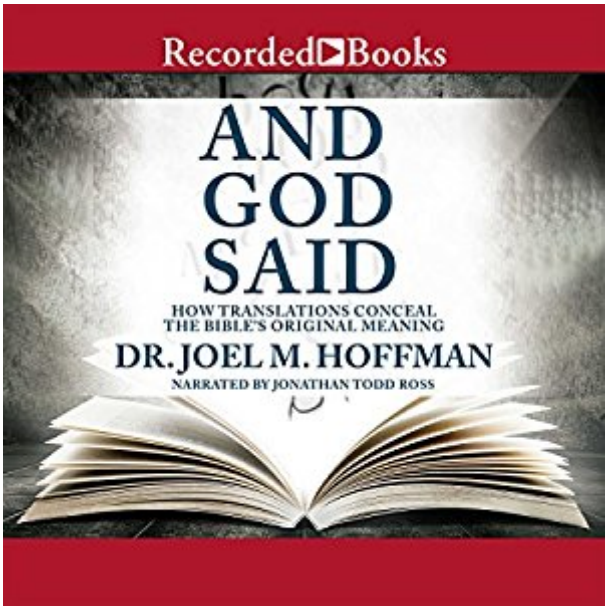
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And God Said: How Translations Conceal The Bible's Original Meaning



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Synopsis

For centuries translations of the Bible have obscured our understanding and appreciation of the original text. Now And God Said provides listeners with an authoritative account of significant mistranslations and shows how new translation methods can give listeners their first glimpse into what the Bible really means. And God Said uncovers the often inaccurate or misleading English translations of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament that quotes from it. Sometimes the familiar English is just misleading. Other times the mistakes are more substantial. But the errors are widespread. This book tackles such issues as what's wrong with the 10 Commandments (starting with the word commandments), the correct description of the "virgin" birth, and the surprisingly modern message in the Song of Solomon as well as many other unexpected but thought-provoking revelations. Acclaimed translator Dr. Joel M. Hoffman sheds light on the original intention of the text and the newly developed means that listeners can use to get closer to it. In And God Said his fresh approach has united the topics of religion, language, and linguistics to offer the first modern understanding since the Bible was written.

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Customer Reviews

Anyone who reads the Bible and wants to get as close as possible to the original languages, should read Dr. Hoffman's book. This is both a scholarly and an approachable book which both linguists and lay readers can enjoy. The author points out problems with all the major English translations of

the Bible (he deals primarily with the Old Testament) such as the King James, New Revised Standard, New Intl. Version, etc. Sometimes the translation from the Biblical Hebrew wasn't accurate and sometimes the English then used (for example, in the King James) has changed and a modern reader really doesn't get the meaning. Even if you are fluent in Biblical Hebrew, scholars often disagree with the meaning of words or dispute the context. Dr. Hoffman discusses major issues with translations (for example, does Isaiah mean "virgin" or "young woman"?). He discusses how languages work compared to other languages. Among other things, this book destroys the idea of reading the Bible literally since often it's difficult for even scholars to know what a passage actually means.

Dr. Joel Hoffman, a Jewish professor of linguistics, walks the reader through the world of translation. He brings examples from English and several other modern languages to show just how difficult translation can be at times. If it's difficult to translate from one modern language to another, just try from an ancient (and dead) language to a living one!His examples are clear, free of unnecessary jargon, and drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures. As a Christian, I wish he had looked a little more at the New Testament (with which he is also quite familiar), but I cannot fault him. He did very well in this book. The one complaint I have about this book is the title. It really looks on the outside as if it were one of those fringe Bible code type books. But I promise you, it's not.Neither is this book an assault on the Christian (or Jewish) faith in any sense. The author seeks to refine our understanding so that we may be further enriched in reading Scripture. I consider this a must-read for believer and unbeliever alike. In fact, Dr. Hoffman includes concise explanations for his biblical examples so that those not familiar with the Bible can still follow his thoughts.Overall, the book gives the impression that Bible translators throughout the centuries have done a decent job, perhaps a C+ to a B-, but could do better in some respects. And on certain issues, there is no complete translation and the only remedy is explanation/commentary. The Bible says that God will preserve his word, but folks, that doesn't mean that God's promising to give perfect translations. The Bible (NT) says that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, but that doesn't mean that you as a solo rebel Christian are infallible in your interpretation. I'd just like for everyone to keep that in mind: no translation will ever remove the need for instruction in order for readers to understand.OK, enough of that tangent. The best thing about this book is that it concisely shows why word-for-word doesn't work, or at least is not the be-all and end-all of translation styles.

Charming, entertaining and deeply thought-provoking analysis takes as its jumping off point the

problem of translating the Bible into English but ranges over etymology, philosophy, linguistics and grammar. What a sentence means and even what meaning means is a hoary chestnut debated for eons but the translation question crystallizes the issue. There is so much in here, rarely have I read as thought-provoking. This book for nearly anyone will change the way he or she thinks about the world: about language, about the Bible, about meaning in general.The book is more focused in scope than many other books in the area. Hofstadter's book on language and translation, Le Ton Beau de Marot comes to mind, which was also very interesting but again I liked the concreteness - and the importance - of the problems addressed here. Hoffman is able to focus far more deeply and specific problems, sometimes devoting a chapter to a single word (like "kill" or "covet" or "shepherd") whereas the Hofstadter book is more general. And although translations like Alter's great works, as well as his exegeses, are powerful, this book has a much narrower focus but also more sensitivity and care not just to the Hebrew source but also to the English target. Indeed, this book is terrifically enjoyable just for what it says about English.The apparent contranym lurking in "patent

To understand another language, the meaning of individual words in that other language should be learned from their use in a variety of contexts.The Lord's Prayer (Psalm 23) better translated might open, "The Lord is my hero .... "Why? In the biblical Hebrew world a "Shepherd," who sometimes would slay lions to protect a flock, was highly regarded. In our world a shepherd would be reluctant to list his occupation in applying for a bank loan.I have paraphrased Hoffman to show how he can add humor to the important matter of translation.

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