

New Testament Hebrew Translation Aims to Make Scriptures More Accessible to Jews

More than a century after a German scholar set out to translate the New Testament into Hebrew before it was even a spoken language, a new generation will now have an opportunity to read the latest edition of this translation in more contemporary parlance.

The Trinitarian Bible Society, based in London, presented the latest revision of Franz Delitzsch's Hebrew translation of the New Testament to Messianic leaders and others gathered at Yad Hashmona on Friday. A second event to introduce the new edition is scheduled for Sept. 4 in Haifa.

This revision – a culmination of 14 years of work – was published in 2025 and is aimed at keeping it faithful to the original Greek while modernizing the Hebrew. It represents a continuation of Delitzsch's aim to make the New Testament accessible to the Jewish people in their own language.

Unlike the Old Testament, the New Testament was written in Greek and was not translated into Hebrew for centuries despite being steeped in Jewish history, traditions, scriptures and people.

Dissatisfied with a previous Hebrew translation, Delitzsch – a German Lutheran – initially took on the monumental task himself in 1864, well before Hebrew was revived as a modern, spoken language. His first completed version was released 10 years later.

He wanted Jewish readers to encounter the New Testament as a

continuation of the Tanach, or Old Testament.

Today, with Hebrew spoken by millions and a modern State of Israel, Delitzsch's life's work has a potential audience he may never have imagined.

"Franz Delitzsch is one of my heroes," said Seth Postel, dean of the College of the Bible in Netanya, in a recorded message at the launch.



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Postel noted that the German Christian scholar was driven by a twofold mission: to make the Old Testament known to Christians and the New Testament known to Jews.

"To this day his life mission carries on," he said. "This is a testimony to a man who chose his life vision well."

The Trinitarian Bible Society originally published Delitzsch's Hebrew New Testament in 1964 based on his last edition which was published in 1892, two years after his death. The society commissioned this modern edition in order to address contemporary Hebrew.

Jonathan Arnold, CEO of Trinitarian Bible Society, told the gathering it was fitting to officially launch the latest edition of the Hebrew New Testament in Israel.

"It was our desire to build on the legacy that Delitzsch established and yet have a translation of modern Hebrew," he said.

The new edition was also designed to look familiar to Jewish readers. Arnold noted that its typography and format are similar to Jewish holy books, with the print stretching across a single column in a handheld-sized book.

Arnold said TBS wants "to make Delitzsch available for

generations to come for those who love his diligent style and for those who want to read his work in modern Hebrew.”

“We hope this will also reach Hebrew speakers in Israel and across the world,” Arnold told All Israel News. “Or that congregations will continue in the strength and dignity of a formally equivalent Hebrew New Testament; that young Hebrew speakers will find the revised language accessible without losing its biblical character.”

Since Hebrew is now spoken by millions, the challenge was to make the translation contemporary without stripping away Delitzsch’s distinctive style, said Tom Jamison, pastor of Tikvat Israel fellowship.

Some of the updates included clarity out of loyalty to the Greek, such as in John 5:18 where it was changed from “he was like God” to “he made himself equal to God.”

In John 3:3, a footnote was to expound upon the Greek which contains another interpretation of, “Except a man be born again”—in Greek this can also mean born from above.

“We hope it’s a big blessing,” Jamison said.

A committee including experts in biblical Hebrew and Greek examined the text verse by verse. Drafts were then given to Hebrew speakers and new immigrants to read and evaluate. If a phrase was not genuinely readable, the translators reexamined it.

Though the edition received accolades, not all Hebrew Bible readers are ready to migrate from their modern Hebrew translation.

“The Delitzsch represents the Jewishness of the New Testament and the Jewishness of Yeshua and Jewish literature, which is great. But I will keep to the Modern Hebrew translation for now,” one reader told ALL ISRAEL NEWS. “The Delitzsch sounds

like the Old Testament, which is why fewer people read it. But it will be good for the next generation of Hebrew readers to use the Delitzsch in the future.”

Delitzsch was born into a poor family in Leipzig in 1813. The family’s close relationship with a Jewish bookseller set the course of his life. Franz Julius Levi Hirsch taught Delitzsch to read Hebrew as a young man. Later, after a period of intellectual struggle with rationalism at university, Delitzsch returned to his Christian faith and his interest in Hebrew became a driving passion in his career.

In his translations, Delitzsch drew heavily on the language and rhythms of biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, while working from the Greek New Testament. He repeatedly revised his work, continually seeking to improve the translation, producing 11 painstaking translations.

“He was never done,” Postel said at the launch. “He kept trying to make it better.”

Delitzsch’s commitment to producing an accurate and faithful version is echoed by the Trinitarian Bible Society’s approach. Arnold invited Israeli readers to examine the revision and share feedback.

“We don’t present this and say, ‘Here is a perfect translation,’” Arnold said. “What a fearful thing that would be to say. We hope it will be for the glory of God.”

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