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Key Terms of the Old Testament
5th Release Announcement

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The Key Terms of the Old Testament (KTOT) project has scheduled its fifth release for early November 2021. We hope to bring the number of articles to about seventy-five. Most of those articles are based on Hebrew words, but about 10 percent are topical articles. Many of the terms share cultural background or are part of a larger semantic field. So, we have encouraged our contributors to write articles that bring together the semantic field, like sacrifice terms or forbidden practices, where the terms need to be compared and contrasted. In other cases, words evoke cultural values, like patronage, that may not be evident to those coming from many of our societies.

We have a diverse team of contributors including various nationalities and representing several different organizations, among them, the Seed Company, the Word for the World, SIL, Dallas International University, and national Bible translation organizations.

What is KTOT?

KTOT is a tool for Old Testament translators. It differs from many OT lexical tools by having a foundation in cognitive linguistics, informed by relevance theory. It places a strong emphasis on providing the cultural background that many of these important Old Testament terms would have evoked for the original hearers and tries to access the network of meaning that they might have conveyed.

KTOT differs from Hebrew lexicons by providing a definition of the term rather than a simple listing of possible meanings. Following the definition is a list of contextual uses, some of which may be associative or comparative extensions of meaning. Our KTOT contributors then provide a more detailed discussion of the definition, any grammatical issues that need to be considered, words with similar meaning from which it may need to be distinguished, cultural background, etc. including sections on the history of how the word has been translated in languages like Greek and Latin, and recommendations about how a translator may want to approach translating the term.

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KTOT differs from theological dictionaries in that it begins with a focus on the common use(s) of a term. Theology is important but KTOT assumes that the theological use of the term develops out of its common use. Often, the better we understand the common use, the better we will understand the theological use. If we reverse that and start with the theological use of the term, it may tell us little about the common use.

Example: גאל

A good example of this is גאל (G'L), a term that I worked on with Jason Sommerlad. גאל (G'L), is usually translated into English as "to redeem." The participle, גֹּאֵל (go'el), is then translated as "redeemer," "kinsman," "avenger," or "nearest kinsman," depending on context.

The connection between these various translations of the term is obscure to people not familiar with the biblical contexts. But a close examination of passages where the term is used of humans shows that it refers to a male family member who has the right and the responsibility to maintain the stability and viability of the family. Among the rights would be the right of inheritance, particularly of land, when a family member is deceased without male descendants. Among the responsibilities would be those of purchasing the release of a family member who has sold himself into debt slavery or of ensuring justice when a family member has been killed, by exacting vengeance if necessary.

The people of God viewed as "the family of God" is an important conceptual metaphor in the Old Testament. Given the importance of the role of a גֹּאֵל (go'el) for Hebrew families, it is not surprising that God would be regularly compared to a גֹּאֵל (go'el). In those cases, the word is often translated as "Redeemer" in English, bringing into focus one of the responsibilities of a גֹּאֵל (go'el)—that of buying a family member out of slavery. But such a translation usually fails to activate the larger conceptual metaphor of someone who protects the welfare of the family. In addition, because the title "Redeemer" has such an important place in historical theology, translators often feel pressure to try to find a term that can carry the weight of that theological tradition. The default for many translators has often been to borrow a term from the language of wider communication that is used in theological studies. And unfortunately, such terms are often poorly understood by those who don't have a theological education.

But it is not uncommon for traditional societies to have a word to refer to someone who has a similar responsibility in their culture for maintaining the stability of the family. Given such a word, translators can explore the various contexts in Scripture where the word גֹּאֵל (go'el) refers to a man. If necessary, they can experiment with modifications in contexts where it doesn't fit well. Finally, they can test to find out whether God can be compared to someone who

fulfills these responsibilities. If so, such a term has the potential to be both more accessible, and able to tie the term into the broader conceptual metaphor of "the family of God."

Other features of KTOT

The Key Terms of the Old Testament gives translators a tool for doing this kind of work. When it gives the contextual uses of a term, in addition to an example, it provides an exhaustive list of references where the term occurs in each context. When using KTOT, whether in Paratext or TW Logos, these references are linked to the Hebrew text which can then be synced to preferred translations. A review of the passage allows the translators to determine whether their proposed translation will work in all of those passages. It also provides a quick way to check for consistency of translation within a given context. In addition, KTOT provides significant information on the cultural background of these key terms, some grammatical insight, where it is helpful, comparison with similar and contrastive terms, and help with translation issues.

How to access KTOT

The Key Terms of the Old Testament is available for translators in both Paratext and TW Logos. It is presently part of the installation package for Paratext 9. To access it, go to Open... select Dictionaries, and click on KTOTSLD. At last check, it had been updated to the 4th release.

To access KTOT in TW Logos go to the Library, and in the search window, type: KTOT, and when it comes up double-click on it to open. At present, KTOT in TW Logos is available in its 3rd release.

KTOT has been doing incremental publishing as our history of releases show. As well as making us able to provide new articles on a regular basis, incremental publishing also allows us to revise or adapt articles in response to feedback. As you use the tool, please let us know if you find any errors, have any questions, or suggestions for improvement.

It sometimes takes a while for the Paratext or TW Logos teams to update for a new release. If you would like to ensure you have the latest release for Paratext, feel free to check at:

https://paratext.org/download/download-paratext-extras/. Be sure to scroll to the bottom of the page and follow the directions there to update KTOT as a Paratext dictionary.

We welcome your feedback. Please contact us by writing to me: paul_mclarren@sil.org, or to dick_kroneman@sil.org. If your comment relates to a software issue, feel free to copy: paul_orear@sil.org. Thank you for your help!