

Review of the *Complete Jewish Bible* New Testament and Comparison with *The Good News of Messiah*

David Stern is the translator of the CJB-NT, and Daniel Gregg of GNM.

Greek ἐκκλησία	CJB Messianic Community	GNM Assembly
-------------------	----------------------------	-----------------

CJB's translation is not in any standard Greek lexicon. GNM's is. It is commendable to avoid the word *Church*, which in spite of being in lexicons, is not what the word means. The GNM strives to use only well documented attested meanings of each Greek word. The acceptableness of paraphrasing goes to extremes in the NET Bible and the MSG Bible. But translators must not give into peer pressure that it is acceptable in a proper translation showing fidelity to the original.

Greek ἄγγελος	CJB angel	GNM messenger
------------------	--------------	------------------

The CJB continues the tradition of transliterating the Greek rather than translating it. As a result, the CJB text does not say what the word means, and it has to be known beforehand what the word means by the reader. Transliterating is the practice of copying the form of the original word into one's translation rather than actually translating the meaning of the word. Translating the meaning of a word requires the form of the word to differ in the target language.

Greek δοῦλος	CJB slave	GNM servant
-----------------	--------------	----------------

The word may also mean "servant." In ancient times the distinction between servant and slave was not so well defined. Since then the meanings have diverged, and the word "slave" has taken on negative connotations that it did not bear in ancient times. The CJB translates the same word "servant" in the Torah and Prophets. Stern clearly overlooked a need for concordance and made the wrong choice in the CJB-NT.

Greek πίστις	CJB trust	GNM faithfulness trusting faithfulness
-----------------	--------------	--

The CJB-NT consistently renders *trust*. But the translation is inconsistent in rendering *faithfulness* in about 20 passages that are theologically definitive and require the meaning *faithfulness*. The CJB renders Habakkuk 2:4 "trusting faithfulness," but when it gets to quoting the same verse in the CJB-NT at Romans 1:17, the text is simply *trust*. So which is it? Does *pistis* merely mean "trust" or does it mean trusting faithfulness or faithfulness in Hab. 2:4? The Good News of Messiah renders the word "faithfulness" generally, and "trusting faithfulness" where the context indicates an emphasis on the trust part of the noun. Furthermore, The Good News of Messiah is translated with the fact that quotations from the Torah and Prophets should agree in meaning in both the Torah and Prophets and The Good News of Messiah.

Greek	CJB	GNM
πίστις	trust	faithfulness
πίστεως	trusting	trustingly faithful
πιστὸς	faithful	faithful

This table shows the usual way each translation handles the *pistis* root word. The GNM achieves concordance, marked in red. The CJB has a major discordance with the adjective form of the word. Other translators try to achieve concordance with “belief,” “believe,” and “believer.” Discordance is a clue that something is fundamentally wrong with the meaning the translator has assigned to the word in question. *Pistis* is *fidelity*, of which trust is a component.

Greek	CJB	GNM
δικαιοσύνη	way of making people righteous in his sight	justice

In Romans 1:17, 3:21, and 10:3, the CJB expands one Greek word that has only one matching Hebrew root to go with it into a whole paraphrase. The reason that Stern translated these verses this way is that he subscribed to the false Lutheran doctrine of imputed righteousness, which is called *forensic righteousness*. In brief this heresy claims that God views the believer as perfectly righteous based on the merits of Christ. I would not say Stern was a heretic, but he certainly grew up adopting some heretical ideas of how a person becomes righteous, and when a person is considered righteous by the Almighty.

GNM: For the justice of the Almighty in it is revealed from [his] faithfulness to [our] faithfulness; even as it is written, but the righteous by faithfulness will live.

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."

In Romans 1:17, clearly the CJB wants to limit *pistis* to trust and trust only. Notice the added words, “and from beginning to end.” The CJB does not mark such obvious theologically based interpretations in italics. Yet in Hab. 2:4, which is quoted here the CJB has “but the righteous will attain life through trusting faithfulness.” It is easier from a linguistic point of view to explain that trust goes with faithfulness rather than faithfulness with trust, and a theological point of view also, since a great number of Christians subscribe to the false doctrine of believe only. It appears that the CJB is trying to have it both ways.

To make sense out of Romans 1:17 requires getting two perpetually mistranslated words right. The first is “justice,” and the second is “faithfulness.” These are, by the way, both the first definition of each respective word in the standard BDAG 3rd edition Greek Lexicon. God’s faithfulness is his demonstration and provision for justice in Messiah. Yeshua paid the penalty for our sins. This is Yeshua’s faithfulness and the Father’s justice.

Since I have quoted Romans 1:17 from the CJB, I further observe that the translation “Tanakh” for “it is written” is not a translation but simply an effort to make what Paul said more *Jewish*, even though there is no hint of it in the original language! Certainly, Paul needs to be understood as a Jew, but it is not the job of the translator to make that point by mistranslating it into the text. The CJB, therefore, might better be called a Targum for Jews.

Everything stands or falls on the correct translation of Romans 1:17 and other verses like it. If Paul’s thesis is skewed, mistranslated, or misinterpreted, then readers will never understand Paul.

Greek
νόμος

CJB
legalism
legalistic
rule

GNM
norm

GNM: So, I am finding the norm with my wishing to do good that in me evil is present.

CJB: So I find it to be the rule, a kind of perverse "torah," that although I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me!

In Roman 7:21, the CJB shows that it does not understand the usage of *nomos* in Greek. Let us now check out what happens when two words are mistranslated for Gal. 2:21:

GNM: For if **justice** is [administered] through the [legal] **norm**, then Messiah died needlessly.

CJB: for if the way in which one attains righteousness is through legalism, then the Messiah's death was pointless.

The CJB does not indicate added words. Any time words are added, one should be able to read the text without them and be able to gain the same understanding from the context. What Paul meant here was that divine justice could not be satisfied the normal way, which requires the death of the sinner, so the Father allowed an exception by which justice would be satisfied by Messiah's death.

The translation of the CJB still subscribes to the notion that a person cannot become righteous by right living and obedience. This way of becoming righteous is called "legalism" even though it is not legalism. True legalism is trying to obtain mercy by one's works. One is forgiven for free, but one must obey to be righteous. Therein lies the distinction. But enemies of the Torah say that being righteous by obeying the Torah is legalism, in spite of what Deut. 6:25 says.

Now let us observe how all the errors in the CJB compound together in Romans 10:4:

CJB: For the goal at which the **Torah** aims is the Messiah, who offers **righteousness** to everyone who **trusts**.

GNM: For Měssiah is the end of the **norm** for **justice** to everyone **trustingly faithful**.



The sense of the CJB here is true. Torah does teach Messiah, and Messiah does give righteousness to those who obey him and trust him. But by mistranslating three words, the CJB has totally missed Paul's meaning of the Good News of Messiah. Paul is saying that Messiah ends the norm of judgment, and what one must do to have him end that norm and pay the penalty: be trustingly faithful.

The Good News of Messiah is available at www.torahtimes.org.

Daniel Gregg, copyright 2012. This article may be freely distributed provided no changes are made.

