> <p>Note: This word 'went between' is taken for burning or consuming.</p>	<p>Similar tr. No note.</p>
16:2	<p><i>I pray thee, go in unto my maid.</i></p> <p>Note: To go in unto her maid is to have carnal copulation with her, as these words 'know' and 'sleep' do also signify.</p>	<p>Same tr. No note.</p>
16:5	<p><i>I have given my maid <u>into thy bosom</u>.</i></p> <p>Note: Bosom, after the manner of the Hebrews, is taken for companying with a woman, and it is also taken for faith, as in Luke .xvi.f. of Lazarus.</p>	<p>Same tr. No note.</p>
16:13	<p><i>I have of a surety <u>seen here the back parts</u> of him that seeth me.</i></p> <p>Note: They see the back parts of God that by revelation or any other way have perseverance [<i>constancy in love?</i>] or knowledge of God.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>Have I not also here <u>looked after him</u> that seeth me?</i></p> <p>Note: She rebuketh her own dullness and acknowledgeth God's graces, who was present with her everywhere.</p>
18:1	<p><i>As he sat in his tent door <u>in the heat of the day</u>.</i></p> <p>Note: The heat of the day is taken for noon.</p>	<p><i>As he sat in his tent door <u>about the heat of the day</u>.</i></p> <p>No note.</p>
18:5	<p><i>I will set a morsel of <u>bread</u> to comfort your hearts withal.</i></p> <p>Note: By bread in the Scripture is understood all manner of food meet [<i>suitable</i>] for man's eating.</p>	<p>Similar tr. No note.</p>
19:5	<p><i>And they called unto Lot and said unto him, Where are the men which came into thy house <u>tonight</u>?</i></p> <p>Note: The night is here taken for the evening, which is the beginning of the night.</p>	<p><i>Where are the men which came to thee <u>this night</u>?</i></p> <p>No note.</p>
19:15	<p><i>Take thy wife and thy two daughters, and that which is at hand, lest thou perish <u>in the sin</u> of the city.</i></p> <p>Note: The sin is taken for the sinner, as malice is for the wicked, and righteousness for the righteous.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>Lest thou be destroyed <u>in the punishment</u> of the city.</i></p> <p>No note.</p>
20:11	<p><i>Abraham answered, I thought that peradventure the <u>fear of God</u> was not in this place.</i></p> <p>Note: The fear of God among the Hebrews is principally taken for the honour and faith that we owe unto God, and that with such a love as the child hath to the father.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>Abraham answered, I thought thus, Surely the <u>fear of God</u> is not in this place.</i></p> <p>Note: He showeth that no honesty [<i>decency?</i>] can be hoped for, where the fear of God is not.</p>

<p>20:16</p>	<p>Unto Sarah he said ... Behold, <u>this thing shall be a covering</u> to thine eyes, and unto all that are with thee, and unto all men an <u>excuse</u>.</p> <p>Note: 'Covering' and 'excuse' is all one [are one and the same].</p> <p>[OED: 'Excuse' = an apology for, or in mitigation or extenuation - here, of Abimelech's offence. Discussed below.]</p>	<p>Totally new tr: Behold, <u>he is the</u> ⁽¹⁾<u>veil of thine eyes to all that are with thee, and to all others: and she was</u> ⁽²⁾<u>thus reprov</u>ed.</p> <p>Note 1: Such an head, as with whom thou mayest be preserved from all dangers.</p> <p>Note 2: God caused this heathen king to reprove her because she dissembled, seeing that God had given her an husband as her veil and defence.</p>
<p>22:2</p>	<p>And he said, Take thy <u>only son</u> Isaac, whom thou lovest.</p> <p>Note: Only son for only beloved or most chiefly beloved above others, after the Hebrew phrase.</p>	<p>Take now thine <u>only son</u> Isaac, whom thou lovest.</p> <p>No note.</p>
<p>22:5</p>	<p>I and the lad will go yonder and <u>worship</u>.</p> <p>Note: To worship is here to do sacrifice.</p>	<p>I and the child will go yonder and <u>worship</u>.</p> <p>No note.</p>
<p>22:12</p>	<p>Now I know that thou <u>fearest</u> God, in that thou hast not kept thine only son from me.</p> <p>Note: I know; that is, I have experience [have proved] that thou fearest God.</p>	<p>New tr: Now I know that thou <u>fearest</u> God, seeing for my sake thou hast not spared thine only son.</p> <p>Note: That is, by thy true obedience, thou hast declared thy lively faith.</p>
<p>24:22</p>	<p>And as the camels had left drinking, he took a <u>golden earring</u> of half a shekel weight, and two <u>bracelets</u> for her hands.</p> <p>Note: Earrings are deckings [adornments] either to apparel the face and forehead of the woman, or the ears. And bracelets is to deck [adorn] the arms or hands.</p>	<p>New tr: And when the camels had left drinking, the man took a <u>golden</u> ^(1,2)<u>abillement</u> of half a shekel weight, and two <u>bracelets</u> for her hands.</p> <p>Note 1: Or, earring.</p> <p>Note 2: God permitted many things both in apparel and other things which are now forbid[den]: specially when they appertain not to our mortification.</p>
<p>24:26</p>	<p>The man bowed himself and <u>worshipped</u> the Lord.</p> <p>Note: To worship is here to give thanks.</p>	<p>Same tr.</p> <p>No note.</p>
<p>24:35</p>	<p>The Lord hath <u>blessed</u> my master out of measure.</p> <p>Note: God blesseth us when he giveth us his benefits [gifts, kindnesses].</p>	<p>New tr: The Lord hath <u>blessed</u> my master wonderfully.</p> <p>Note: To bless signifieth here to enrich, or increase with substance, as the text in the same verse declareth.</p>
<p>24:49</p>	<p>Tell me: and if not tell me also, that I may <u>turn me to the right hand or to the left</u>.</p> <p>Note: The right hand or the left: is no more than to say, but tell me one thing or another, that I may know whereunto to stick [what to count on], and is a phrase of the Hebrew.</p>	<p>Similar tr.</p> <p>Note: That is, that I may provide elsewhere.</p>

<p>25:6</p>	<p><i>And unto the sons of his [Abraham's] <u>concubines</u> he gave gifts.</i> Note: Concubines in the Scripture are not harlots, but wives: yet they bore no rule in the house, but were subject as servants. As Hagar was unto Sarah. [Rogers' desire is to make clear that there was no impropriety in this polygamous society. These were not kept mistresses who served the sexual needs of men who were not their husbands.]</p>	<p>New tr: <i>But unto the sons of the <u>concubines</u>, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts.</i> Note: Read Gen. 22:24. Which says, "Concubine is oftentimes taken in the good part for those women which were inferior to the wives." [If they were not <i>inferior wives</i>, but inferior to the wives, then they were not in fact wives. That makes them kept mistresses, or, in the early modern English sense, 'harlots.']</p>
<p>25:8</p>	<p><i>[Abraham died] and was <u>put</u> unto his <u>people</u>.</i> Note: To be put among his people is not only to be put in a goodly place of burial, but to be put with the company of the ancient fathers that died in the same faith that he did.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>[Abraham died] and was <u>gathered to his people</u>.</i> Note: Hereby the ancients signified that man by death perished not wholly, but as the souls of the godly lived after in perpetual joy, so the souls of the wicked in perpetual pain.</p>
<p>25:27</p>	<p><i>Jacob was a <u>simple</u> man.</i> Note: He is simple that is without craft and deceit, and continueth in believing and executing of God's will.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>Jacob was a <u>plain</u> man.</i> Note: Or, simple and innocent. [per the OED, 'plain' never meant simple or innocent.]</p>
<p>26:22</p>	<p><i>[Isaac said] we are <u>increased</u> upon the earth.</i> Note: Increased, as if he should say, after so great pains and labours, God hath given us peace and quietness. For quietness doth open and increase the heart, and sadness restraineth it.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>We <u>shall increase</u> upon the earth.</i> No note. [The tr. was changed into a prophecy of national expansion. Cf. Gen. 13:15, 46:3]</p>
<p>27:4</p>	<p><i>[Isaac said to Esau,] Let me eat, that my soul may <u>bless</u> thee before I die.</i> Note: Bless; that is, that my soul may wish thee good and pray to God for thee.</p>	<p><i>Bring it me, that I may eat, and that my soul may <u>bless</u> thee before I die.</i> Note: The carnal affection which he bare to his son made him forget that which God spoke to his wife, Gen. 25:23.</p>
<p>27:28</p>	<p><i>[May] God give thee of the <u>dew</u> of heaven.</i> Note: By this word 'dew' is understood of the Hebrews all that is in the firmament, which comforteth [<i>sustains</i>] the earth, as the sun, the moon, rain, and temperateness of weather.</p>	<p>Similar tr. No note.</p>
<p>27:28</p>	<p><i>And [give thee] of the <u>fatness</u> of the earth.</i> Note: By the fatness of the earth [the Hebrews] understand all that is brought forth beneath in the earth.</p>	<p>Similar tr. No note.</p>
<p>27:37</p>	<p><i>With <u>corn and wine</u> have I established him.</i> Note: By corn and wine is understood abundance of all temporal things.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>With <u>wheat and wine</u> have I furnished him.</i> No note.</p>

<p>31:42</p>	<p><i>Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the God whom Isaac <u>feareth</u> had been with me, surely thou haddest sent me away now all empty.</i> Note: Fear is taken for honour.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the <u>fear</u> of Isaac had been with me, surely thou haddest sent me away now empty.</i> Note: That is, the God whom Isaac did fear, and reverence.</p>
<p>32:10</p>	<p><i>With my <u>staff</u> came I over this Jordan.</i> Note: To go with a staff is a manner of speaking of the Hebrews, which signifieth nothing else but to go simply, barely, and without any riches or freight [<i>load of goods</i>].</p>	<p>Same tr. Note: That is, poor and without all provision.</p>
<p>38:29</p>	<p><i>[The midwife said,] Wherefore hast thou <u>rent a rent</u> upon thee?</i> Note: Rent a rent; that is, wherefore diddest thou open the matrix first, or was firstborn.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>How hast thou <u>broken the breach</u> upon thee?</i> Note: Or the separation between thee and thy brother.</p>
<p>42:22</p>	<p><i>And now verily see his <u>blood is required</u>.</i> Note: To require the blood of the hand of another is to take vengeance of the evil done unto him.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>Lo, his <u>blood is now required</u>.</i> Note: God will take vengeance upon us, and measure us with our own measure.</p>
<p>42:38</p>	<p><i>And so should ye <u>bring my gray head</u> with sorrow <u>unto the grave</u>.</i> Note: Bring me to my grave: that is, ye shall bring me to my death.</p>	<p>Similar tr. No note.</p>
<p>46:3</p>	<p><i>I will make of thee <u>a great people</u>.</i> Note: That is, I will multiply thy seed, so that many people shall come thereof.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>I will there make of thee <u>a great nation</u>.</i> No note. [Cf. Gen. 13:15, 26:22]</p>
<p>46:4</p>	<p><i>Joseph shall <u>put his hand upon thine eyes</u>.</i> Note: To put his hand upon his eyes is to be present at his death and to bury him.</p>	<p>Same tr. Note: Shall shut thine eyes when thou diest: which appertained to him that was most dearest, or chief of the kindred.</p>
<p>47:9</p>	<p><i>And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The <u>days of my pilgrimage</u> are 130 years.</i> Note: The day of his pilgrimage was all the time that he lived.</p>	<p>New tr: <i>The <u>whole time of my pilgrimage</u> is 130 years.</i> No note.</p>
<p>49:10</p>	<p><i>The <u>sceptre</u> shall not depart from Judah.</i> Note: Sceptre is here taken for power royal and dignity.</p>	<p>Same tr. Note : Sceptre; or, Kingdom.</p>
<p>49:16</p>	<p><i>Dan shall <u>judge</u> his people, as one of the tribes of Israel.</i> Note: Judge his people; that is, he shall rule and govern them.</p>	<p>Same tr. Note: Shall have the honour of a tribe.</p>

<p>49:20</p>	<p>Of Asher cometh <u>fat bread</u>, and he shall give pleasures for a king. Note: Fat bread; that is, plenteousness of the earth, as increase of corn and other, and therewith shall feed kings and all the people of the earth.</p>	<p>New tr: Concerning Asher, his <u>bread shall be fat</u> and he shall give pleasures for a king. Note: He shall abound in corn and pleasant fruits.</p>
<p>49:27</p>	<p>Benjamin is a ravishing <u>wolf</u>. In the morning he shall devour his prey, and at night he shall divide his spoil. Note: Wolf is here taken in a good sense, and signifieth a fervent preacher of God's word, as was Paul, in whom this text is verified [<i>seen and fulfilled</i>] (Ph'p. 3:5).</p>	<p>New tr: Benjamin shall raven as a <u>wolf</u>: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil. No note.</p>

Discussion of Genesis 20:16; 'Covering' vs. 'veil'

Genesis 20 relates the strange story of how Abraham, when he moved into the land of Gerar, told everyone that his wife Sarah was his sister. He instructed Sarah to go along with this falsehood, and she obeyed. Then King Abimelech in fact took the beautiful Sarah into his own residence. But God appeared to him and warned him to return her. Abimelech summoned Abraham and said to him,

Genesis 20:10-16, Matthew Bible What hast thou done unto us, and what have I offended thee, that thou shouldest bring on me and on my kingdom so great a sin? Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said moreover to Abraham, What sawest thou, that moved thee to do this thing?

And Abraham answered, I thought that peradventure the fear of God was not in this place, and that they [*people*] would slay me for my wife's sake: yet in very deed she is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not of my mother; and became my wife. And after God caused me to wander out of my father's house, I said to her, This kindness shalt thou shew unto me in all places where we come: that thou say of me that I am thy brother.

Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, menservants and women servants, and gave them to Abraham, and delivered him Sarah his wife again. And Abimelech said, Behold the land lieth before thee; dwell where it pleaseth thee best. And unto Sarah he said, See, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver. Behold, this thing shall be a covering to thine eyes, and unto all that are with thee, and unto all men an excuse.

MB note: 'Covering' and 'excuse' is all one.

In verse 16 (italicized), Tyndale translated the Hebrew word '*kesooth*' as "a covering." Here '*kesooth*' means a thing or gift that *covers for* an offence or injury in the eyes of the person(s) named. In his note, Rogers explained that 'covering' and 'excuse' had the same meaning. In early modern English 'an excuse' could be understood in a good sense, meaning something offered in mitigation of an offence. Thus Abimelech's gifts were intended to be both a covering and an excuse in that they covered and atoned for any harm and appearances of evil that the king had caused.

Hebrew scholar Gesenius confirms that 'kesooth' had this meaning in Genesis 20:16:

Metaph. *Covering of the eyes* [is] a gift of appeasing given to anyone that *he may shut his eyes* (with regard to something deserving reprehension) ... or a *present given in order to obtain pardon, a mulct*. So is the passage to be understood, which has a good deal troubled interpreters, Genesis 20:16.⁵ (Emphasis original)

The idiom did not trouble Tyndale or Rogers. However, it became troubling in the Geneva revision:

Genesis 20:15-16, GNV 1599 And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee, dwell where it pleaseth thee. Likewise to Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, *he is the* ⁽¹⁾*veil of thine eyes to all that are with thee*, and to all others; and *she was* ⁽²⁾*thus reprovved*.

Note 1: Such a head, as with whom thou mayest be preserved from all dangers.

Note 2: God caused this heathen king to reprove her because she dissembled, seeing that God had given her a husband as her veil and defence.

The GNV notes are contrary to common sense. Sarah's head, Abraham, did not preserve her from danger, but exposed her to danger. (Perhaps he thought his lie was the least of dangers; the text does not say.) The GNV also says strangely that Sarah was reprovved for dissembling, whereas by obeying her husband she in fact performed a wifely obligation that the GNV repeatedly insists on. Further, in the translation 'kesooth' is made to be a veil.⁶ Gesenius discussed the problems with this:

Several interpreters have taken a *covering of the eyes* to be a *veil*; and have thus rendered the whole passage, arbitrarily enough, *behold this is to thee a veil of the eyes*, i.e. with these thousand shekels (no little price indeed!) buy a veil for thyself, *for all who are with thee, and altogether for all*, i.e. that it may be manifest to all that thou art a married woman. They add that married women only wore veils, and that virgins did not; but this is altogether opposed to Eastern manners, and it cannot be proved.⁷

The KJV mostly followed the GNV. Moderns have recovered the sense given in the MB:

Genesis 20:16 in other Bibles

KJV Behold, *he is to thee a covering of the eyes*, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus *she was reprovved*.

RV Behold, *it is for thee a covering of the eyes* to all that are with thee; and in respect of all *thou art righted*.

RSV *It is your vindication* in the eyes of all who are with you; and before every one *you are righted*.

NIV *This is to cover the offense against you* before all who are with you; you are *completely vindicated*.

ESV *It is a sign of your innocence* in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone *you are vindicated*.

⁵ Gesenius' *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, s.v.3682.

⁶ Is this connected to the Islamic practice of veiling the face? The GNV often relied on rabbinic interpretations, as did Mohammed.

⁷ Gesenius, s.v. 3682. However, Gesenius construes the Hebrew word rendered 'excuse' in the MB more in accordance with the GNV rendering; s.v. 3198. Jay Green translates it with "you are justified."

It is evident that, contrary to the subtle condemnations of the 1560 Geneva Bible preface, Tyndale kept “Hebrew phrases” in his translations. Also, Rogers treated them with care and thoughtfulness in his notes. There was no need for further exposition by the puritans – unless, that is, the real intent was to change the meaning and interpretation. And in fact, that is what they did more often than not. It is to the reader to judge the merit of their new translations and expositions, but I know which I trust and believe are truly agreeable to the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, the Matthew Bible does not reveal irreverence toward Hebrew manners of speech, nor a lack of integrity. It was faithful to the Hebrew, and John Rogers provided competent and godly commentaries.

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