

Summative Tables

I have given you a lot to wade through in previous documents about translations. You may find all the information that you seek in the table below. Once you get the quick and dirty information that you seek, then you may return to the individual examinations of the various translations for more information. This looks at first, what is it that you might want in a Bible, and then suitable translations of Bibles are then named.

Also listed are additional reference materials, including material on the Greek and Hebrew languages.

[Summative Table](#)

[Cut to the Chase...](#)

[Format of Translations](#)

[Additional Hebrew Reference Works](#)

[Additional Greek Reference Works](#)

[Additional Reference Works](#)

[Guide to Recommended Hebrew Reference Works](#)

[Hebrew Grammatical Works](#)

Summative Table	
Very literal, almost word-for-word translations, designed for serious and careful study:	NKJV, ESV, NASB, Voice in the Wilderness, Modern KJV, Literal Translation of the Holy Bible, The Emphasized Bible, The Amplified Bible. Also very accurate, but not as readable: Scotfield KJV, Young's Literal Translation.
The best Bible (in order of preference):	NKJV with Scotfield Notes; NKJV with NIV notes; NASB with Scotfield Notes; NASB with NIV notes. I don't know if some of these even exist, but if I was to do it all over again, these would have been my choices for my primary Bible.
The translation is also good literature:	KJV, NKJV, ESV, REB and the Tanakh (1985) . One of the reasons that the KJV stood for so many years is, it was an accurate translation, but it was a powerful and literal rendering as well. O, that even Shakespear could this well write!

Summative Table

Other sources for very literal translations:	Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary on the Old Testament, offer a translation as they exegete any given passage. Apart from being in Old English, the translation is generally very good. Barnes occasionally has a passage or two translated out—however, this is not throughout his commentary. Kenneth Wuest has a four volume set of commentaries on much of the New Testament, and included is a very literal rendering of most of the books of the New Testament. Finally, I have a book called <i>The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament</i> and it has an interlinear word-by-word rendering of the New Testament, along with a slightly more free translation. The NKJV is printed along the side of the Greek in a different column.
Reasonably literal, orthodox, but relatively easy-to-read Bible translations:	NASB, NKJV, ESV and <i>The Amplified Bible</i> .
Literate, accurate and relatively easy-to-read Old Testament translation (this is a better translation, in many ways, than, for instance, the CEV, NLT, REB):	Tanakh (JPS—1985) .
Modern English translation which is both easy to follow and yet reasonably accurate:	God’s Word™, NIV, <i>The Amplified Bible</i> .
Reasonably accurate, thought-for-thought translations	God’s Word™, REB, NEB, NAB, NJB, NIV . All of these translations have their own weaknesses.
Best <i>reading</i> Bible (either for reading to yourself or for reading aloud):	NLT, JPS (Tanakh—1985), CEV, the Message, NAB, NJB .
Modern English translation with a conservative bias:	NASB, NKJV, ESV, CEV, God’s Word™ .
Very easy to read, easy to understand translations:	NLT, TEV, CEV .

Summative Table	
Most pleasantly formatted or laid out:	CEV, NLT. The Open Bible (the NLT) has the most extras, which are also pleasantly laid out. However, in both cases, the quality of the extras is at times questionable.
Modern English translations which stray significantly from the original text (we might call these the more imaginative texts):	CEV, NLT, TEV. Note that, even though the CEV has a very conservative bias, it is not very close to the original. It is barely a thought-for-thought translation.
Translations which I find interesting.	The Modern Language Bible (New Berkeley Version), The Ferar-Fenton Bible.
Modern English translation with a fairly theologically liberal bias:	NEB, The Living Bible, Moffatt's Translation.
Traditional Jewish order for the Old Testament:	The Complete Jewish Bible ; the Tanakh .
Bibles in chronological order:	The Reese Chronological Bible (KJV); The Narrated Bible (NIV). On the plus side for Reese, there are dates on almost every page. On the negative side, these dates are, in some cases, way off. Also, I don't know that I agree with its sequencing of the narratives. The Narrated Bible seems to flow, whereas Reese's Chronological Bible seems to be more choppy; however, one very nice feature of Reese's Bible is that the history of Israel and Judah are laid side-by-side, one occupying one column, the other occupying the other. In the Narrated Bible, Judah is covered for awhile, and then Israel, and then Judah again. For intensive study purposes, there is no clear favorite. For light studying, either would work. If you need dates, then Reese's is for you. If you simply want to read the Bible through chronologically, then the Narrated Bible is the best choice.
Strongly recommended:	<i>The Amplified Bible, God's Word™, ESV, KJV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV, Young's Literal Translation, Rotherham's Emphasized Bible.</i>
Recommended as a second Bible:	Any of those directly above, as well as NIV, REB, NEB, NJB, NAB, NLT.

Summative Table	
Recommended if your reading skills are particularly weak or if your English is poor:	The Easy English Bible, The New Simplified Bible, Today's English Version, The New Living Translation, The Contemporary English Bible.
Translations with part of all of the Apocrypha—not every printing of these translations will have the Apocrypha included (one of my NRSV 's has it; and two do not).	The NRSV , the REB , the NAB and the NJB .
The translation with the greatest number of footnotes on variant readings (however, these predate the Dead Sea Scrolls):	Rotherham's <i>Emphasized Bible</i> .
The two translations which appear to make the most use of the Dead Sea Scrolls.	NRSV and NAB .
Translations which tend to follow the Septuagint as often as not:	Rotherham's <i>The Emphasized Bible</i> , the NRSV , the REB , the NAB and the NJB . The TEV also tends to follow the Septuagint (but not as often as the others mentioned).
Translations which tend to follow the Massoretic text almost exclusively:	The Complete Jewish Bible , the Tanakh , God's Word™ , the KJV , the NKJV , the NASB , the NIV and Young's Translation .
Carry the <i>imprimatur</i> , which indicates that this translation is acceptable to the Catholic Church. Catholic Church scholars were involved in the translation and sponsorship of the REB .	NRSV , NAB , NJB .

Summative Table

The next two distinguishing factors need a preface. The separation of the Bible into chapter and verses was done long after Scripture was actually written; therefore, although we use such separations continually, they are sometimes poorly done. In my opinion, if you have to look carefully at a translation in order to note where one verse ends and another begins, that is superior to a Bible where each verse is carefully laid out, separate from its adjacent verses. The writers of Scripture wrote in a more flowing style, and the flow of their thoughts may extend over several verses—so when the verse separation is emphasized, this logical thought-flow is sometimes lost. Quite obviously, if you use Bible software rather than a physical, carry-in-your-hand Bible, this distinction is less pronounced.

Verse separation is not emphasized (good):	CEV, Rotherham's Emphasized Bible, NAB, NIV, NJB, NLT (or, The Open Bible), NRSV, REB, the Tanakh, TEV
Separation into verses is emphatic (bad):	The Amplified Bible, KJV, NASB, NKJV
Influenced by charismatics .	NAB, NJB, NRSV, REB, RSV, TEV
Updated or supplanted versions:	ASV, KJV, NEB, RSV, The Living Bible
Successors to above:	NASB, NKJV, REB, NRSV, NLT (or, The Open Bible).
Best footnote content:	Scofield's KJV, NIV Study Bible
Best formatting of footnotes:	NLT, NIV Study Bible
Worst formatting for footnotes	NRSV
Very good information on LXX and Dead Sea Scrolls in footnotes	NRSV
Excellent information on the LXX and Dead Sea Scrolls in footnotes	The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible does contain good information on the Dead Sea Scrolls, and often footnotes alternate readings elsewhere.
Excellent information on LXX, Vulgate, and other ancient versions in footnotes	Rotherham's <i>The Emphasized Bible</i>
Almost a total lack of footnotes	God's Word™, Complete Jewish Bible, NAB, NJB, Young's Literal Translation
Not recommended at all for any reason:	Moffatt's Translation, the New World Translation (the self-serving Jehovah Witness Bible translation).

Summative Table	
Cut to the Chase...	
My Recommendations:	For a first Bible, I would suggest either the NASB or the NKJV (if either one is available with Scofield notes, then it comes with an even higher recommendation). The ESV is also an excellent Bible, and free on the internet (I am disappointed that pronomial references to God are not capitalized, however). I believe that everyone should own at least one accurate rendering of Scripture. As a second Bible, I would strongly recommend the NIV Study Bible . Finally, for a third version, I would recommend either God's Word™ or The Open Bible (the NLT) . If your reading level is low, then I strongly recommend the TEV (also known as the Good News Bible). If you do much by way of personal Bible study, you need Scofield's Notes (which is now available in e-sword).

Format of Translations	
Poetry is distinguished from prose.	CEV, The Complete Jewish Bible, God's Word™, the James Moffatt Translation, NAB, NASB (barely), NJB, NRSV, The Open Bible (NLT), REB, Rotherham's <i>Emphasized Bible</i> , TEV, <i>Young's Literal Translation</i> (again, barely).
Written in true paragraph form.	CEV, The Complete Jewish Bible (barely), God's Word™, NAB, NJB, NIV (barely), NRSV, The Open Bible (NLT), REB, TEV, <i>Young's Literal Translation</i> (barely).
Written strictly verse by verse. Each new verse is formatted as a new paragraph.	<i>The Amplified Bible</i> (I have an old version from the 1960's), NASB, NKJV, KJV (wherein, the poetry is not generally distinguishable from prose—it depends a lot upon who packaged the KJV).
Verse numbering is unobtrusive.	The Complete Jewish Bible, CEV, NAB, NIV, NJB, NLT, NRSV, REB, TEV.
Verses are written on along the side rather than interspersing them as the divisions occur.	The Complete Jewish Bible (in the poetry sections only), the James Moffatt Translation, NEB, NKJV (in the poetry sections only), NRSV (in the poetry sections only).

Words not found in the original manuscripts but added to help with the understanding of the verse are distinguished.	God's Word™, KJV, NASB, NKJV, <i>Young's Literal Translation</i> .
Two verses are occasionally combined so that a better understanding of the passage can be achieved (that is, you cannot determine where one verse ends and the other begins).	CEV, the James Moffatt Translation, The Open Bible (NLT), TEV (very occasionally).
Verse order is changed with the intention of providing an easier to understand translation.	CEV, the James Moffatt Translation.
In my opinion, poetry should look like poetry and prose should look like prose. Even the proverbs should look different from poetry or prose. Prose should have groups of verses placed together in paragraph form. There is no distinguishing of verses in the original languages, so the idea of combining two or more verses is not a bad idea. The less obtrusive the verse numbering is, the better.	

Additional Hebrew Reference Works

Interlinear Hebrew-English Bibles	Owens' Analytical Key to the Old Testament (it is outstanding as a language aide); the reference numbers refer to the Brown Driver Briggs Lexicon (which itself is a must for anyone who delves into the Hebrew of any Old Testament passage). English translation with it is only fair to good. Zodiates' The Complete Word Study Old Testament is also a good interlinear for the Old Testament, with more helps in the back of the Bible (however, the parsing consists of considerably less information than Owen's work and the reference numbers are Strong's).
Hebrew Concordances	You <i>must</i> own The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament if you have any interest in the exegesis of the Old Testament and understanding of the use of the Hebrew words.

Additional Hebrew Reference Works

Hebrew Lexicons

Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon is given as the standard. However, **Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament** is invaluable; you should have them both, as Gesenius is better organized and, in my opinion, offers better English equivalents. For instance, ṭîyrâh (ṭîyrâh) [pronounced *tee-RAW*], is said to mean *wall, fence, enclosure* in Gesenius; in BDB, its meanings are given as *encampment, battlement*. Strong's #2918 BDB #377. The former set of meanings is much more accurate. If you rely on **Owens Analytical Key to the Old Testament**, then you will need BDB, as it is keyed to BDB. Now, **Strong's Concordance** has Greek and Hebrew Lexicons in back, which are adequate for new believers, and Zodhiates' **Complete Word Study Old Testament** has an incomplete, but fairly good lexicon in the back (and it also has **Strong's Concordance** in back as well). Of these, only **Strong's** offers the pronunciation of the words (**The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance** also offers pronunciations).

Additional Greek Reference Works

Interlinear Greek-English Bibles

Zodhiates' **The Complete Word Study New Testament** and **The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament** are both very good works. Zodhiates has the KJV and above the words are Strong's numbers along with a limited morphology (the gender, number and person are not given); the Greek text is off to the side. The latter work has the NKJV off to the side, with the Greek text in the middle of their Bible. Below the Greek text is a literal and then a slightly less literal rendering. There is nothing by way of Strong's numbers or morphology. Quite frankly, I have not found anything for the New Testament as good as **Owen's Analytical Key to the Old Testament** (which is, by the way, keyed only to BDB numbers and not to Strong's numbers).

Additional Greek Reference Works

Greek Bible Reference work	The Analytical Greek New Testament . This does not have an English text, but it has a complete morphology of each Greek word. No Strong's numbers, unfortunately. You might call this a <i>grammatical</i> interlinear.
Greek Concordances	For work in the Greek, you must own The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament . For the beginner, Zodhiates's Complete Word Study New Testament is an interlinear with a reasonable Greek concordance.
Greek Lexicons	Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (3 volumes); Arndt and Gingrich's Greek-English Lexicon ; Zodhiates's Word Study Dictionary New Testament ; Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon ;

Additional Reference Works

Commentaries: Barnes Notes	Barnes Notes are somewhat uneven—some books are given great, exegetical examinations, and others receive far less attention. Nevertheless, this is one of the least expensive and most insightful set of commentaries available. Barnes Notes are tremendous, readable, scholarly and literate. Barnes Notes is also available with e-sword.
Commentaries: <i>Thru the Bible Radio</i>	J. Vernon McGee's <i>Thru the Bible Radio</i> commentary (it's available as individual books, as a book or on at least two different CD's, and it can be downloaded from his website as well). McGee is not even a tenth as detailed as Barnes. However, McGee covers almost every major doctrine there is in language that anyone can understand. His overviews and illustrative material, which often seems too simple, belie his theological brilliance. You will get a very good, general understanding of any chapter of Scripture from examining McGee's work; and you will chance upon almost every major theological doctrine, sometimes without realizing it.

Additional Reference Works

Commentaries: Keil and Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*

Although I quote from **Keil and Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament***, their writing is dense, sometimes difficult to follow, and it presupposes a working knowledge of several languages. Let me give you an example; this is a quote from Keil and Delitzsch: Just as $\eta\lambda$ signifies *imo vero* (58:3) when it comes after an antecedent clause that is expressly or virtually a negative, it may mean "nevertheless, ὁμῶς," when it opposes a contrastive to an affirmative assertion, as is very frequently the case with $\delta\lambda$ or $\delta\lambda\iota$.¹ Did that make sense to you? This sentence illustrates what I mean by the descriptor *dense*. And you may have noticed that in one sentence, apart from English, we had three other languages bandied about. Keil and Delitzsch are generally very accurate, they provide a great many insights, and even though I don't quote from them extensively, I often use the information that they present. What tends to happen when I study their work in association with a personal exegetical study is that they will, more than any other commentary, cause me to go back and revise or better explain what I have already written. They push me to be more precise in my handling of Scripture. One sentence from them might cause me to go back into my exegesis and add a two-page table to more carefully cover a particular topic. If you are not involved in careful exegetical study, then this commentary would just gather dust on your shelf. However, if you exegete Scripture, and you recognize the importance of the original languages, then this might be the commentary is for you.

¹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 321.

Additional Reference Works

Horrible Commentaries:	Lest you think that I simply named the commentaries which I have as the best that is out there, think again. The ITC series, from what I have read so far (<i>1 & 2 Samuel</i>) is horrid. Gnana Robinson, the author of this particular booklet, at the very beginning superimposes 20 th century values and rhetoric on his examination of the Scripture. His supposition in chapter one causes him to completely misinterpret the portion of the sacrifice that was given to Hannah. He makes a host of theological errors (such as saying that the Bible allows for a heathen to worship God in their own way) ² as well as factual errors (Robinson mixes up his Bethshemesh's in passages where it is clear that the cities referred to are in different tribal areas). ³
Weak Commentaries:	Gordon's commentary on I & II Samuel, although not nearly as bad as Robinson's, is simply unremarkable. Gordon has an extensive vocabulary, which makes reading his commentary enjoyable. Unfortunately, the read does not yield much fruit. The additional notes found in the NIV Study Bible and Scofield's Bibles are far superior to anything found in either of these two commentaries.

² Gnana Robinson, *1 & 2 Samuel; Let Us Be Like the Nations*; International Theological Commentary; Eerdmans's Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, ©1993; p. 36.

³ Gnana Robinson, *1 & 2 Samuel; Let Us Be Like the Nations*; International Theological Commentary; Eerdmans's Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, ©1993; p. 40.

Additional Reference Works

Old Testament History

I wasn't certain how to classify Edersheim's *Bible History Old Testament*, but I *had* to mention it. Edersheim writes, very eloquently might I add, a history, in his own words, of the Old Testament, including such details as we might miss in our reading of Scripture. You may think, *why not just read the Old Testament?* Here's why: (1) Edersheim is a very enjoyable read. If your mother or father ever put you to bed by recalling a Bible story from memory, this is what Edersheim does, with the added bonus that he has a marvelous way with words. (2) There have been several instances where, in my study of an Old Testament passage, that I really did not get the gist of what was happening. For instance, in the battle between the 20 Philistines and Jonathan with his armorbearer, I did not understand the description of 1Sam. 14:14, nor did I correctly picture the fight which ensued. I pictured this movie version with Jonathan and his armorbearer maybe back-to-back, fighting twenty men, like, say, Buffy and one of her slayerettes against a pack of demons. However, this is not the picture painted by Scripture, but I could not see it (and, in my defense, I had first gone through nearly 20 translations and a half-dozen commentaries, and still did not have the picture). Then when I read what Edersheim wrote, the picture became quite clear.

Let me add that, Edersheim's work is different from the typical commentary, as he focuses more upon the narrative than the theology. This does not mean that he ignores theology; he just spends more time with the story, which tends to convey the theology behind it.

Bible Dictionaries:

I tend to use J. D. Douglas's *The New Bible Dictionary* the most often, although there is little about it that sticks out in my mind, apart from it being a very good one volume source.

Additional Reference Works

Bible Encyclopedia:	My favorite is far and away <i>The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible</i> . Because of the huge number of contributors, there will be times that it will contradict itself and many times that the material has a liberal bend.
Manners and Customs Reference Works:	I have several, but Freeman's is generally the best. It is arranged in the order of the Bible, rather than topically (like Gower and Matthews).
Miscellaneous Reference Works:	<i>Figures of Speech Used in the Bible</i> by Bullinger. Although I have read comments now and again which are negative concerning Bullinger, this is an outstanding work and helps to clarify and classify various idioms and figures of speech which are found in Scripture.

Translations Influenced by the Greek and Hebrew

Translation	1Samuel 10:10b
The Amplified Bible	...he spoke under divine inspiration among them.
CEV (The Promise)	...and right there in the middle of the group he began
The Complete	...and he prophesied along with them.
The Emphasized	...and he was moved to prophesy in their midst.
God's Word	He prophesied with them.
KJV	...and he prophesied among them.
NASB	...he prophesied among them.
NKJV	...he prophesied among them.
NLT (The Open	...he, took, began to prophesy.
The Septuagint	...he prophesied in the midst of them.
Young's Literal	...he prophesies in their midst

Translations Influenced by Charismatics

Translation	1Samuel 10:10b
James Moffatt	...a band of dervishes met him; he prophesied along with
JPS (Tanakh)	...he spoke in ecstasy among them.
NAB	...he joined them in their prophetic state.
NJB	...he fell into ecstasy with them.
NRSV	...he fell into a prophetic frenzy with them.
REB	...he too was filled with prophetic rapture.
TEV (The Good	...he joined in their ecstatic dancing and shouting.

The following is a check-off list for some of the characteristics of various translations. An X in the box means that this is a true characteristic of the translation.

Characteristics of the More Literal Translations							
	<i>Amplified Bible</i>	Complete Jewish Bible	God's Word™	NASB	NKJV	NRSV	<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>
Capitalizes pronouns which refer to members of the Godhead	X			X	X		X
Capitalizes all nouns which refer to members of the Godhead	X	X	X	X	X		X
Does not exhibit undue charismatic influence	X	X	X	X	X		X

The following is a check-off list for some of the characteristics of various translations. An X in the box means that this is a true characteristic of the translation.

Characteristics of the Moderately Literal Translations				
	<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	JPS	Moffatt's Translation**	NIV
Capitalizes pronouns which refer to members of the Godhead		X*		
Capitalizes all nouns which refer to members of the Godhead	X			X
Does not exhibit undue charismatic influence	X			X

* The pronoun *us* in Gen. 1:26 is not capitalized, but individual pronouns which refer to Jehovah God of Israel are. This is a *Jewish* translation, so we would not expect a pronoun referring to the *Spirit of God* to be capitalized.

** Moffatt's translation may belong in the *less literal* category. He is occasionally close to the Hebrew text and at other times, he free-styles.

The following is a check-off list for some of the characteristics of various translations. An X in the box means that this is a true characteristic of the translation.

Characteristics of the Less Literal Translations

	CEV	NAB	NEB	NJB	NLT	REB	TEV
Capitalizes pronouns which refer to members of the Godhead							
Capitalizes all nouns which refer to members of the Godhead	X	?		?	X		
Does not exhibit undue charismatic influence	X				X		

The question marks in the category of capitalizing nouns which refers to all members of the Godhead indicate that there are several places where it is likely that Spirit of God is found in the Hebrew, but their translation hides this fact and renders it wind (e.g., Gen. 1:2 1Sam. 19:20). After spending several years with this book, I warmed up considerably to the paraphrases. However, I find this chart, when compared to the previous 2 charts, to be disturbing.