

This thinksheet is to exhibit, by using Deut.6.4a, the possibilities, difficulties/flexibility/opportunity in rendering the Hebrew Bible into English. This six-word, three-phrase sentence, central for Judaism and therefore axial for Christianity, begins with a command-word [which the Masoretes accented by rendering its last letter larger, as in our "Attention!"] and ascends to an explosive "...one!"--the root of which is the final focus of the thinksheet.

PROBLEMATICS:

1. How render God's personal name here? Usually "the Lord," sometimes "the Eternal," JB [Jerusalem Bible] "Yahweh."

2. How phrase the English, which cannot tolerate--as Hebrew can--a verbless sentence (except exclamations)? Here's the Hebrew phrasing: "HEAR [JB: "Listen"], ISRAEL, / THE-LORD OUR-GOD / LORD ONE!" ["The" on "the Lord" is not in Hebrew but is required in English, the articular indicating identity--but in English is not\*used when what one wishes to indicate is quality, as in the second instance in my translation here.] [\* "anarthrous"]

3. How place "is"? This continues problematic #2, for adding "is" to the second or third phrase "weights" it heavier than the other, and adding it to both phrases bulks up the utterance and, in addition, smooths its staccato into semi-legato. Any use of 'is' will be "midrashic," i.e. interpretative-additional; but English sticks us with the need for it--an instance of structure-clash, which makes translation an impossible possibility. [This translation-impossibility lay behind the requirement, when I was in seminary, that in the pulpit the Bible be preached from, not any translation thereof.] But note that translation here is also subtractive. Adding "is" is more, because something is heightened; but also less, because the open impact of the Hebrew is narrowed by one or two "is's" down into some simplex, the Hebrew being multiplex [not ambiguous, certainly not vague--false notions derivative from eisegesis, which is another dimension of translation-distortion, viz. intentional, whether conscious or unconscious--almost always the latter].

Here, then, are the possibilities for "is" placement:

Add "is" only to the second phrase:

IS our God, one Lord. [NEB (New English Bible)]  
the Lord alone. [RSVfn3 (Revised Standard Version, footnote tr.3); NAB (New American Bible); JBfn]

Add "is" only to the third phrase:

our God, the Lord IS one. [RSVfn1]  
IS one Lord. [RSV text]  
IS Lord alone (or "is the Lord alone")  
IS the only God.  
IS the one Yahweh. [JB]

Add "is" to both phrases:

IS our God, the Lord IS one. [RSVfn2]

4. What does "one" mean here? More accurately put, how translate  $ec^h ad^h$  [root **7DA**] (note that it's rendered three ways above, and there are many other possibilities)? Try your English dictionary and you'll find a basic split between cardinal and ordinal [i.e., between "one" and "first"], and a more subtle but no less important split between numerical and qualitative [quantity/identity]. On a sheet of paper, draw a vertical line and list all the words and synonyms on that divide. "Single" and "singular" will be on both sides. [All languages have this divide, and use the former as "weak" and the latter as "strong"--e.g., Lat. "unus" = one but "unicus" = unique, for which also the word "solus" = sole.] From Web.Coll.<sup>7</sup> my list has 16 "strong" words. Now study the root in Strong #258 and the following article. If you'd started with the English, you'd've found half a doz. Heb. words under "one," an invitation to many journeys! (Add. note: The root includes the meaning "collect [one's thoughts]," as does the primary NY root for thinking, viz. lg, as indeed in "collect" itself....so, LOGOS!)