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JUST HOW LITERAL IS THE KING JAMES VERSION?¹

ABSTRACT

Many scholars have the perception that the King James Version (KJV) is a literal translation. However, it is not so easy to define the concept of “literal translation.” The simplest definition may be to regard it as word-for-word translation. However, when one compares the KJV carefully with the original Hebrew Bible, there are numerous instances where lexical items are changed to adapt the idiom to that of the target language. In this article, a measuring instrument is proposed and used to analyse some passages, with Ezek 15 as principal example. The same instrument is used to evaluate other translations. Comparing the results gives a more precise indication of just how literal the KJV is.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many Bible readers, including scholars, have the perception that the King James Version (KJV) is a literal translation.² This is a small step away from regarding it as the “best” translation, especially when one prefers a translation that contains as little interpretation as possible.³ When

1 This is a revised version of an unpublished paper read at the 13th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 12-17 August 2001.

2 “Formal equivalence (sometimes called ‘literal translation’) believes that the original wording, grammar, and syntax should be retained so long as the resulting translation is understandable (KJV, NASB, and RSV are examples)” (Osborne 1997:33). According to Packer (1997:30), the NKJV prefers “verbal equivalence, even if awkward.” According to Labuschagne and Naudé (2003:130, 162), source based translation requires a high level of lexical equivalence (however, the idea of translation as a mere linguistic transcoding of a text to produce a mirror-like rendering of the original has become outdated in the context of medical translation). Also compare Glassman (1981:18-21) regarding perceptions of the KJV as the standard for a faithful, literal rendering – he refers to an example (Ps 139:16) as mostly “[l]iteral and word-for-word,” “but hardly meaningful in English as it is used today.”

3 In fact, translation without interpretation is impossible. Steiner (1998:29) rightly points out that translation is viewed as a model “in which a message

teaching Biblical Hebrew (BH) to undergraduate students, one realises that there is a big gap between a consistent word-for-word version, such as an interlinear Bible, and even the most literal of the standard translations, a gap which beginners in BH find very difficult to cross. Therefore, the question may be asked: Is this perception correct? If the KJV is a literal translation, why is it so difficult for a beginner to see the formal equivalence between the Hebrew text and the literal translation? Is this due to obligatory shifts that are needed even in the most “adequacy-oriented translations” (where translators adhere primarily to the norms of the original text), or to what extent does the KJV subscribe to the norms of the target language in order to be an “acceptable” translation (cf. Toury c1995:56-57)?

It is interesting to note that the translators of the KJV seem to have been more concerned with the meaning of the text (as opposed to its form) than some may suppose. In their preface to the reader, the translators of the KJV state, “But we desire that the Scripture may speake like it selfe, as in the language of Canaan, that it may bee understood even of the very vulgar” (BibleNetUSA 1611). However, this should not be misconstrued as adherence to some modern theory of meaning-based translation. For one thing, their comments on meaning seem to be restricted mainly to the level of words:

[W]ee have not tyed our selves to an uniformitie of phrasing, or to an identitie of words [...] For is the kingdome of God become words or syllables? why should wee be in bondage to them if we may be free, use one precisely when wee may use another no lesse fit, as commodiously? [...] therefore hee [i.e., God] using divers words, in his holy writ, and indifferently for one thing in nature: we, if wee will not be superstitious, may use the same libertie in our English versions out of Hebrew & Greeke, for that copie or store that he hath given us (*ibid.*).

This seems to indicate that they did not restrict themselves to a concordant view of translation.

from a source-language passes into a receptor-language via a transformational process. The barrier is the obvious fact that one language differs from the other, that an *interpretative transfer*, sometimes, albeit misleadingly, described as encoding and decoding, *must occur* so that the message ‘gets through’ (emphasis in italics added).

This article concentrates on the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, and does not specifically consider the Aramaic sections or the Greek New Testament. After an attempt to define the concept of literalness, some adaptations in the translation of the KJV⁴ are discussed. The article then measures the extent of literalness in the KJV, compares it to the New International Version (NIV), and uses some statistical procedures to determine if the results are statistically significant. The article primarily attempts to measure the textual-linguistic adequacy of the KJV, but also notes some surprising instances of adaptations for the sake of acceptability (cf. Toury, c1995:58-59).

2. *DEFINING LITERALNESS*

The KJV remains one of the most literal English translations available. However, is it 100% literal? Is it even possible to make a 100% literal translation from one language into another, and especially from a language like BH (a member of the Afro-Asiatic Language Family) into a language from a different language family, like English (Indo-European)? Or does a 100% literal “translation” imply an interlinear version, the grammar of which is not acceptable in the target language? It is probably impossible to create a 100% literal version that will still qualify as a “translation,” because it is impossible to *translate* without interpreting. Any translation contains interpretation to a lesser or higher degree (cf. Ross 2001:394; Ryken 2005:72; Pattemore 2007:254). A 100% literal version, such as an interlinear Bible⁵, is a mechanical juxtaposition of words that does not adjust either the vocabulary or syntax in terms of the conventions of the target language.⁶

The answers to many of these questions will depend on one’s definition of the concept of “literal translation.” However, this concept is not so easy to define. A number of definitions have been proposed, of which the following are examples:⁷

4 The edition of the KJV published by the Bible Society of South Africa was consulted, as it is a widely used form of the KJV text. The revision history of the KJV falls outside the scope of this article and has not been taken into consideration.

5 Cf. Nida (1961:11).

6 But even here a certain degree of interpretation is necessary, for example in selecting the correct translation equivalent for polysemous words and homonyms.

7 Some of these definitions are actually summaries of the authors’ discussions.

- To always render “the same Hebrew ... word by the same English word, and similarly for many types of grammatical constructions” (Nida 1961:11-12).
- To attempt “to match grammatical forms and even to employ the same word order, if at all possible” (Nida 1964:23).
- To mechanically reproduce the form of the original source text “in the receptor language in such a way as to distort the message and/or [grammatical and stylistic] patterns of the receptor language” (i.e. formal correspondence) (Nida & Taber 1982:201-203).
- To follow source language usage, “(notably in the use of pronouns, prepositions, and participial constructions) to an extent which runs entirely counter to the genius”⁸ of the [target] language (Kenyon & Gehman 1963:348).
- The form of a literal translation corresponds to the linguistic form of the original text. Literalness does not classify a translation in terms of its faithfulness (to “represent the literal meaning of the original text”) (Beekman & Callow 1974:20-21; cf. Glassman 1981:19-20). A “highly literal translation reproduces the linguistic features of the original language with high consistency,” resulting in a translation which does not transmit the message clearly to the reader. A “modified literal” translation contains necessary lexicological and grammatical adaptations in the form of the target language in order to transmit the message clearly and in accordance with the established conventions of the target language. Nevertheless, corresponding grammatical constructions are preferred, and a word is often consistently translated with the same translation equivalent (coupled pairs). Combinations of words are retained, where possible (Beekman & Callow 1974:21-24; cf. Bekker 1983:124; Toury, c1995:80, 95).
- A literal translation is a direct word-for-word translation in which the unit of translation is below the level of the sentence, i.e. a morpheme, word or phrase. Formal changes which are typical of normal translation are not made (Van den Broeck & Lefevere 1979:121).
- A literal translation is a “pre-translation process” in which the source language’s grammatical constructions “are converted to their nearest

8 Kenyon & Gehman make specific reference to “the genius of the Greek language” when translating from Hebrew.

TL [target language] equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context” (Newmark 1988:46).

- “Interlineal translation is actually an extreme form of the much more common **literal translation**, where the literal meaning of words is taken as if from the dictionary (that is, out of context), but TL [target language] grammar is respected” (emphasis in the original) (Hervey & Higgins 1992:20).
- Describing “word-for-word” (i.e., literal) translations, Packer (2005:10-11) states that they “are not [...] word-for-word in any mechanical sense; they seek simply to catch all the meaning that the text expresses, book by book, section by section, paragraph by paragraph, and sentence by sentence, in a way that the original writer, were he with us today, would recognize as a full and exact rendering of what he sought to put across to his own readership, now expressed in clusters of English words that as far as possible match those that he used himself.”
- Grudem *et al.* (2005) propose an interesting variation of the literal approach to translation, which they call “essentially literal translation.” One of the contributors defines “essentially literal translation” as follows: “‘Essentially literal’ does not mean totally literal. It means that a translation strives to find the English word or combination of words that most accurately corresponds to the words of the original text. It does not mean translating the original in a way that makes no sense in English. Furthermore, retaining the syntax of the original, though not an irrelevant consideration, is nonetheless not a high priority, inasmuch as Hebrew and Greek syntax is so different from English syntax” (Ryken 2005:58).
- A literal approach to translation seeks “to reflect as closely as possible the words, expressions and even the structures of the text in its original language” (Noss 2007:14).

The simplest definition of “literal translation” may be to regard it as a word-for-word translation in which lexical items are retained. For the purposes of this article, “lexical items” are defined as all parts of speech as well as genitive suffixes, the *n locale* and object suffixes.⁹ The essence

9 The reason why certain affixes (e.g. the personal suffixes that indicate the subject and tense/mood/aspect of BH verbs) are excluded from this analysis is

and ideal of literal translation is to translate every lexical item in the source text with a formal equivalent in the target language text, as far as possible, e.g. Ezek 15:4a: “Behold it is cast into the fire as fuel”:

לְאֵכָלָהּ	נָתַן	לְאֵשׁ	הִנֵּה
preposition + noun	finite verb	preposition + article + noun	interjection
as fuel	it-is-cast	into the fire	Behold!

3. ADAPTATIONS IN THE KJV

One of the typical points of criticism against functional equivalent translations is that their focus falls on semantic word types (events, entities, qualities, relations); in consequence the parts of speech are not considered as important.¹⁰ Translators may replace, for example, a verbal noun with a verb, a “genitive” of quality with an adjective, etc. We would not expect these adaptations in “literal” translations such as the KJV. Therefore, it is quite surprising to find such adaptations even in the KJV, e.g.:

וְנַתַּתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ שְׁמֵמָה	And I will make the land <i>desolate</i> (adjective) (Ezek 15:8 KJV)	Lit.: And I will make the land <i>a desolation</i> (noun)
לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה לְמַלְאכָהּ	it was meet for <i>no</i> (adjective) work (Ezek 15:5 KJV)	Lit.: it was <i>not</i> (adverb) made for work
נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה	<i>saieth</i> (verb) the Lord GOD (Ezek 15:8 KJV)	Lit.: (the) declaration (of) (noun) the-Lord YHWH
הַקְּמוֹן גּוֹיִם	<i>many</i> (adjective) nations (Gen 17:4 KJV) (construct state replaced with adjective)	Lit.: <i>a multitude of</i> (noun) nations

that they form an integral part of the word itself, while other affixes (e.g. the direct object suffix) are optional.

10 For example, after including a summary of this “semotaxis” approach, Bekker (1983:147-148) objects to the Nida School’s “dynamic equivalent” theory of translation because it would put too much emphasis on the receptor of the message rather than on the message itself (the term “dynamic equivalent” was later changed to “functional equivalent”). Krüger (1999:247-251) also refers to these semantic word types and pleads that transformations should not be made in a study-orientated translation, since that would assign a secondary place to form.

אַחֲזַת עוֹלָם	an <i>everlasting</i> possession (Gen 17:8 KJV) (construct state replaced with adjective)	Lit. a possession of <i>eternity</i> (noun)
אֶרֶץ מִגְרִיךָ	the land <i>wherein thou art a stranger</i> (Gen 17:8 KJV) (“genitive phrase” replaced with relative clause, noun replaced with nominal clause, and possessive suffix replaced with independent personal pronoun as subject)	Lit.: the land of your <i>sojourning(-place)</i> (noun + suffix)
יָלִיד בֵּית וּמִקְנַת כֶּסֶף	he that is born <i>in the house, or bought with money</i> (Gen 17:12 KJV) (construct phrases paraphrased)	Lit.: born of house/a son of a house and a <i>purchase of silver</i> (construct phrases)
בְּזֵנֶכֶר	<i>stranger</i> (Gen 17:12) (noun)	a son of a foreign land (construct phrase)

If the definition proposed above can be regarded as the essence of literal translation, word order, syntactic changes, word semantics, metaphors, pragmatic issues, etc. should not be taken into consideration in an analysis to determine the extent of literalness of a translation. This does not imply that these phenomena do not present their own problems, also in the KJV, e.g.:

- The Hebrew word *היה* means *to be/become*, but in formulae introducing prophecies it is usually translated in the KJV with *come*, e.g.:

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר	And the word of the LORD <i>came</i> unto me (Ezek 15:1)	Lit.: And the word of YHWH <i>was/became</i> to me.
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- Also, translation equivalents are often selected based on context, although they do not appear in dictionaries with that particular sense, e.g.:

הֲיִצְלַח / וְנַעֲשֶׂה	<i>Is it meet / shall it be meet</i> (Ezek 15:4, 5 KJV)	Lit.: will-it- <i>succeed?</i> / and it will <i>be made</i>
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- An example of syntactic changes is the relative clause, the pronominal direct object of which cannot be translated in English,¹¹ e.g.

... עֵצֵה־גִּפְנֹן	the vine tree ... which I	Lit.: the vine tree ... which
אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּיו לְאֵשׁ לְאֻכְלָהּ	have given to the fire for fuel (Ezek 15:6 KJV)	I have given <i>it</i> to the fire for fuel

- The translation of suffix and prefix conjugations (SC/PC) often requires high-level knowledge of the semantics of the verbal system in BH. However, these problems do not influence the part of speech and will not be taken into consideration in determining the level of literalness in this article, e.g.:

נָתַן	it <i>is cast</i> (Ezek 15:4 KJV) (present tense)	Lit.: it- <i>was</i> -given (SC)
יַעֲשֶׂה	it <i>was meet</i> (Ezek 15:5 KJV) (durative past)	Lit.: it- <i>will</i> -be-made (PC)
וְנַעֲשֶׂה	<i>shall it be meet</i> (Ezek 15:5 KJV) (prophetic perfect?)	Lit.: and it <i>was made</i> (י + SC)
נָתַתִּי	<i>will I give</i> (Ezek 15:6 KJV) (prophetic perfect)	Lit.: I <i>gave</i> (SC)
וְנָתַתִּי	And I <i>will set</i> (Ezek 15:7 KJV) (waw consecutive + SC/waw copulative + prophetic perfect)	Lit.: And I <i>gave</i> (י + PC)
יָצְאוּ	they <i>shall go out</i> (Ezek 15:7) (prophetic perfect)	Lit.: they <i>went</i> out (SC)
וְנָתַתִּי	And I <i>will make</i> (Ezek 15:8 KJV) (waw consecutive + SC: a continuation of תֹּאכְלֶם (וַיִּדְעֶתֶם))	Lit.: And I <i>gave</i> (a continuation of בָּשׂוּמִי - past?)

- The semantic content of a certain conjugation¹² is not always clear and often requires interpretation, e.g.

11 However, in Gen 17:14 the possessive suffix is retained in the English, although the grammar seems forced: וְעָרַל זָכָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יְמוּל אֶת־בְּשָׁר עָרְלָתוֹ “the uncircumcised man child *whose* flesh of *his* foreskin is not circumcised” (KJV) (own italics).

12 The derived conjugations are also called “stem formations” – compare Van der Merwe et al. (1999:78) for the semantics of the Niphal.

וְגַמְלֵתֶם	And ye shall <i>circumcise</i> (Gen 17:11 KJV) (active/reflexive?)	Lit.: And you shall <i>be</i> <i>circumcized</i> (passive: cf. vs. 10, 12, BDB)
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A careful comparison of the KJV with the BH text in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) - according to the definition proposed above - reveals numerous instances where parts of speech in the source language (BH) are changed to adapt to the idiom of the target language (English). These are not necessarily mistakes in the translation – in most cases the translators simply had no other choice, because the idiomatic way of expression in English is different. In this regard, it is useful to distinguish between low-level and high-level idiomatic changes.

Low-level idiomatic changes are those with which most people would normally agree. They are so basic that students of BH learn them in their vocabularies and introductory grammars. For example, age is expressed in Hebrew by saying “someone is a son/daughter of 20 years,” but in English, this is translated more idiomatically as “someone is 20 years old” (cf. Gen 17:1,12). Presumably, nobody would argue that this is a translation error, yet this remains an idiomatic adjustment: parts of speech (and even the whole syntactic construction) have been changed. Some examples of such low-level idiomatic changes are:

- The translation of the names of the Lord: אֲדֹנָי is a proper name, but *the Lord* is a noun phrase consisting of an article plus noun. The tetragrammaton יהוה is also a proper name in BH, but it is likewise usually translated with *the LORD* (cf. Ezek 15:1,7). The combination of these two proper names, אֲדֹנָי יהוה, is translated as *the Lord GOD* (article plus noun plus proper name; *GOD* is not a literal translation of the tetragrammaton) (Ezek 15:6,8).
- The preposition מִן in the BH construction expressing the comparative degree is replaced by the adjective *more* followed by the preposition *than*, e.g.:

בְּנֵי-אָדָם מִהַיְהוּהָ עֵץ-הַגֶּפֶן	Son of man, What is the vine tree <i>more than</i> any tree (Ezek 15:2 KJV)	Lit.: Son of man, what is the vine tree <i>away-from</i> any tree?
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- The noun כָּל in the construct state (lit. whole-of/totality-of) is translated with the adjectives *all, every, any, whole*, e.g.:

כָּל-כֵּלִי	<i>any</i> vessel (Ezek 15:3 KJV)	Lit.: a whole-of/a totality- of a vessel
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- The direct object marker and the interrogative particle cannot be translated directly - word order (and punctuation in the case of the latter) serves these functions in English,¹³ e.g.:

הִיקַח מִמֶּנּוּ עֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת לְמַלְאכָה	Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? (Ezek 15:3 KJV)	Lit.: (<i>interrogative particle</i>) wood will be taken of it to do for work
אֵת שְׁנֵי קְצוֹתָיו אָכְלָה הָאֵשׁ	the fire devoureth both the ends of it (Ezek 15:4 KJV)	Lit.: (<i>direct object marker</i>) both the ends of it the fire consumed

- The indefinite article does not occur in Hebrew and has to be supplied where necessary in translation. However, the absence of an article in BH can, depending on the context, sometimes be rendered in the same way in English (i.e., without an article). The definite article, on the other hand, is rendered more consistently in English versions, although there are exceptions, especially in poetry, where it is often omitted or inserted in translation. Some examples of the difference in usage of articles between BH and English are provided below:

מֵעֵלוּ מַעַל	they have committed <i>a</i> trespass (Ezek 15:8 KJV)	Lit. they-were-unfaithful unfaithfulness
אֵשׁ	<i>the</i> fire (Ezek 15:5 KJV)	Lit. <i>a</i> fire.
אוֹת בְּרִית	a token of <i>the</i> covenant (Gen 17:11 KJV)	Lit. a token of <i>a</i> covenant
מֵהָאֵשׁ	from <i>one</i> fire (Ezek 15:7 KJV)	Lit. from <i>the</i> fire
וְהָאֵשׁ	and <i>another</i> fire (Ezek 15:7 KJV)	Lit. and <i>the</i> fire
הַנְּפֹשׁ הַהוּא	that soul (Gen 17:14 KJV)	Lit. the soul the that

- The translation of participles as nouns is quite common, e.g.:

כִּן נָתַתִּי אֶת־יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם	so I will give the <i>inhabitants of</i> Jerusalem (Ezek 15:6 KJV)	so I gave the <i>living-ones-of</i> Jerusalem
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High-level idiomatic changes are not so basic, and scholarly opinions may differ about the correct translation. When a translator has to deal

13 Since this article discusses a written text (the Hebrew Bible and some English versions), no consideration is given to the oral forms of expression.

with one of these phrases, (s)he has to choose whether (s)he wants to translate literally (which might lead to unacceptable and incomprehensible English), or to translate more freely (which necessitates more interpretation), and where to draw the line. There are also higher-level idiomatic changes in the KJV, e.g.:

- The construct phrase can express many different underlying semantic relations between its elements, and often the translator has to interpret the phrase before deciding on a proper translation:

עֵץ־הַיָּבֵטָן	the vine tree (Ezek 15:2 KJV) (entity - specification)	Lit.: <i>(the) wood (of) the vine</i> (part - whole)
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עֵץ הַזְּמוּרָה	(more than any) tree <i>or than</i> a branch (Ezek 15:2 KJV) (a list instead of a genitive construction)	Lit.: <i>(the) wood of the branch</i> (part – whole)
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- The BH usage of the 3 m. pl. form of the verb must sometimes be interpreted as indicating an indefinite, personal subject:

אִם־יִקְחוּ מִמֶּנּוּ יָתֵד לְתֵלוֹת	or will <i>men</i> take a pin of it	Lit.: Or will <i>they</i> take a pin
עָלְיוֹ כָּל־כֵּלִי	to hang any vessel thereon? (Ezek 15:3 KJV)	of it to hang any vessel thereon?

- The semantic content of prepositions (especially in combination with infinitives) often requires high-level interpretation which may lead to a freer translation, e.g.:

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר	And the word of the LORD came unto me, <i>saying</i> (Ezek 15:1 KJV) (לְ of manner)	Lit.: And the word of the LORD came to me <i>for to-say</i> (= <i>by saying</i>) ¹⁴
הֲיִקַּח מִמֶּנּוּ עֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת לְמַלְאכָה	Shall wood be taken thereof <i>to do</i> any work?	Will wood be taken from it <i>in order to</i> make (it) into

14 לֵאמֹר is regarded as a “high level idiom” since its use as a subordinating conjunction or complementizer has become so fixed that it is almost impossible to derive its meaning from the combination of individual words. Also compare the לְ of result in Gen 17:16 (וַהֲיִתָּה לְגוֹיִם) “and she shall be a mother of nations” and Gen 17:20 (וַנַּעֲשֶׂה לְגוֹי גָדוֹל) “and I will make him a great nation.”

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| | (Ezek 15:3 KJV) לְ of purpose and לְ of result) | an article (Lit.: Will wood be taken from it <i>for</i> to-make <i>for</i> an article) |
| בְּהִיְתוֹ תָּמִים | when it was whole (Ezek 15:5 KJV) | Lit.: <i>in its being</i> whole |
| בְּשׁוּמִי | when I set (Ezek 15:7 KJV) | Lit.: <i>in my placing</i> |
| בְּהִמְלוֹ | when he was circumcised (Gen 17:24 KJV) | Lit.: <i>in his being-circumcized</i> |
- The translation of conjunctions and interjections presents a problem - BH does not have many of these, and the ones that do exist are used to express a great variety of semantic functions. The translation of the very common conjunction וְ is sometimes difficult, and in certain contexts it may even be omitted¹⁵ (or a conjunction inserted in its absence), e.g.:

הִנֵּה בְּהִיְתוֹ תָּמִים לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה לְמַלְאכָה	Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work (Ezek 15:5 KJV)	הִנֵּה, followed by -בְּ plus infinitive construct, can also be translated in English with a subordinating conjunction, cf. NIV: <i>If</i> , when it was whole, it was not useful for anything
וְנַעֲשֶׂה עוֹד לְמַלְאכָה	shall it be meet yet for any work (Ezek 15:5 KJV)	and shall it be meet yet for work
 - The recognition of interrogative clauses without an interrogative particle requires high-level interpretation, e.g.:

וְנַעֲשֶׂה עוֹד לְמַלְאכָה	... shall it be meet yet for any work...? (Ezek 15:5)	There is no interrogative particle in the Hebrew text.
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 - Recognition of a collective singular is dependent on the context, e.g.:¹⁶

15 Also cf. Gen 17:14 (וְנִכְרְתָהּ).

16 “The CBMW [The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood] guidelines for translation state, ‘Person and number should be retained in translation so that singulars are not changed to plurals and third-person statements are not changed to second-person or first-person statements, with only rare exceptions required in unusual cases’” (Osborne 1997:37). Also compare Grudem

כַּאֲשֶׁר עֵץ־הַגֶּפֶן בְּעֵץ הַיַּעַר As the vine tree among the Lit.: as the tree of the vine
trees of the forest (Ezek in the *tree* of the forest
 15:6 KJV)

- Dislocatives (*casus pendens*) are sometimes difficult to recognize and often have to be rendered by a prepositional phrase in English:

אֲנִי הִנֵּה בְרִיתִי אִתְּךָ As *for me*, behold, my Lit.: *I*, behold! my
 covenant *is* with thee (Gen covenant (is) with you
 17:4 KJV)

שָׂרַי אִשְׁתְּךָ לֹא־תִקְרָא As *for Sarai* thy wife, thou Lit.: *Sarai* your wife, you
 אֶת־שְׁמָהּ שָׂרַי shalt not call her name shall not call her name
 Sarai (Gen 17:15) Sarai

Although italics are usually employed in the KJV to indicate words that were added in the translation, this practice is not followed consistently. This may mislead readers to think that all added words are indicated, e.g.:

הֲיִקַּח מִמֶּנּוּ עֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת Shall wood be taken The word “any” does not
 לְמַלְאָכָה thereof to do *any* work? appear in the Hebrew text,
 (Ezek 15:3 KJV) but is not put in italics in
 the KJV.

הֲיִצְלַח לְמַלְאָכָה Is it meet for *any* work? Again the word “any” does
 (Ezek 15:4 KJV) not appear in the Hebrew
 text, but now it is put in
 italics in the KJV. Cf. also
 verse 5.

עֶרְלֵל זָכָר *the* uncircumcised man The words “the” and
child (Gen 17:14 KJV) “child” are added but not
 in italics.

4. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE KJV LITERAL?

Now that it has been established that there are many instances of idiomatic change in the KJV, the question arises: To what extent is the KJV literal? If the proposed definition of “literal translation” is accepted, it can be used to gauge the literalness of the KJV. The same instrument

(1997:27) regarding the change of singulars to plurals to facilitate inclusive translation: “Since ‘all Scripture is God-breathed’ (2 Tim 3:16), and ‘every word of God proves true (Prov 30:5) we must conclude that God caused singular pronouns to be used in each of these places for his own purposes, and, if there is any way to translate them as singulars in legitimate English today, we are not at liberty to change them to plurals in translation.”

can also be applied to other translations. Comparing the results may give a more precise indication of how literal the KJV really is.

Below, the text of Ezekiel 15 is analysed as an example of this method (see Figure 1). The KJV and NIV are compared to the Hebrew text in table format. The NIV, which may be regarded as at least a partly functional equivalent translation,¹⁷ is added to the comparison in order to facilitate the gauging of the two translations on a relative scale. The table represents this comparison using the following conventions:

1. The first column indicates the verse numbers and their subsections.
2. The second column contains the Hebrew text, one clause per row.
3. In the third column, a word-for-word translation is supplied with the number of lexical items (parts of speech, genitive suffixes, *n locale* and object suffixes) indicated in brackets. The lexical items are separated by vertical lines (|). Where a single word in BH is represented by a phrase in English, the constituent parts of the English phrase are joined by a hyphen (-). Square brackets indicate lexical items in the BH that have no translation equivalents in English but need to be taken into account (e.g. the direct object marker), whereas round brackets indicate English translation equivalents implied, but not occurring overtly, in the Hebrew text. Examples of such implicit elements are the indefinite article, the definite article of a word in the construct state followed by a definite genitive, or the preposition “of” in a construct phrase.
4. The fourth and fifth columns represent the corresponding clauses from the KJV and NIV respectively. Units missing in the target text

17 The NIV does not claim to be a functional equivalent translation, but it can be safely stated that at least some parts of it were translated in accordance with the theory of functional equivalence. In its preface, the main goal of the translators is stated to have been “the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers” and “faithful communication of the meaning of the writers of the Bible” (Biblica 1983). That the theoretical basis of the NIV approaches that of functional equivalence in certain respects is clear from the fact that the translators “have striven for more than a word-for-word translation” (*ibid.*), as well as from their awareness of the need to communicate the *thought* and *meaning* of the writers (cf. the above-mentioned quotations). Cf. also Bell (2008:13), who states that, “Under the banner of dynamic equivalence, it [i.e., the NIV] sought to produce a much more conservative translation than TEV.”

are indicated by ^, and underlined text indicates that some idiomatic change or addition has been made, whether high- or low-level. The figures in brackets indicate the difference between the number of lexical items in the third column and the number of missing or changed units in the versions cited.¹⁸ The rating of the translations is, therefore, based on a penalizing or negative marking system.

In order to ensure optimal consistency in the penalizing system, some criteria have to be agreed upon in fuzzy areas. These are listed below:

1. Concessions were made where changes or additions are indicated in the translations by using italics, showing that a direct (literal) translation is impossible.¹⁹ It may be argued that these instances should have been marked negatively as well, in which case the total percentages of literalness (see below) would be even lower.
2. Punctuation is usually ignored, except where it is used to render a lexical item in BH (e.g. a question mark representing the BH interrogative particle).
3. Changes on a lexical semantic level (e.g. “it-was” translated as “came”) are also ignored for the purposes of this study and will therefore not be penalised.
4. The insertion of an indefinite article in an English version is not penalised, due to the differences in usage between BH and English, as discussed above. Moreover, the high frequency of the indefinite article in English, if penalised, would cause the results for the English versions to be statistically distorted.
5. Since the definite article tends to be translated more consistently than the indefinite article, any deviations in this regard will be penalised.
6. Any difference in number between the source and target texts is penalised, except in the case of *pluralia tantum* and *pluralis majestatis*.
7. Constructions that are conventionally adjusted as entire units are also penalised as a unit, e.g.:

18 This method, therefore, does not measure strict concordance or “coupled units” (cf. Toury c1995:99); however, it is still highly testable since the consistency of the rendering of lexical items can be determined numerically.

19 The KJV is inconsistent in this practice.

- a. Construct phrases transformed into compounds
 - b. Postconstructs (“genitives”) transformed into relative clauses
 - c. Temporal preposition phrases transformed into adverbial clauses
 - d. Possessive clauses where the typical BH idiom “X is for Y” is rendered as “Y has X”
 - e. Possessive clauses where the typical BH idiom “X is for Y” is rendered as “Y is X’s” or “Y belongs to X”
8. Verb forms that are morphologically discernable are penalised when rendered as different verbal forms in the target text, e.g.:
 - a. Participles translated as nouns
 - b. Participles translated as relative clauses
 9. Verb functions that are not morphologically discernable and where various interpretations are possible are not penalised, i.e.:
 - a. Tense
 - b. Aspect
 - c. Mood
 10. Morphologically marked passives translated as actives, or vice versa, will be penalised. However, when a morphologically marked passive with an active meaning is rendered as an active form (and vice versa), it will not be penalised.
 11. Intransitive BH verbs translated as copulative clauses will not be penalised.
 12. BH nouns with complex meanings that are usually translated as a noun phrase will not be penalised. However, a nominal clause rendered as an intransitive verb in English will be penalised.
 13. Prepositions which may, etymologically, be derived from more than one lexical item (e.g. preposition + noun) but are written as one word in the Masoretic Text are counted as one unit. Compound prepositions joined by a *maqquph* are counted as separate units.

Vs	Hebrew clauses	Word for word version	KJV	NIV
1a	וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר	And it-was (the) word (of) YHWH to me by to-say (inf.): (8 lexical items) (8)	And the word of <u>the LORD</u> came unto me, ^ <u>saying</u> (part.), (5)	^ The word of <u>the</u> <u>LORD</u> came to me: “ ^ ^ (4)
2a	בֶּן־אָדָם מֵהֵיחֵיהָ עֵץ־הַגֶּפֶן מִכָּל־עֵץ הַיְמוֹרָה	Son (of) man what it-is (the) wood (of) the vine away-from (the) totality (of) (the) wood (of) the branch (12)	Son of man, What is the vine <u>tree more</u> than <u>any</u> tree, <i>or than a</i> branch (8)	Son of man, how is the wood of <u>a</u> vine <u>better</u> than ^ <u>that</u> of <u>a</u> branch (7)
2b	אֲשֶׁר הִיא בְּעֵצֵי הַיַּעַר:	which it-is in (the) trees (of) the forest? (6)	which is among the trees of the forest? (6)	^^ on <u>any</u> of the trees <u>in</u> the forest? (2)
3a	הֲיִקַּח מִמֶּנּוּ עֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת לְמִלְאָכָה	[inter. part.] it-will-be- taken from it wood for to-make for (an) article (9)	Shall wood be taken <u>thereof</u> ^ to do <u>any</u> ^ work? (4)	Is wood <u>ever</u> taken from it ^ to make ^ anything <u>useful</u> ? (4)
3b	אִם־יִקְחוּ מִמֶּנּוּ יִתֵּד לְתֵלוֹת עָלָיו כָּל־כְּלִי:	or? they-will-take from it (a) peg for to-hang on it (a) totality (of) (an) implement (11)	or will <i>men</i> take a pin of it ^ to hang <u>any</u> vessel <u>thereon</u> ? (8)	^ Do they make pegs from it ^ to hang ^ things on ^ ? (5)
4a	הִגָּה לְאֵשׁ נִתֵּן לְאֲכָלָהּ	behold! for the fire it-was-given for food (7)	Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; (7)	<u>And</u> after it is thrown on the fire as fuel (6)
4b	אֶת שְׁנֵי קְצוֹתָיו אֲכָלָהּ הָאֵשׁ	[obj. marker] (the) two (of) (the) ends of-it it-burnt the fire (subject) (6)	the fire devoureth ^ both the ends of it, (5)	<u>and</u> the fire burns ^ both ends ^ (3)

4c	וְתוֹכוֹ נֶחָר	and (the) middle of-it it-was-set-aglow (4)	and the midst of it is burned. (4)	and <u>chars</u> the middle, ^ (2)
4d	הֲיִצְלַח לְמַלְאכָהּ	[inter. part.] it-will- succeed for (an) article (4)	Is it meet for <i>any</i> work? (3)	is it <u>then</u> useful for anything? (2)
5a	הֲנִהּ בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ תָּמִים לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה לְמַלְאכָהּ	behold! in being of-it whole not it-will-be- made for (an) article (9)	Behold, <u>when</u> it was whole, it was meet for <u>no</u> work: (7)	If it was not useful for anything <u>when</u> it was whole, (8)
5b	אִם כִּי־אֵשׁ אֶכְלָתָהּ	how-much-less when (a) fire it-burnt it (5)	how much less [...] when <u>the</u> fire hath devoured it, (4)	how much less when <u>the</u> fire has burned it (4)
5c	וַיִּחַר	and it-was-set-aglow (2)	and it is burned (2)	and it is charred? (2)
5d	וַיַּעֲשֶׂה עוֹד לְמַלְאכָהּ:	and it-was-made still for an-article (5)	^ shall it be meet yet for <i>any</i> work (4)	^ can it be made ^ into something <u>useful</u> (2)
6a	לְכֹן כִּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה	therefore thus said Adonai YHWH (5)	Therefore thus saith <u>the</u> Lord GOD; (4)	Therefore <u>this is</u> <u>what the</u> <u>Sovereign LORD</u> says: (2)
6b	כַּאֲשֶׁר עֵץ־הַגֶּפֶן בְּעֵץ הַיַּעַר	just-as (the) tree (of) the vine (is) in (the) tree (of) the bush (8)	As the vine <u>tree</u> among the trees of the forest, (6)	As the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest (7)
6c	אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּיו לְאֵשׁ לְאֶכְלָהּ	that I-gave it to the fire for food (8)	which I have given ^ to the fire for fuel, (7)	^ I have given ^ for the fire, as fuel (6)

6d	כִּן נָתַתִּי אֶת־יִשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם	so I gave [obj. marker] (the) inhabiting-ones (of) Jerusalem (5)	so will I give ^ the <u>inhabitants</u> of Jerusalem. (3)	so will I treat ^ the <u>people living in</u> Jerusalem. (3)
7a	וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־פָּנַי בָּהֶם	And I-gave [obj. marker] face of me in them (7)	And I will set ^ my face against them; (6)	^ I will set ^ my face against them. (5)
7b	מִהָאֵשׁ יֵצְאוּ	from the fire they- went-out (4)	they shall go out from <i>one</i> fire, (4)	<u>Although</u> they have come out of the fire, (3)
7c	וְהָאֵשׁ תֹּאכְלֵם	and the fire it-will- eat them (5)	and <i>another</i> fire shall devour them; (5)	the fire [...] will <u>yet</u> [...] consume them. (4)
7d	וַיִּדְעֻתֶם	and you-will-know (2)	and ye shall know (2)	And [...] you will know (2)
7e	כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּשׁוּמֵי אֶת־פָּנַי בָּהֶם:	that I (am) YHWH in placing of me [obj. marker] (the) face of me in them (11)	that I <i>am</i> <u>the</u> LORD, <u>when</u> I set ^ my face against them. (8)	<u>when</u> I set ^ my face against them, that I am <u>the</u> LORD. (8)
8a	וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ שְׁמָמָה	and I-gave [obj. marker] the land (a) desolation (6)	And I will make ^ the land <u>desolate</u> , (4)	^ I will make ^ the land <u>desolate</u> (3)
8b	יַעַן מָעַלּוּ מֵעַל	because they-were- unfaithful (an) unfaithfulness (3)	because they have committed a trespass, (3)	because they have been unfaithful ^, (2)
8c	נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה	(the) declaration (of) Adonai YHWH (3)	<u>saith</u> <u>the</u> Lord GOD. (1)	<u>declares</u> <u>the</u> <u>Sovereign</u> LORD.” (0)

	Results:	155 lexical items = 100%	120 lexical items translated literally = 77%	96 lexical items translated literally = 62%
Vs	Hebrew clauses	Word for word version	KJV	NIV
1a	וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר	And it-was (the) word (of) YHWH to me by to-say (inf.): (8 lexical items) (8)	And the word of <u>the LORD</u> came unto me, ^ <u>saying</u> (part.), (5)	^ The word of <u>the LORD</u> came to me: “ ^ ^ (4)
2a	בֶּן־אָדָם מֵהַיֵּהוּ עֵץ־הַגֶּפֶן מִכָּל־עֵץ הַזְּמוּרָה	Son (of) man what it-is (the) wood (of) the vine away-from (the) totality (of) (the) wood (of) the branch (12)	Son of man, What is the vine <u>tree more</u> than <u>any</u> tree, <i>or than a</i> branch (8)	Son of man, how is the wood of <u>a</u> vine <u>better</u> than ^ <u>that</u> of <u>a</u> branch (7)
2b	אֲשֶׁר הִיא בְּעֵצֵי הַיַּעַר:	which it-is in (the) trees (of) the forest? (6)	which is among the trees of the forest? (6)	^^ on <u>any</u> of the trees <u>in</u> the forest? (2)
3a	הֲיִקַּח מִמֶּנּוּ עֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת לְמִלְאָכָה	[inter. part.] it-will-be-taken from it wood for to-make for (an) article (9)	Shall wood be taken <u>thereof</u> ^ to do <u>any</u> ^ work? (4)	Is wood <u>ever</u> taken from it ^ to make ^ anything <u>useful</u> ? (4)
3b	אִם־יִקְחוּ מִמֶּנּוּ יִתְּדוּ לְתֵלוֹת עָלָיו כָּל־כְּלִי:	or? they-will-take from it (a) peg for to-hang on it (a) totality (of) (an) implement (11)	or will <i>men</i> take a pin of it ^ to hang <u>any</u> vessel <u>thereon</u> ? (8)	^ Do they make pegs from it ^ to hang ^ things on ^ ? (5)
4a	הִנֵּה לְאֵשׁ נָתַן לְאֹכְלָהּ	behold! for the fire it-was-given for food (7)	Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; (7)	<u>And</u> after it is thrown on the fire as fuel (6)

4b	אֶת שְׁנֵי קְצוֹתָיו אֹכְלָהּ הָאֵשׁ	[obj. marker] (the) two (of) (the) ends of-it it-burnt the fire (subject) (6)	the fire devoureth ^ both the ends of it, (5)	<u>and</u> the fire burns ^ both ends ^ (3)
4c	וְתוֹכוֹ נִחְרָה	and (the) middle of-it it-was-set-aglow (4)	and the midst of it is burned. (4)	and <u>chars</u> the middle, ^ (2)
4d	הֲיִצְלַח לְמַלְאכָהּ	[inter. part.] it-will- succeed for (an) article (4)	Is it meet for <i>any</i> work? (3)	is it <u>then</u> useful for anything? (2)
5a	הֲנִהּ בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ תָּמִים לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה לְמַלְאכָהּ	behold! in being of-it whole not it-will-be- made for (an) article (9)	Behold, <u>when</u> it was whole, it was meet for <u>no</u> work: (7)	If it was not useful for anything <u>when</u> it was whole, (8)
5b	אִף בִּי־אֵשׁ אֹכְלָתָהּ	how-much-less when (a) fire it-burnt it (5)	how much less [...] when <u>the</u> fire hath devoured it, (4)	how much less when <u>the</u> fire has burned it (4)
5c	וַיִּחַר	and it-was-set-aglow (2)	and it is burned (2)	and it is charred? (2)
5d	וַיַּעֲשֶׂה עוֹד לְמַלְאכָהּ:	and it-was-made still for an-article (5)	^ shall it be meet yet for <i>any</i> work (4)	^ can it be made ^ into something <u>useful</u> (2)
6a	לְכֹן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה	therefore thus said Adonai YHWH (5)	Therefore thus saith <u>the</u> Lord GOD; (4)	Therefore <u>this is</u> <u>what the</u> <u>Sovereign</u> LORD says: (2)
6b	כַּאֲשֶׁר עֵץ־הַגִּזְפוֹן בְּעֵץ הַיַּעַר	just-as (the) tree (of) the vine (is) in (the) tree (of) the bush (8)	As the vine <u>tree</u> among the trees of the forest, (6)	As the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest (7)

6c	אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לְאֵשׁ לְאֹכְלָהּ	that I-gave it to the fire for food (8)	which I have given ^ to the fire for fuel, (7)	^ I have given ^ for the fire, as fuel (6)
6d	כֵּן נָתַתִּי אֶת־יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם	so I gave [obj. marker] (the) inhabiting-ones (of) Jerusalem (5)	so will I give ^ the <u>inhabitants</u> of Jerusalem. (3)	so will I treat ^ the <u>people living in</u> Jerusalem. (3)
7a	וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־פָּנַי בָּהֶם	And I-gave [obj. marker] face of me in them (7)	And I will set ^ my face against them; (6)	^ I will set ^ my face against them. (5)
7b	מִהָאֵשׁ יֵצְאוּ	from the fire they- went-out (4)	they shall go out from <i>one</i> fire, (4)	<u>Although</u> they have come out of the fire, (3)
7c	וְהָאֵשׁ תֹּאכְלֵם	and the fire it-will- eat them (5)	and <i>another</i> fire shall devour them; (5)	the fire [...] will <u>yet</u> [...] consume them. (4)
7d	וַיִּדְעֻתֶם	and you-will-know (2)	and ye shall know (2)	And [...] you will know (2)
7e	כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּשׁוּמִי אֶת־פָּנַי בָּהֶם:	that I (am) YHWH in placing of me [obj. marker] (the) face of me in them (11)	that I <i>am</i> the LORD, <u>when</u> I set ^ my face against them. (8)	<u>when</u> I set ^ my face against them, that I am the LORD. (8)
8a	וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ שְׁמָמָה	and I-gave [obj. marker] the land (a) desolation (6)	And I will make ^ the land <u>desolate</u> , (4)	^ I will make ^ the land <u>desolate</u> (3)
8b	יַעַן מָעַלוּ מֵעַל	because they-were- unfaithful (an) unfaithfulness (3)	because they have committed a trespass, (3)	because they have been unfaithful ^, (2)

The above example (Ezek 15) was taken from the prophetic literature. The same method was also used to analyse sections from the historical literature, legal material, wisdom and poetry. The sections were chosen at random, and the results are presented in Figure 2.

	Word-for-word version		King James Version		New International Version	
	Lexical items	Percentage	Lexical items	Percentage	Lexical items	Percentage
Gen 17	561	100%	441	79%	358	64%
Ex 20:1-17	277	100%	220	79%	202	73%
Ezek 15	155	100%	120	77%	96	62%
Eccl 7	458	100%	331	72%	254	55%
Ps 23	84	100%	68	81%	70	83%
Average %	-	100%	-	77%	-	65%

Figure 2. A comparison of the level of literalness in the KJV and NIV renderings of sections from various types of literature in the Old Testament.

To determine if these differences are significant, a number of statistical procedures were followed.²² Technically speaking, the null hypothesis for this study is that the KJV will **not** be a more literal translation than the NIV. If this hypothesis can be rejected statistically, it will provide support for the alternative hypothesis, that the KJV is indeed a more literal translation than the NIV.

The basic statistical test to confirm or reject the null hypothesis is a t-test for dependent samples. The two versions are translations of the same BH text and can therefore be compared, verse for verse, to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the averages. For every verse, the possibility of a fully literal translation was assigned a value of 1 (or 100%). If there were 7 words in the original BH text, and all 7 were reproduced faithfully in translation, then 7 divided by 7 gives

²² The authors trust that their systematic and statistical research methods make a contribution towards methodological improvements in the field of descriptive translation studies, as suggested by Toury (c1995:69), to overcome the limitations of a stage where “we must be content with our intuitions” with regard to the study of translational norms.

1. If, for instance, only 6 of the 7 Hebrew words were translated literally, then 6 divided by 7 gives a literalness score of 0,86, or 86%. Conducting a t-test on all the individual verses, a t-value of 9,98 was obtained (with 86 degrees of freedom, and $p < 0.000001$). What this means is that the difference is statistically significant, and the probability that this result is due to chance is less than one in a million. The null hypothesis (no difference between the two versions) can be rejected. For this reason, we provide support for the alternative hypothesis, viz. that the KJV is indeed more literal than the NIV.

However, a closer examination of the data reveals that the five different biblical texts do not consistently differ in degree of literalness. To determine if specific texts were treated differently in terms of degree of literalness, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure was conducted on the data, with the difference in degree of literalness as a dependent variable, and the individual book-chapters as factor variable.²³ The results indicated a strong interaction of the different chapters with degree of literalness. An ANOVA computes an F-value, which was 7,21 in this case (with 4 degrees of freedom, and $p < 0.000051$), which is a statistically significant interaction.

Figure 3 is a visual representation of the differences in literalness for the five chapters.

23 The possibility of an interaction between degree of literalness and length of the verse was also examined, but no significant interaction was found with an ANOVA test, nor a statistically significant correlation. Thus, the length of a particular verse, or sentence, did not influence the degree of literalness of a translation in the data sample.

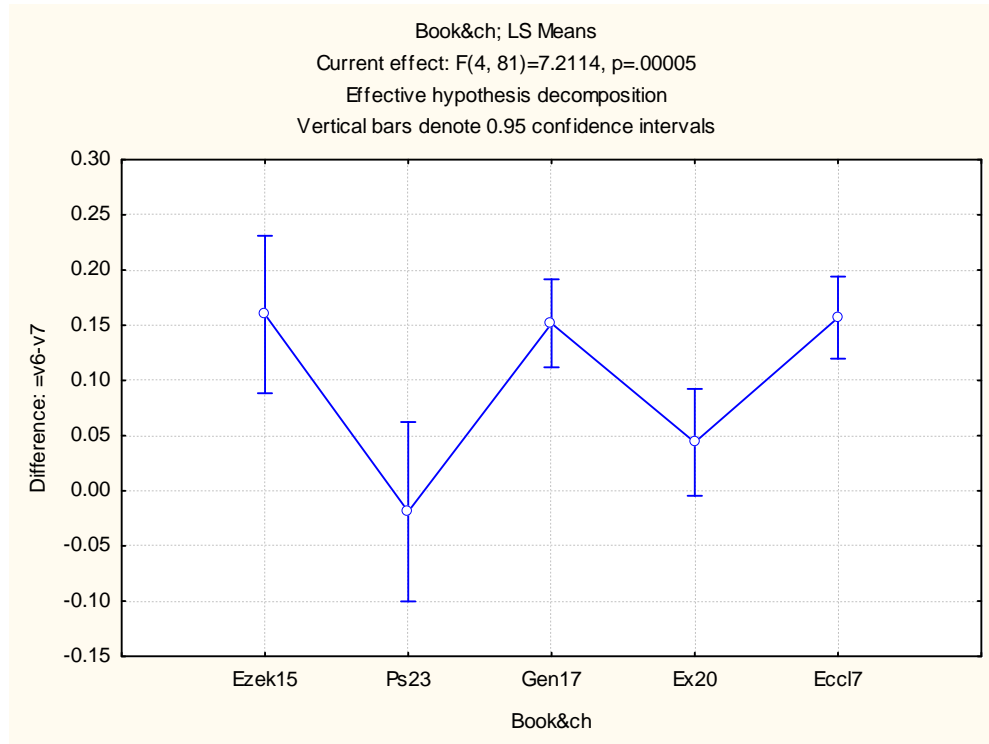


Figure 3. A visual representation of the differences in literalness for the five chapters.

The graph clearly shows that three of the texts, viz. Ezekiel 15, Genesis 17 and Ecclesiastes 7 have a comparable difference in the vicinity of 15%, whereas the other two texts, viz. Psalm 23 and Exodus 20, are closer to 0. This implies that the less familiar texts are translated in a relatively consistent manner, with a 15% difference in literalness between the KJV and the NIV, but the translations of the two more familiar texts are quite similar to each other in degree of literalness. There is a strong possibility that the KJV's rendering of these two texts has become a reference point for subsequent translations, and translators of subsequent versions may be so familiar with the wording of the KJV that their translations are closer to it, and perhaps therefore somewhat more literal than elsewhere. However, this is not necessarily a merely subconscious phenomenon. Most translators would be aware of the passages familiar to many Bible readers and would attempt to render such passages closer to canonical translations such as the KJV, thus ensuring greater acceptability of the new version.

5. CONCLUSION

Although some decisions to penalise or not to penalise may have been arbitrary, the KJV and NIV were compared consistently, clause by clause, and the difference between the two translations may indeed give an indication of their level of literalness. The results suggest that there is a general difference of about 15% in degree of literalness, with the exception of more familiar texts, which are more literal in the NIV than other texts, and thus closer to the KJV.

The same measuring instrument may be applied to gauge the literalness of other English versions. This may help to change perceptions about the level of literalness of the KJV and some other versions. In further research, the method could also be refined to take into consideration word order, syntax, word semantics and pragmatics. Translations of the Aramaic parts of the Old Testament and the Greek New Testament could also be evaluated in the same way. More research is needed to determine the usefulness of this approach for measuring the literalness of translations in other languages. Although a method that would apply to all languages would be ideal, the authors are of the opinion that the measuring instrument discussed in this article would need to be extensively revised if it were to serve this purpose.

Some new hypotheses were prompted while comparing the BH and English texts. One of these is the observation that, in some instances, the KJV seems to deliberately attempt to use idiomatic English. Examples of this are the translation of “heaven and earth” instead of “the heavens and the earth” (Exod 20:11), “the seventh day” instead of “on the seventh day” (Exod 20:11), “I will make him a great nation” instead of “I will make him into a great nation” (Gen 17:20), and “wisdom giveth life to them that have it” instead of “wisdom giveth her owners life” (Eccl 7:12)²⁴. Surprisingly, the NIV sometimes renders these instances more literally, e.g. “the heavens and the earth” (Exod 20:11), “on the seventh day” (Exod 20:11), “I will make him into a great nation” (Gen 17:20), and “wisdom preserves the life of its possessor” (Eccl 7:12). Even within the KJV itself, there are occasional inconsistencies. See for example Gen 17:7-8: “to be a God unto thee” vs. “I will be their God” (instead of the more literal “I will be a God unto them”).²⁵ While this article has graded

24 This is a surprising example of fully functional equivalent translation which one would not expect in the KJV.

25 According to Toury (c1995:67), “a translator’s behaviour cannot be expected to be fully systematic... Consistency in translational behaviour is thus a graded

the literal translation consistency level of the KJV as 77 percent on average, these new propositions should be explored in depth in further independent studies.

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notion which is neither nil (i.e., total erraticness) nor 1 (i.e., absolute regularity)".

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