Preface to the Gender–Sensitive Edition

The present edition has taken as its starting point the venerable New Jewish Publication Society (NJPS) translation, whose preparation began in 1955. After three decades of effort, in 1985, the complete translation was published in one volume under the title *Tanakh* (the Jewish tradition's term for the Hebrew Bible)—and has become one of the most respected English renderings of the biblical text, both within the Jewish world and beyond.[1]

NJPS continues to possess this iconic status for readers, scholars, and communities across the globe. Nevertheless, in 2020, The Jewish Publication Society decided to commission a revision. In particular, a set of far-reaching changes—especially in English-language usage, but also extending well beyond that—had made NJPS seem more male-oriented than its translators intended. This state of affairs, in turn, had made it harder for today's readers of *Tanakh* to gain an accurate picture of what the Hebrew Bible meant in its original context. Furthermore, the translation had come to unduly alienate many individuals and communities, making it difficult for them to engage the Bible and its teachings.

THE JPS TANAKH: Gender-Sensitive Edition (scholarly abbreviation: RJPS or Revised JPS edition) aims to once again open up the biblical text to contemporary readers. In particular, it aims to restore the ability of NJPS to provide an accurate picture of how gender is handled in the Bible—the original text's presuppositions, ascriptions, and prescriptions. Drawing upon advances in scholarly understandings of how gender functioned in the ancient world, it introduces a wide range of changes in the language used both for people and for God, as well as in related areas. It offers gender-inclusive renderings when appropriate and gendered ones when called for historically and linguistically. It also makes changes in other areas, especially regarding archaic language and ritual terminology. It thus strives to be *gender sensitive*—to be attentive to the complex ways in which gender and language function, both in the Bible's world and in our own. The intended result is to restore the vital access that a translation of the Hebrew Bible can afford to its world and its timeless lessons.

Diverse readers open up an English translation of the Bible, and for many of them, both the treatment of gender and fidelity to the

Hebrew text matter deeply. If you are such a reader, then this edition is dedicated to you. It is dedicated, as well—and with gratitude—to the original translation teams who created NJPS, and whose trailblazing path has been followed here.

NJPS as (Incidentally) Gender Sensitive

As recounted by Harry M. Orlinsky *z″l* (1908–1992), a professor of Bible at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion and the champion of what came to be called NJPS, in 1955 its initial translation team began to consider gender issues (although that label was not used at the time) upon assuming the freedom to depart from the traditional renderings of earlier English versions.[2] As a matter of course while parsing the Hebrew text, the committee members would ask themselves about the scope of a given "male" personal noun: in this particular context, did it mean *son*—or *offspring*? And *fathers*—or *ancestors*? They posed such questions for the sake of their ultimate goal: to ascertain the text's plain sense, so as to render it accurately into modern English idiom.[3]

In other words, already prior to the 1970s, when (second-wave) feminists called for an end to male-oriented Bible translation, NJPS had unintentionally led the way in what came to be called gender-sensitive rendering. Indeed, just prior to the 1985 publication of the full *Tanakh*, Prof. Orlinsky carefully checked a third of its thirty-nine books, looking for additional passages that might warrant inclusive language. He found what he later described as "exceedingly few instances" where such a change was needed.[4] In short, Orlinsky had good reason to argue that for at least a significant portion of the biblical text's personal references, the NJPS translation process had represented the Bible's treatment of gender accurately.

A Flood of Shifts in English Usage

Much as a flooding river can reconfigure the channel through which it subsequently flows, rapid changes in English usage have, in the years since NJPS was published, reshaped how its achievement is viewed. Whereas NJPS had frequently employed both the masculine pronouns *he/him/his/himself* and the noun *man* in their classic generic sense, such usage has since been swept away—largely disappearing from everyday parlance. The language's altered course has thus skewed the gender picture that NJPS's readers see in many passages.

An example illustrates the challenge that readers now face. A legal section of Exodus declares: "He who fatally strikes a man shall be put to death" (21.12, NJPS, first published in 1962). Two labels denote the parties involved: *He* and *man.* The translation committee surely intended that both of them have gender-inclusive force.[5] In the early 1960s that was common parlance in the realm of American law. Even in 1985, such wording was still considered normal diction in formal documents.

Since then, however, nearly all jurisdictions in the USA have intentionally replaced *he* and *man* as generic terms in the wording of their laws or ordinances. That way of speaking and legislating has become rare—and is therefore unexpected, if not jarring or even alienating. Hence present-day readers of NJPS may well infer that this verse is talking only about male perpetrators and male victims—or at least pause to wonder about that prospect. Or worse, readers might conclude that in the biblical world, only males were deemed worthy of the text's attention. These are difficulties that follow in the wake of the altered course of our English language.

Meanwhile, that same evolution has affected even many NJPS passages where women are not in view, by making gender seem to be more at issue than it actually is. In effect, the translated text has become less coherent, which decreases readers' ability to make sense of it. For example, in 1 Samuel, when King Saul hears a proposal that certain rogues be executed (11.12; cf. 10.27), he demurs, replying: "No man shall be put to death this day!" (11.13, NJPS, first published in 1978). Although the scoundrels in question are almost certainly men, this fact is beside the point, because the king is making a categorical statement. NJPS surely employed *man* here in its broadest classical sense (with *no man* meaning *nobody*). Nowadays, however, *man* is seldom used in that way; rather, the king's point would normally be expressed in more clearly gender-neutral terms. The baseline of expected wording has shifted. And so Saul's apparent departure from the (new) normal way of speaking evokes an impression that he is making an issue of the maleness of those implicated. Although that inference is blunted by the fact that their gender is not otherwise a concern in this story, it leaves Saul's utterance (as rendered in NJPS) sounding odd.

At the same time, due to a related shift in English parlance, speakers increasingly make personal reference without recourse to gender. Nowadays we tend to separate our mention of a person's accomplishments and social roles from the gendered garb in which we used to

clothe those points. For example, in discussions of America's establishment as a nation, it has become common to avoid the classic term *founding fathers* in favor of *founders*—while leaving it unstated that they were almost all men.[6] What might once have been an artful act of specification (taking the referents' maleness as a given and then expressing the role in those terms) might now function as an act of exclusion (an endorsement of the fact that women were usually not eligible for positions of communal leadership). Present-day parlance favors the avoidance of exclusion over the specification of a gendered role. In that light, when God says to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers . . ." (Gen. 31.3, NJPS, first published in 1962), the locution *fathers* now comes across as suspect. Aren't his mother Rebekah and grandmother Sarah also in view?

The Impact on God-Language

Thus far, we have been talking about the Bible's references to human beings. Actually, however, the main protagonist featured in biblical accounts is Israel's Deity. The aforementioned recent gender-related changes in English have likewise affected audience perceptions about the NJPS renderings of references to God. Those, too, seem more male-oriented, in that the third-person pronouns used by NJPS—such as *He*—have become harder to construe as not ascribing gender.[7]

A further challenge is how to represent the name of God. As many readers will be aware, the Hebrew Bible refers to the Deity with multiple terms, frequently using a noun such as *'elohim* (typically rendered as "God") but even more often using a four-letter "personal" name known as the tetragrammaton (consisting of the Hebrew letters *yod*, *heh*, *vav*, and *heh*, often transliterated into English as *YHVH*). NJPS generally translated the tetragrammaton as "the LORD"—using small capital letters.[8] This reflected the traditional Jewish practice of marking the Deity's name as unique, by presenting it in a distinctive manner and avoiding its direct pronunciation. However, when the epithet *Lord* is used in place of the divine name, it implicitly treats God's persona as male, compared to a baseline non-gendered synonym such as *Sovereign*. Nowadays in many Jewish circles, people who read aloud from NJPS avoid saying "the LORD" due to that male connotation. (They substitute a variety of terms instead.) For such readers, God is a persona not only in the ancient text but also in present moments—and the Deity whom they themselves have experienced is not a male.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

In sum, due to changes in the English language since NJPS was published in 1985, it has been increasingly construed as unduly male-oriented and somewhat ponderous—much like the long tradition of wooden equivalents that its translators had, at one time, so proudly transcended. For many readers of the Bible in English, this distorted state of affairs is discomfiting, and even outrageous. For some, the translation's amplification of the Bible's predominantly male-centered concerns painfully compounds the relative exclusion of girls and women from the Jewish textual tradition. Likewise they view the God-language as rather scandalously implying that divinity exists only apart from the feminine.

The Making of a Revised Edition

The Jewish Publication Society's leadership has been well aware of the trends described above. It has explored a variety of ways to respond to the gender-related changes in English that were affecting how NJPS was construed. In 2020, the right combination came together of institutional support, available translation expertise, a partnership with Sefaria, and an increasingly interested audience. The publisher therefore embarked upon a full revision of *Tanakh*.

Happily, the revision effort was able to build upon a foundation that JPS had established initially through an earlier publishing partnership, with URJ Press. That effort had focused only on the Torah (also known as the Pentateuch, or Five Books of Moses, which is the first major section of the Hebrew Bible). In 2006, the outcome had been published in *The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation*. (The revised Torah translation itself is referred to in scholarly circles as CJPS, which stands for "Contemporary JPS.")

Titled *THE JPS TANAKH: Gender-Sensitive Edition*, the present revision of NJPS in its entirety has treated CJPS as a pilot project, by incorporating nearly all of its modifications to NJPS for the Torah, while refining others and introducing new changes. The CJPS methodology meanwhile served as the starting point for work on the rest of the Bible, which retained many CJPS innovations while also going beyond them.[9] When an abbreviation is needed for convenience, the publisher now asks scholars and others to refer to this new version of the NJPS translation as "RJPS"—that is, the Revised Jewish Publication Society translation.

The remainder of this preface—before concluding with due acknowledgments—will outline the RJPS approach to revision. For further details about the methodology, see the Notes on Gender in Translation, available online at purl.org/jps/gender.

The Treatment of References to Human Beings

Translation can be said to involve two dimensions. One is dealing with *what was said* in the source text, by ascertaining and rendering its plain sense into a tongue that the reader finds more comprehensible. The other is accounting for *what went without saying*—especially, in this case, the gendered social roles and mores that the original text's wording presupposed, yet nowadays may be unfamiliar.[10] Like NJPS, the present translation renders the ancient text as if all its voices were speaking Modern English. At the same time, it brings the salient gender-related presuppositions and norms into view (often in the notes).[11] The first goal affords the reader a ready comprehension of the *Tanakh*, while the second maintains a historical and cultural authenticity.[12]

One important decision for any translator between cultures (such as *ancient* versus *modern*) is to what extent the world that is presupposed by the original utterance should be made relatable and familiar. The present edition offers readers a faithful and unvarnished view into a somewhat strange world that is not only fascinating but also occasionally unsettling—and perhaps even disturbing. Some of the norms of ancient Israel were not those of many contemporary readers, to say the least. In particular, their society was more committed to gender asymmetry and hierarchy than is our own; women's and men's lives were supposed to be strongly distinct.[13]

Regardless, the revision has hewn to the same charge that was initially presented to the NJPS translation team: "to render the Hebrew text as they believed the original author of that text meant it to be understood" by its original audience.[14] As before, this rendition is meant neither to endorse nor condemn the ancient ways that it describes, but rather to be a witness to them. For as Prof. Phyllis Bird, a pioneering feminist biblical scholar, has memorably put it, "the aim of a Bible translator . . . should be to enable a modern audience to overhear an ancient conversation, rather than to hear itself addressed directly."[15]

In some instances, reporting the "ancient conversation" has meant adopting a non-gendered rendering. In the case of the aforementioned directive from God to Jacob (Gen. 31.3), the label in question was אֲבֹת *'avot*, which can mean "fathers" or "ancestors." Based upon a belief that for the ancient audience, the term in this setting would have evoked the image of an extended-family household, the present translation renders, "Return to your ancestors' land. . . ."

In other cases, however, overhearing the "ancient conversation" has

meant adopting a gendered rendering even where a gender-inclusive one might be defensible. For example, as recounted in 1 Kings 21.3, when Naboth rejected King Ahab's bid for his vineyard, he fatefully said, "GOD forbid that I should give up to you what I have inherited from my אֲבוֹת!" Which rendering of his final word is best: *fathers*—or *ancestors?* Given the brusqueness (and even rudeness) of Naboth's reply, the ancient audience would have understood him to be taking a bold stand in the well-known competition between major authority structures in ancient Israel: the monarchy (headed by a king) versus the traditional reliance upon patrimonial households (headed by a father). That conceptual frame sets up an equivalence between the opposed authority figures. Therefore, just as *king* is gendered in English, so too the rendering of אֲבוֹת should be. Accordingly, in that passage *father* was preferred to *ancestors*.[16]

The revising team examined each personal reference in the Hebrew text that employed grammatically masculine inflections or male terms. It assessed whether women as well as men were in view. After accounting for the gender implications, the team weighed how well NJPS conveyed those to a contemporary audience. The team also sought to ensure that references to women were rendered in a manner that did not add undue connotations, and that references to men did not unduly emphasize maleness. The rendering was tweaked as needed. (When introducing changes, the team adopted the same overall rendering style and footnoting style as NJPS.) In sum, the revising translators strove to make gender no more and no less of an issue than the text's original audience would have perceived it.

The Treatment of References to Israel's God

The God-language in this edition presupposes that most readers will identify its main protagonist with the non-gendered God that is the norm in much of present-day religious Judaism. It also respects the fact that the Hebrew text does not allow us to determine exactly what ancient communities themselves believed about the gender of God's persona. Indeed, whether the Bible's language is intended to depict a Deity whose persona is beyond gender categories is a matter of longstanding debate in academic circles.[17] Such indeterminacy is best preserved via a gender-neutral presentation, for it allows either a nongendered or gendered reading.

In order to refer to God as a persona in a manner that does not ascribe manly gender, the present edition's translation team carefully

considered a variety of options before undertaking adaptations in three areas: third-person references, the divine name, and metaphors used as epithets. Each area will now be briefly discussed, in turn.

Third-Person References.   The revision avoids all third-person personal pronouns that might appear to ascribe gender to God. For example, Hebrew that had been rendered in NJPS as "His covenant" (Deut. 17.2), "laws that He enjoined upon you" (Deut. 28.45), and "His people" (Deut. 32.43), is now rendered respectively as "the covenant," "laws that were enjoined upon you," and "God's people." In many cases, clauses were recast or combined without altering their basic meaning. For example, "who has not failed in His kindness" (Ruth 2.20) has become "who has not failed to show kindness"; likewise, "The Lord has laid waste without pity / All the habitations of Jacob; / He has razed in His anger / Fair Judah's strongholds. / He has brought low in dishonor / The kingdom and its leaders" (Lam. 2.2) has become "The Sovereign has laid waste without pity / All the habitations of Jacob— / Has razed in anger / Fair Judah's strongholds, / Bringing low in dishonor / The kingdom and its leaders."[18]

The Divine Name.   As noted above, NJPS generally translated God's ineffable four-letter name, the tetragrammaton, as "the LORD" (using small capital letters). To avoid the male connotations of that rendering, the translators weighed various approaches, ranging from simply leaving it untranslated altogether (and having it appear in unvocalized Hebrew), to offering a simple transliteration (YHVH), to employing a commonly used Hebrew substitute (e.g., *Adonai*, meaning "my Lord"), to rendering its presumed meaning into English (e.g., Source of Being).[19] Ultimately, after careful consideration, this edition's translators settled on a different solution, drawing upon two practices from the rich tradition of German Jewish Bible translation.[20]

As its default rendering, this edition builds on Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's approach in his translations of biblical books (starting in 1867): namely, rendering the divine name with a visually and typographically distinctive version of the German word for God. While Hirsch achieved this by using a distinctive spacing for the letters,[21] this edition adopts an approach rooted in NJPS itself by representing the divine name with the word "God" in small capitals: GOD. Maintaining the typographic treatment that NJPS used for rendering God's name as "the LORD,"[22] this approach addresses the following three issues that the editorial team deemed to be crucial.

1. *Accessibility.* The term GOD is immediately recognizable as a reference to the Deity and readily pronounceable by English-speakers. Since one goal of JPS *Tanakh* translations is to open up the biblical text to readers and communities from a wide range of backgrounds, the translators chose an accessible, familiar, and easy-to-pronounce term.

2. *Clarity.* Upon reading the text and seeing the small capitals, readers will know that the original Hebrew is God's name, rather than some other label.

3. *Authenticity.* The term GOD provides access to the ancient experience of the divine name primarily as a name (rather than as a description or a theological claim).[23] In the Hebrew, this name is distinct from, but exists alongside of, other ways of referring to the Deity. Using two versions of the same word (GOD and *God*) for this name and for certain other Hebrew terms underscores that the Deity is being invoked in all of these cases, while (as noted above) enabling readers to know which type of expression appears in the biblical text.

While representing the tetragrammaton as "GOD" works well in most cases, there are instances where it would produce confusion, especially if the translation were read aloud. Particularly in passages where God's name is followed by the term *'elohim* with a possessive pronoun, the result would be awkward: a sequence previously rendered as "the LORD your God" would become "GOD your God." In such cases, the present edition employs a substitute for the tetragrammaton coined in the 1780s by the German Jewish philosopher and translator Moses Mendelssohn: "the ETERNAL" (in his German: *der Ewige*). Such substitutions yield more felicitous-sounding phrases.[24] The following table shows some examples, compared to the NJPS reading.

RJPS	NJPS	Citation
The ETERNAL God planted a garden in Eden	The LORD God planted a garden in Eden	Gen. 2.8
Thus says GOD:	Thus says the LORD:	Exod. 4.22
O my Sovereign GOD	O Lord GOD	Deut. 3.24
You shall love the ETERNAL your God	You shall love the LORD your God	Deut. 6.5
The Sovereign GOD of Hosts	The King LORD of Hosts	Isa. 6.5

Metaphors as Epithets.   The ancient poets who called God "Rock" were not claiming that their Deity was made of stone. Rather, the metaphor succinctly expressed a reassuring sense of reliability. By analogy, another popular image, which cast God as Father—with the people Israel as God's child—does not allow us to conclude that the speaker believed that God's persona is male.[25] Rather, that figure expressed the Deity's generative role in the social order. This gendered imagery also likened the ongoing relationship between God and Israel to a social contract that was ubiquitous in the ancient world: ideally, one's father promised legitimacy, protection, and sustenance in return for loyalty. This image reflected the distinctive role of the head of a household in the ancient Near East (or Southwest Asia—to employ a less Eurocentric name for the region, albeit a less familiar one).[26] The present edition, committed to gender accuracy, therefore preserves the njps rendering "Father," while footnoting the ancient perception of that role.

So, too, this edition retains the gendered epithet "King" where it is employed in a military context. In the ancient Near Eastern stereotype, it was the responsibility of a king (but not a queen) to lead the army into battle. Gender is thus salient in that metaphor of protection and authority, which (to reiterate) did not necessarily mean that the speaker believed that God's persona is male.

Additional Revisions

In the process of making the gender-related changes, the translation team attended to several other aspects as well.

Farewell to Some Archaisms.   As the English language has evolved, certain expressions in njps have come to seem so dated that they become a distraction, if not a stumbling block. Here and there, the revised version replaces such terms with others that sound less archaic to early twenty-first-century ears. Gone are expressions such as *beseech*, *bewail*, and *played the harlot*. By design, their substitutes are not intended to be noticeable.[27]

More Precise Ritual Terminology.   To express certain concepts related to priestly concerns, the present edition has moved away from some traditional renderings that have seemed to obscure the picture. Regarding what scholars call "ritual purity," it replaces *clean* and *unclean* with *pure* and *impure*. Terms of cleanliness have the disadvan-

tage of evoking misleading images of hygiene and dirt. Rather, what is intended is a pair of complementary states of being that affects one's ability to engage with the Deity—and with associated persons, places, and objects. Similarly, this edition employs *purgation offering* rather than *sin offering*, and *reparation offering* rather than *guilt offering*.[28] The older renderings have prompted confusion in that the Torah often prescribes such sacrifices even where sin and guilt, respectively, are not central to their function.[29]

Clarified References. NJPS usually hewed very closely to the Hebrew text in using a pronoun to make reference to someone or something, rather than a more descriptive (noun) label. In certain places, the intended reference is thereby unclear, so the translators helpfully supplied a clarifying footnote. However, when those passages are read aloud, audiences sometimes struggle to keep track of who or what is being talked about. The present edition strives instead to make references clear within the translation text itself, while acknowledging in a footnote that the Hebrew text is more vague.[30]

Conventions Made Explicit. As discussed above, the biblical text's meaning often depends upon taking into account the linguistic conventions and then-familiar social mores that went without saying during the text's engagement of its ancient audience. Where those givens differ from contemporary ones with regard to gender perceptions, dozens of new footnotes have been supplied, in order to enable today's audience to better construe the text through ancient eyes.

More Attention to Footnotes. Because today's Bible-reading audience is, by and large, more interested in the nuances of translation than the original audience for NJPS, the footnotes have been made more prominent on the printed page, while navigation aids have been added in both the printed and electronic editions.

Copyediting Corrections. More than two hundred corrections of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and minor wording have been made for clarity, precision, and consistency among the various portions of the Bible translation. That drive for consistency has included place names (*Cush* rather than the occasional *Nubia* or *Ethiopia*) and artifacts (*oracle idols* rather than *household idols*, *teraphim*, or *household gods*). As for matters of style, only one change is widespread: the replacement of the restrictive use of *which* with *that*, to reflect standard American usage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this revised translation has realigned NJPS with standard, present-day English parlance for ascribing gender (or not). It has also continued to provide a forthright encounter with the cultural world depicted in the ancient text, where gender is concerned. Consequently, this edition should once again evoke for today's audience the same mental picture as the original text apparently evoked for its ancient one. This edition therefore preserves the differences between the Bible's world and our own, while—crucially—allowing the biblical text to speak to contemporary readers who might otherwise find it alienating.

The latest team of translators, by retracing the pathway taken by its predecessors, has hopefully accomplished a restoration that would make the original NJPS teams proud. Perhaps it can even be said: the result is just like NJPS, only more so.

Both the publisher and the translation team are truly pleased to be offering *THE JPS TANAKH: Gender-Sensitive Edition* to the public, knowing that it matters a great deal to many of you. Those who consider the accurate treatment of how gender functioned in the Bible's world, and the inclusion of a non-gendered depiction of God, to be vital aspects of a translation may experience a range of reactions. Some may well feel relieved to no longer be provoked—while reading or studying the Bible—to wonder why this sacred text continually gives the impression that the feminine does not count for much. Others may appreciate no longer needing to inwardly correct the translated words as they encounter them. Still others may be excited to encounter a text that better reflects their values and commitments, while remaining historically and linguistically accurate. Hence they may once again feel eager to share a JPS *Tanakh* translation with younger generations—whether the latter are encountering sacred texts in communal worship, learning about their heritage as they come of age, reckoning with the Bible in university courses, or simply reconnecting with traditions that had long seemed alienating. If so, dear reader, take this translation in hand, and proceed!

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Of course I must also mention Rabbi Hara Person, who as editor-in-chief of URJ Press championed an initial "gender-accurate" adaptation project in 2003–2005; she also served as the first critical reader for the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy. In addition, the consulting editors for that earlier work on the Torah (which became CJPS in 2006), who provided crucial guidance, were Prof. Carol L. Meyers, Prof. Adele Berlin, and JPS editor-in-chief Dr. Ellen Frankel.[31] As noted above, the present work benefited immensely from their pioneering efforts.

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Rabbi David E. S. Stein, Ph.D.
Project Manager and Revising Translator
9 May 2023 / Lag ba-Omer 5783

Notes

1. See the "Preface to the 1985 Edition" that immediately follows this one. In 1999, a second edition that incorporated miscellaneous corrections was issued along with the publication of *The JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*.

2. Given the nature of the English language, a more literal style of translation from Hebrew is, on the whole, biased toward male renderings. See the supporting essay "Notes on Gender in Translation" (hereinafter: Notes), available online at purl.org/jps/gender.

3. Harry Orlinsky, "A Jewish Scholar Looks at the Revised Standard Version and Its New Edition," *Religious Education* 85, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 211–21; Harry Orlinsky, "Male Oriented Language Originated by Bible Translators," in *A History of Bible Translation and the North American Contribution*, eds. Harry M. Orlinsky and Robert G. Bratcher (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 267–77.

4. Harry Orlinsky, "A Jewish Scholar Looks at the Revised Standard Version and Its New Edition," *Religious Education* 85, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 217. He checked the thirteen books that he had helped to translate. Nonetheless, for the other books the translation committees may well have been less rigorous in avoiding male-oriented renderings.

5. Although gender is at issue elsewhere in this passage, that fact does not affect the rendering of this particular clause. The grounds for concluding that this clause should not be rendered in gendered terms are as follows. (1) The original Hebrew text is framed categorically, in terms of a situation that is sketched out in a schematic way; it is not making an issue of the gender of either the perpetrator or the victim. (2) Neither the sentence's grammar nor its way of making reference specifies the gender of those parties. (3) Considerations of both consistency and genre suggest that for the text's ancient audience, it went without saying that women are in view. (4) In the case of the noun in question, construing it here gender-inclusively finds support in several biblical dictionaries.

6. Commendably, such a change in wording is meant to expand the conceptual frame with regard to whose contributions to society are seen as valuable. This move, however, is not cost-free.

7. For the second edition of the NJPS translation (1999), a disclaimer on the copyright page stated: "As in the first edition (and in Hebrew), masculine terms for God such as 'He' should be understood as gender neutral. . . ."

8. The exceptions to this rule appeared wherever the epithet אֲדֹנָי *'adonai* (typically rendered as "the Lord" or "my Lord") occurred nearby; in those cases—numbering about three hundred—the divine name was represented instead as "GOD," echoing a traditional Jewish practice of altering the pronunciation of the tetragrammaton when אֲדֹנָי appears in close proximity.

9. The most obvious departure from CJPS lies in how God's personal name is represented. (CJPS reproduced the Name via unvocalized Hebrew letters throughout.) On this edition's treatment of the Name, see below; and on other differences from CJPS, see the Notes online.

10. See "What Goes without Saying" in the Notes online.

11. On the "thought-for-thought" translation approach used by NJPS, see its preface. A distinguishing feature of that approach is that it enables today's audience to engage the

ancient text readily—that is, with little recourse to explanatory notes. That being said, although the notes accompanying RJPS remain fairly sparse, the translators consider them to be an integral part of the translation.

12. Gender-neutral wording does not necessarily mean that women are in view. For example, in normal English idiom, one might refer to individuals who play in a men-only sports league, such as the National Basketball Association, simply as professional athletes; the fact that only men are in view often goes without saying. Similarly, in RJPS, a gender-neutral formulation in a particular passage may likewise presuppose that only men are in view at that point in the text—a fact that the Bible's original audience would have been expected to realize. See "Translating Gender in Light of English Idiom" in the Notes online.

13. See "What Goes without Saying" in the Notes online. That section also discusses why this translation effort left aside the consideration of other possible gender identities.

14. Harry Orlinsky, ed., *Notes on the New Translation of the Torah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1969), 3–40, here 18.

15. Phyllis Bird, "Translating Sexist Language as a Theological and Cultural Problem," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 42, nos. 1–2 (1988): 91. The same point was later reiterated to the present editor by Tikva Frymer-Kensky *z″l* (1943–2006), professor of Bible at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. She insisted that an *authentic* translation needs to convey forthrightly the distinctions that the Bible drew between men and women according to the norms of ancient Israelite society. Happily, in the years since NJPS was published, the ability of Bible translators to fulfill that aim has improved greatly, due to the spectacular growth in scholarship on women, men, and the construction of gender—not only in the Bible but also in ancient Israel and across the ancient Near East.

16. To give a more detailed analysis: Masculine plural reference does not specify the gender of the persons in view, so it justifies either the gendered "fathers" or the gender-inclusive "ancestors." Both terms denote those who had passed that estate on to him. Presumably the ancient audience would have granted that perhaps one of more of those forebears might have been a daughter who (for one of several reasons) had inherited from her father, for such things known to happen on occasion. And yet a gender-inclusive scope would not have been in Naboth's mind, because he was in a dialogic situation of contrast and refusal, in which a speaker normally makes recourse to a *stereotype*. And in the case of Naboth's patrimony, the stereotype was gendered as male.

17. See "Israel's God: The Case for Gender-Neutral Language" in the Notes online, which explains why a gender-neutral depiction may also be the most historically accurate one.

18. See "Third-Person References to Israel's God" in the Notes online.

19. See "Representing the Tetragrammaton" in the Notes online.

20. Since Antiquity, the tetragrammaton has been treated unlike other Hebrew nouns, both in speech and in writing, as if it referred to something totally other. Such distinctive treatment appears to be a reflex of the monotheistic concept of God as unique and transcendent.

21. In the following extract, the letterspacing in the leftmost word is what signals the divine Name:

Gott, euer Gott.

Gott, euer Gott (God, your God)—the end of Lev. 19.2 in S. R. Hirsch's translation.

22. See above under "The Impact on God-Language."

23. Generally speaking, a name's meaning is simply its ability to uniquely identify who or what it refers to. Typically in English parlance, in a monotheistic milieu, the term *God* is employed with unique reference—just like a name (and in language, what most determines a term's meaning is how it is conventionally used). At the same time, the term *God* is technically what we might call a "job description" rather than a name; it asserts that its referent not only possesses qualifications (such as immortality and life-giving power), but also carries out certain functions: holding humans to account within a moral order, bestowing protection upon the faithful, and so on. Therefore, using one version of this term (GOD) when a name (the tetragrammaton) is being translated, and another version (God) when some other term (along the lines of a job description) is being translated, accurately reflects both the Hebrew original and modern English usage.

24. This substitution has been made in more than nine hundred cases. Likewise for the sake of felicitous English idiom, our literary editor judged that certain instances of the divine name—particularly those that mark GOD as the party being addressed (vocatives)—should be rendered as "Eternal One" or "the ETERNAL One" rather than either "GOD" or "the ETERNAL" alone. These cases number more than three hundred. Overall, "GOD" is used for nearly 82% of the Bible's instances of the tetragrammaton, and "ETERNAL" for about 18%.

25. See "Gender and Figurative Language" in the Notes online.

26. Typically the head of a household was designated the "father" of its members, even those who were not his literal offspring. A linguistic reflex of this social structure is that the absence of a father was felt so keenly that Hebrew had a special word for it.

27. At the same time, this edition retains certain social terms that no longer reflect current conditions, such as *maiden* and *maidservant*, for they reflect more accurately the society of the ancient Near East than contemporary terms such as *teenager* or *domestic*.

28. Already in NJPS, a note acknowledges the inaccuracy of "sin offering" (Lev. 4.3).

29. To give one example for each of those terms: (1) The offering that a woman is obliged to bring after giving birth (Lev. 12.6) is for wiping away any lingering ritual impurity from that momentous occasion (vv. 7–8); she has committed no sin. (2) As an animal offering that is allowed to be converted into payment in silver (Lev. 5.15), the reparation offering is apparently more about making amends than guilt per se.

30. For example, NJPS follows the Hebrew wording for the last verse of the book of Exodus, which reads: "For over the Tabernacle a cloud of the LORD rested by day, and fire would appear in it by night. . . ." (40.38). Where exactly was the fire said to appear—does the pronoun *it* refer to the Tabernacle, or to the cloud? The revised translation reads: ". . . fire would appear in that cloud by night. . . ." Every language has certain conventions for how speakers are expected to help their audience keep track of who is being talked about. Ancient Hebrew conventions of this sort differ from English ones. Hebrew is more likely to employ a pronoun and rely upon the audience to sort out the intended reference (based upon salience), whereas English prefers to clarify matters via a noun.

31. That gender-accurate adaptation of Exodus through Deuteronomy first appeared in *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, Revised Edition (New York: URJ Press, 2005). I served as revising editor both for that translation work and for what appeared in *The Contemporary Torah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006).