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# Our Statement on the Contemporary Danish Bible 2020

by BSI staff

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Earlier this week, the Jerusalem Post published an article about a new contemporary translation of the Bible, produced by the Danish Bible Society. While new Bible translations are usually cause for celebration, this new contemporary Danish Bible is cause for serious concern.

Before commenting on the translation, we want to make it clear that we appreciate and respect the staff and the ministry of the Danish Bible Society, and recognize them as our brothers and

sisters in the Lord. They are a group of people very committed to making the Bible available and accessible to everyone, and have been doing so for many years.

**Our concern is strictly in regard to the translation itself.**

In the translation, called “Danish Contemporary Bible 2020” the term “Israel” is almost completely removed from the New Testament, and is changed several times in the Old Testament. As a national Bible Society, the Danish Bible Society did this project using their own budget and team and not under the supervision of the United Bible Societies. The Bible Society in Israel had no knowledge of the project prior to its publication.

In this new Danish Bible (which uses a New Testament translation from 2007), the term “Israel” only appears twice in the entire New Testament, despite appearing more than 60 times in the Greek from which the New Testament is translated. The term “Israel” has been replaced with “the Jewish people”, “the Jews”, “the people...”, and in some cases removed altogether.

A press release of the Danish Bible Society says this translation decision was made because, “for the secular reader, who does not know the Bible



well, 'Israel' could be referring only to a country. Therefore, the word 'Israel' in the Greek text has been translated in other ways, so that the reader understands it is referring to the Jewish people."

From our discussions with the Danish Bible Society, we understand that there was no political agenda behind this decision. The purpose was to engage a secular Danish audience with the word of God, and to make it personal to them.

The local body of believers as well as others in Israel and beyond were very surprised by and disappointed with the approach that the translators took regarding the term Israel and in its implementation in this translation.

We at the Bible Society in Israel have done some preliminary research regarding how the term "Israel" was translated throughout the new Danish Contemporary Bible 2020, and were troubled by what we found. Following are a few examples where the term "Israel" has been replaced or removed.

#### **New Testament:**

- Matt. 2:21: "and he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel." [speaking of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus' return from their time in Egypt] □ the





phrase “land of Israel” is changed to simply “home”.

- Matt. 15:31: “God of Israel” □ “God” (this repeats itself in other places).
- Luke 4:25: “many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah” □ “many Jewish widows in the time of Prophet Elijah.” [This is an anachronism: the word “Jewish” was not in use in Elijah’s time, and he was a prophet in the northern kingdom, not in Judah.]
- Luke 4:27: “many lepers in Israel” □ “many Jewish lepers” [Again, the word “Jewish” is anachronistic, and Elisha was in the northern kingdom.]
- John 1:49: “king of Israel” □ “king of all people”
- 2 Cor. 3:7: “...the Israelites could not gaze at Moses’ face.” □ “Moses’ face radiated so strongly that the Jews could not bear to see it.” [Anachronism, the term “Jews” was not then in use]

Though most Old Testament mentions of Israel remain intact, about 9% of the mentions have replaced or removed the term “Israel”. The term “Israel” appears 2,521 times in the Hebrew Bible. In the new Danish Contemporary Bible 2020 it appears 2,316 times. Below are several examples of the changes.



## Old Testament:

- Ex. 24:10: "...they saw the God of Israel." □ "they saw God."
- Ps. 121:4: "He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." □ "He who takes care of us will not fall asleep, no he is not sleeping."
- Isa. 41:14: "Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel." □ "Jacob", "Israel" and "The Holy One of Israel" have been replaced/removed.
- Isa. 43:1: "But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.'" □ "O Israel" and "O Jacob" have been removed.
- Jer. 45:25: "Israel shall be justified and shall glory." □ "Israel" has been replaced with "my people..."
- Jer. 49:3: "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." □ "Israel" changed to "my chosen".
- Jer. 25:27: "the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel" □ "the Lord of Heaven"



- Jer. 33:7: "I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel..." □ "Judah and Israel" changed to "all my people".

While all translators must make difficult decisions, those decisions must be freed, as much as humanly possible, from any interpretation foreign to the text. Even if done to accommodate for a secular Danish audience, the meaning of the word of God must not be compromised. We believe that the replacing and removing of the term "Israel" in the way that it was done in the Danish Contemporary Bible 2020 was a harmful decision which has hurt many who love the word of God, in Israel and beyond.

We believe that the Danish Bible Society, as our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord, will seriously consider our feedback, which echoes the voices of many, and will take measures to correct their translation as necessary. Please pray with us that in all this, God will be glorified.

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The information provided above is just a small sample of our research. It is not based on media reports, but has been taken directly from the Contemporary Danish Bible 2020 itself. We hope that more information will soon be available.



To view the Danish Bible Society's press release regarding this matter, please click the following link.

<https://www.bibelselskabet.dk/new-danish-bible-2020-and-israel>

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