



Gender, the Bible, and the Art of Translation

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Sacks has published widely on modern Jewish thought, including the 2017 book *Moses Mendelssohn's Living Script* (Indiana University Press). He has also played leadership roles in a wide range of efforts to elevate the voices of emerging scholars and promote conversations between academia and the broader public, including spearheading partnerships with civic, philanthropic, and Jewish institutions. Prior to pursuing graduate studies, he worked at a consulting firm in the area of nonprofit fundraising and marketing.

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Elias Sacks (The Jewish Publication Society)

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Genesis 1:26-27

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרֵדוּ בְדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ
הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ: וַיְבָרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

King James Version (1611)

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

New Revised Standard Version (1989)

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

THE JPS TANAKH – New Jewish Publication Society (NJPS) Translation (1985)

And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

THE JPS TANAKH: Gender-Sensitive Edition – Revised Jewish Publication Society (RJPS) Translation (2023)

And God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." And God created humankind in the divine image, creating it in the image of God—creating them male and female.

Isaiah 2:2-4

בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים נִבּוֹן יְהוָה הָרַב בֵּית־יְהוָה בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָרִים ... וְהָלְכוּ עַמִּים רַבִּים וְאָמְרוּ לְכוּ וְנַעֲלֶה אֶל־הַר־יְהוָה אֶל־
בֵּית אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וְיִרְנֻנוּ מִדְּרָכָיו וְנִלְכֶה בְּאַרְחֻתָיו כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וְדְבַר־יְהוָה מִירוּשָׁלַם: וְשָׁפַט בֵּין הַגּוֹיִם וְהוֹכִיחַ
לְעַמִּים רַבִּים וְכִתְּתוּ חַרְבוֹתָם לְאַתִּים וְחַנִּיתוֹתֵיהֶם לְמַזְמְרוֹת לֹא־יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל־גּוֹי חֶרֶב וְלֹא־יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְחָמָה:

NJPS (1985)

In the days to come, the Mount of the LORD's House shall stand firm above the mountains...And the many peoples shall go and say: "Come, let us go up to the Mount of the LORD, to the House of the God of Jacob; that He may instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths." For instruction shall come forth from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Thus He will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not take up sword against nation; they shall never again know war."

RJPS (2023)

In the days to come, the Mount of God's House shall stand firm above the mountains...And the many peoples shall go and say: "Come, let us go up to the Mount of God, to the House of the God of Jacob; that we may be instructed in God's ways, and that we may walk in God's paths." For instruction shall come forth from Zion, the word of God from Jerusalem. Thus [God] will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not take up sword against nation; they shall never again know war.

Psalms 24:1-10

לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר לַיהוָה הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ תִּבְּל וַיִּשְׁבֵי בָּהּ ... שְׁאֵי שְׁעָרִים רָאשֵׁיכֶם וְהַנְּשֹׂאוֹ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם וַיִּבּוֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד:
מִי זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד יְהוָה עֲזִיז וְגִבּוֹר יְהוָה גִּבּוֹר מִלְחָמָה: שְׁאֵי שְׁעָרִים רָאשֵׁיכֶם וַיִּשְׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם וַיִּבּוֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד:
מִי הוּא זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הוּא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד סֵלָה:

RJPS (2023)

Of David. A psalm. The earth is God's and all that it holds, the world and its inhabitants...O gates, lift up your heads! Up high, you everlasting doors, so the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory?—GOD, mighty and valiant, GOD, valiant in battle. O gates, lift up your heads! Lift them up, you everlasting doors, so the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory?—GOD of Hosts is truly the King of glory! Selah.

Leviticus 19:33-34

וְכִי יָגוּר אִתְּךָ גֵר בְּאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנוּ אֹתוֹ: כַּאֲזַרְח מִכֶּם יְהוָה לָכֶם הִגַּר הִגַּר אֶתְכֶם וְאַהֲבַת לֹא כְמוֹךְ כִּי-גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם
בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

NJPS (1985)

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the LORD am your God.

RJPS (2023)

When strangers reside with you in your land, you shall not wrong them. The strangers who reside with you shall be to you as your citizens; you shall love each one as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the ETERNAL am your God.

Exodus 18:19-22

אֵינְעֶצְךָ וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים עִמָּךְ הִיָּה אֲתָה לְעַם מֹל הָאֱלֹהִים וְהִבֵּאתָ אֶתְּהָ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים: וְהִזְהַרְתָּ אֶתְּהָ אֶת־הַחֲקִים וְאֶת־הַתּוֹרֹת וְהוֹדַעְתָּ לָהֶם אֶת־הַדֶּרֶךְ יִלְכוּ בָּהּ וְאֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן: וְאֵתְּהָ תַחֲזֶה מִכָּל־הָעָם אֲנָשֵׁי־חַיִל יִרְאִי אֱלֹהִים אֲנָשֵׁי אֲמֶת שְׂנֵאֵי בְצַע וְשִׁמְתָּ עֲלֵהֶם שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים וְשָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֵת: וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם בְּכָל־עֵת

NJPS (1985)

I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You represent the people before God: you bring the disputes before God, and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and let them judge the people at all times.

RJPS (2023)

I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You represent the people before God: you bring the disputes before God, and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. You shall also seek out, from among all the people, those who are capable and who fear God—trustworthy ones who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and let them judge the people at all times.

Exodus 22:15-16

וְכִי־יִפְתֶּה אִישׁ בְּתוּלָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־אָרְשָׁה וְשָׁכַב עִמָּהּ מִהָרַ וּמִהָרְנָה לֹא־אִשָּׁה: אִם־מָאן! מִמָּאן אָבִיהָ לְתַתָּה לֹא בְּסֶךְ וְשָׁקָל כְּמָהָר הַבְּתוּלֹת:

RJPS (2023)

If a man seduces a virgin for whom the bride-price has not been paid, and lies with her, he must make her his wife by payment of a bride-price. If her father refuses to give her to him, he must still weigh out silver in accordance with the bride-price for virgins.

2 Samuel 20:15-22

וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אֶת־יֹאָב מִשְׁחִיתָם לְהַפִּיל הַחוּמָה: וְתִקְרָא אִשָּׁה חַכְמָה מִן־הָעִיר שְׁמֹעוּ שְׁמֹעוּ אִמְרוּ־נָא אֵלֵינוּ וְיֹאָב יִקְרַב עִדְהָנָה וְאִדְבָּרָה אֵלָיו: וַיִּקְרַב אֵלָיו וְתִאֲמַר הָאִשָּׁה הָאֵתְּהָ יֹאָב וַיִּאֲמַר אֲנִי וְתִאֲמַר לֹא שְׁמַעֲ דְּבָרֵי אֶמְתִּיר

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַע אָנֹכִי: וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאמֹר ... אָנֹכִי שְׁלַמִּי אֲמוּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲתָה מִבְּקֵשׁ לְהַמִּית עִיר וְאִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לָמָּה תִּבְלַע
נִחְלֵת יְהוָה: וַיַּעַן יוֹאָב וַיֹּאמֶר חָלִילָה לְיָ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתַי וְאִם אֲשַׁחֲתִי: לֹא־כֵן הִדְבַּר כִּי אִישׁ מִהֵר אֶפְרָיִם שָׁבַע בֶּן־
בְּכָרִי שָׁמוּ נָשָׂא יָדוֹ בַּמֶּלֶךְ בְּדוֹד תְּנוּ־אֶתוֹ לְבָדוֹ וְאֵלֶכָּה מֵעַל הָעִיר וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֶל־יוֹאָב הִנֵּה רֹאשׁוֹ מִשְׁלָךְ אֵילָךְ
בְּעַד הַחוֹמָה: וַתְּבוֹא הָאִשָּׁה אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם בְּחֻכְמָתָהּ וַיִּכְרְתוּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ שָׁבַע בֶּן־בְּכָרִי וַיִּשְׁלְכוּ אֶל־יוֹאָב וַיִּתְקַע בַּשֹּׁפָר
וַיִּפְצוּ מֵעַל־הָעִיר אִישׁ לְאֵהָלָיו וַיּוֹאָב שָׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ:

NJPS (1985)

All the troops with Joab were engaged in battering the wall [of the city], when a clever woman shouted from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come over here so I can talk to him." He approached her, and the woman asked, "Are you Joab?" "Yes," he answered; and she said to him, "Listen to what your handmaid has to say." "I'm listening," he replied. And she continued... "I am one of those who seek the welfare of the faithful in Israel. But you seek to bring death upon a mother city in Israel! Why should you destroy the LORD's possession?" Joab replied, "Far be it, far be it from me to destroy or to ruin! Not at all! But a certain man from the hill country of Ephraim, named Sheba son of Bichri, has rebelled against King David. Just hand him alone over to us, and I will withdraw from the city." The woman assured Joab, "His head shall be thrown over the wall to you." The woman came to all the people with her clever plan; and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri and threw it down to Joab. He then sounded the horn; those attacking the city dispersed to their homes, and Joab returned to the king in Jerusalem.

RJPS (2023)

All the troops with Joab were engaged in battering the wall [of the city], when a woman who was wise shouted from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come over here so I can talk to him." He approached her, and the woman asked, "Are you Joab?" "Yes," he answered; and she said to him, "Listen to what your handmaid has to say." "I'm listening," he replied. And she continued... "I am one of those who seek the welfare of the faithful in Israel. But you seek to bring death upon a mother city in Israel! Why should you destroy God's possession?" Joab replied, "Far be it, far be it from me to destroy or to ruin! Not at all! But a certain man from the hill country of Ephraim, named Sheba son of Bichri, has rebelled against King David. Just hand him alone over to us, and I will withdraw from the city." The woman assured Joab, "His head shall be thrown over the wall to you." The woman came to all the people with her wise plan; and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri and threw it down to Joab. He then sounded the horn; those attacking the city dispersed to their homes, and Joab returned to the king in Jerusalem.

Further Resources

[The Jewish Publication Society](#)

NJPS: [THE JPS TANAKH](#) (1985)

RJPS: [THE JPS TANAKH: Gender-Sensitive Edition](#) (2023)

Preface to the *Gender-Sensitive Edition* (2023) – [print](#) and [online](#)

Sample Translations comparing RJPS and NJPS – [online](#)

David Stein, “Notes on Gender in Translation” – [online](#)

David Stein, “Commentary on the Functions and Rendering of וְיִשְׂרָאֵל” – [online](#)

Beth Lieberman and Barry Schwartz, “Sing to God a New Song” – print and [online](#)

Beth Lieberman and Elias Sacks, “What’s a Gender-Sensitive Tanakh Translation?” – [online](#)

“The JPS Gender-Sensitive Translation: A 15-Minute Tour” – [video](#)

“The JPS Gender-Sensitive Translation: What’s New Beyond Gender?” – [video](#)

“The JPS Gender-Sensitive Translation: How Do I Use It?” – [video](#)