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TRANSLATING THE NAMES OF GOD: HOW EUROPEAN LANGUAGES HAVE TRANSLATED THEM

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In two earlier articles in this series I tried to present an overview of the more important names of *God* used in the Old and New Testaments. (See *The Bible Translator*, April 1984, pages 201-211). In this article I want to illustrate how the various Hebrew names occurring in the Old Testament have been translated into Greek in the Septuagint (usually abbreviated LXX) and into modern European languages, namely English, German, French, and Spanish. In the modern language group we will use both older, formal correspondence type translations and modern dynamic equivalent ones. The English versions quoted are: The Authorized or King James Version (abbreviated KJV) and *Good News Bible* (GNB). The German ones are Luther (L), and *Die Gute Nachricht* (GN). The French ones are Segond (Seg), *Bible de Jérusalem* (BJ), and Français Courant (FC). The Spanish versions are Nacar-Colunga (N-C) and the Version Popular called *Dios Llega al Hombre* (VP).

In the main part of this article I will provide the findings of my research in the form of a summary of the approaches which the various translations have used in rendering the divine names; but to prevent unnecessary duplication I will give only a bare minimum of supporting evidence. Then as an appendix I will add a comparative listing of the translations of the various names in selected passages, together with notes that call attention to both the general principles employed and occasionally also to some of the unique, sometimes worthwhile and sometimes negative, features of specific translations.

Transliteration

All of the translations follow the general practice of transliterating proper names of non-Hebrew deities, just as they transliterate proper names of people and places. Thus we find *Baal* (1 Kg 18.21), *Dagon* (Jg 16.23), *Rimmon* (1 Kg 5.8), *Ashtoreth* (1 Kg 11.5), *Succoth Benoth*, *Nergal*, *Ashima*, *Hebhaz*, and *Tartak* (2 Kg 17.3), and so on. Even obviously meaningful names like *Adrammelek*, “splendor of the king”, and *Anammelek*, “the prince is king”, or “the son is king”, (2 Kg 17.30) have been transliterated rather than translated. However with the names of the

God of the Hebrews this principle has been followed only under special circumstances. For examples of transliteration in KJV see the following: *el* (Gen 33.20, 17.1, Ex 6.3, Ezek 10.5); *YHWH* (Ex 6.3, Ps 38.18, 68.4, Gen 22.14, Ex 17.5); *Sabaot* (Rom 9.29, Jas 5.4). Transliteration has also been used with some of the praise names based on the name *YHWH*, as well as in some of the earliest versions of the Septuagint which used *IAO* as a transliteration of *YHWH*.

Translation by a culturo-linguistic equivalent

For *el/elohim* all the translations usually use the standard class noun label for *god* in the language in question: Theos, God, Gott, Dieu, Dios, and so on. The same is true for *adon/adonai* "Lord". There is a wide range of discrepancy, however, in the manner in which translations have handled the tetragrammaton *YHWH*. None of the European languages here quoted seem to have found a culturo-linguistic equivalent for this personal name as is the case in some African languages, like Chichewa with *Mlezi/Chiuta*. The French Segond version with its use of *l'Éternel* comes the closest to a culturo-linguistic equivalent. (See next section for more discussion of *l'Éternel*.)

Translation of the meaning of the name

Hebrew names, both personal and place names, often expressed meaning, or at least alluded to words with meaning. Thus *Melchizedek* means "king of righteousness", while the name *Abraham* sounds like "ancestor of many nations". The names for *God* are no exception; often they too express a meaning, for instance *el* means "strong" or "mighty". This explains Luther's rendering of *el* the *elohim* as "the mighty God" (Gen 33.20). In the same way, the tetragrammaton, *YHWH*, the ineffable name of the God of the Hebrews, is really a consonantal form of the verb *to be* and could be translated as "the one who is" or "who will be" (Ex 3.4). Thus when the Segond, for example, translates this name as *l'Éternel*, "the Eternal One", it has translated, at least in part, "the one who is, who was, and who will be". (Translating the name *YHWH* by meaning is a live possibility for many African languages which have traditional praise names of similar meaning for *God*; for instance Akan uses *Forever-Owner*.)

Some of the biblical praise names for God, like *el olam*, *el shaddai*, *YHWH sebaoth*, and so on, have been translated by meaning, at least in part, by a wide variety of translations. (See the comparative listing of Gen 21.33, Ex 6.3, 1 Sam 1.3.)

Obliteration of original distinctions

Some very radical blurring of the distinction between the names *el/elohim* and *YHWH* has taken place in the Septuagint. In fact, we cannot escape the feeling that the translators of this Old Testament made a conscious effort to minimize their separate identities. Note the following rather obvious examples:

- (a) In the creation account of Gen 1 *elohim* "God" is the active agent. However in the restatement of the creation account in Gen 2 beginning with verse 4 the Hebrew original introduces *YHWH elohim* rendered "LORD God" in KJV. However LXX continues with only *theos*, "god" through verses 4-7 and only in 2.8 does it introduce the combined names as *kurios ho theos*, "lord the god". (It is also worth remembering here that neither Hebrew nor Greek make the capital versus lower case *God/god* distinction made by English, French and Spanish.) Even elsewhere LXX often reduces *YHWH elohim* to only *theos*, as for instance in Ex 3.18.
- (b) LXX often substitutes one name for the other; for instance Job 3.4 "let not *eloah* regard", becomes "let not *ho kurios* regard". Again, Gen 30.24 "may *YHWH* add another son" becomes "may *theos* add another son". In the latter example there might be some justification because there is a slight possibility of an ambiguity, since *kurios* could also be a wife's respectful way of referring to her husband, as with Sarah calling Abraham *lord* (Gen 18.12).
- (c) LXX does not hesitate to use the combined name *kurios ho theos* even when either *YHWH* or *elohim* occur alone, for instance Gen 4.26 "call on the name of *YHWH*" becomes "call on *kurious tou theou*". Again, Gen 6.5 "*YHWH* saw" becomes "*kurios ho theos* saw"; but in Gen 6.12 "saw *elohim*" also becomes "*kurios ho theos* saw".

This seemingly intentional blurring between *YHWH* and *elohim* is very marked in Gen 28.20-21 where Jacob says to *YHWH*, "Lord": "if God (*elohim*) will go with me and will help me...so that I come back again to my father's house in peace; then the LORD (*YHWH*) shall be my God (*elohim*)". When LXX begins Jacob's vow with "if *kurios ho theos* will go with me..." it masks an important distinction which the original narrator is making. It is most intriguing to note that the four common language translations which we cite have all followed the example of LXX and have likewise blurred this important distinction.

- (d) In passages where the combination *el*, the *elohim* occurs, LXX usually drops the first *el*: Gen 33.20 "I am *el* the *elohim* of Israel" becomes "I am your *theos* Israel"; Gen 46.3 "I am *el* the *elohim* of your fathers", LXX merely says "I am the *theos* of your fathers". It also does the same sometimes with *YHWH the elohim*: Ex 3.18 "*YHWH* the *elohim* of the Hebrews" becomes "*ho theos* of the Hebrews". In Ex 3.18 "*YHWH* our *elohim*" is rendered only as "our *theos*".
- (e) LXX also renders both the tetragrammaton *YHWH* and *adon/adonai* by *kurios*, "lord" both singly and when the two occur side by side in the same context.

With *YHWH* alone: Gen 17.1 "appeared *YHWH*", LXX "*kurios* appeared"; Gen 33.3 "said *YHWH* to Jacob", LXX "*kurios* said to Jacob", Gen 39.2 "*YHWH* was with Joseph", LXX "*kurios* was with Joseph"; Ex 15.3 *YHWH* is his name", LXX "*kurios* is his name".

With *adon/adonai* alone: Gen 18.30 "let not the *adonai* be angry" in LXX becomes "let not *kurios* be angry"; Ex 4.10 "O my *adonai*, I am

not eloquent” in LXX becomes “*kurios* I am not eloquent”; Ex 23.17 “males shall appear before *adonai*” in LXX is “shall appear before *kurios*”.

In the same context side by side: Ex 15.17 “O *YHWH*...O *adonai*” (two vocatives) both are rendered *kurie*; 2 Sam 17.19 “O *adonai*, O *YHWH*” (two vocatives) becomes *kurie mou kurie*; 2 Sam 7.28 “*adonai YHWH* you are *elohim*” (one vocative) becomes *kurie mou kurie*. It may be interesting to note that in this passage FC uses *Seigneur Dieu*, *c’est toi qui est Dieu*.

The practice of translating both *YHWH* and *adonai* with *kurios* rests at least in part on the fact that *adonai* had become the favorite oral replacement for the tetragrammaton, “the ineffable name”, which was not pronounced when scriptures were read aloud in public. There also seems to be some indication that the taboo against pronouncing *YHWH* was carried over to *theos* once the LXX came to be widely used in worship, so that even *theos* was often replaced by *kurios*, as in Job 3.4.

It is interesting to note here that FC, the new dynamic equivalent French translation, departs from Segond which uses *l’Éternel* to translate the name *YHWH*, to use *Seigneur*. In this it becomes like LXX and like the other common language translations. However it does distinguish the non-deity reference of *kurios* in a number of idiomatic ways, such as *maître* (Gen 18.12, Num 11.28).

FC uses a wide variety of equivalents for *adon* referring to non-deity: (a) It expresses the social relationships: *mon père* (Gen 31.35), *excellence* (1 Sam 25.24), *mon général* (Jg 4.18), *son mari* (Jg 19.26) and so on. (b) It distributes the components of meaning: *fais-nous l’honneur* (Gen 23.6), *je vous en prie* (Gen 24.18). (c) It leaves it implicit entirely: Num 32.25, 1 Sam 1.26. (d) For ordinary human beings it generally uses *maître* or *mon seigneur* (1 Kings 18.7-8).

Maintaining at least a part of the original distinction by means of capital versus lower case letters

Many of the translations, which have followed the LXX’s lead in rendering both *YHWH* and *adonai* with their equivalent of *lord*, have tried to maintain the original distinction between them by using capital or lower case letters. For example, KJV uses “LORD” (all capitals) for *YHWH*, and “Lord” (first letter capital) for *adonai*, “lord” (all lower case) where it refers to non-deity.

The use of capitals to distinguish meaning is, of course, meaningful only for the reader, never for the hearer, and for that reason it violates the principle that “heard language takes precedence over written language”. For German, which capitalizes the first letter of all nouns, common or proper, the use of capitals to make such distinctions is not a practical option. We see another example of KJV’s use of capitals for making a distinction in the case of *adonai YHWH* where in order to distinguish the two words which are usually both translated by “lord” (one all capitals, the other only first

letter capital), it uses "Lord GOD". Here "GOD" (all capitals) translates *YHWH* (see Gen 15.2 for example).

Introducing distinctions not present in the Hebrew originals

As already stated earlier, the English, French and Spanish translations also use capitals to make the distinction between *el/eloim* referring to "the God of the universe" which is written with the first letter in capital as *God* and written all lower case when it refers to the god or gods of other nations. While this distinction probably is not counter to the spirit of the Hebrews' thinking, it does not in actual fact reflect accurately the Hebrew original. Even the LXX with its many biases does not make this distinction; and as already said, the German is unable to make such a distinction because all nouns, not only proper names, begin with a capital letter.

Applying different translation solutions in different contexts

We have already illustrated this in part above, in referring to how KJV translates *YHWH* in *YHWH elohim* as "LORD" and *adonai YHWH* as "GOD".

Another example of this could be the distinction between "god" and "God" when translating *eloim* already discussed in the previous section. However we are here interested more in what seems to be arbitrary differences in the translation of the same Hebrew name. For example, in Gen 6.3, 17.1, and 28.3, LXX translates only the *el* in *el shaddai*. It renders the expression as merely *theos*, thus leaving out *shaddai* completely. But in Ezek 10.5 *el shaddai* is rendered as *theou shaddai* for no apparent reason. Again in Num 24.16 "heard the word of *el* and knew the knowledge of *elyon*, saw the vision of *shaddai*", it translates it as "God on high", "heard the words of *theou*, knew the knowledge of the *hupsistou*, and saw the vision of *theou ... en hupno*".

Another example from LXX would be when it translates the combined name *adonai YHWH* as *despota* in Gen 15.2, as *kurio tou theou* in Ex 23.17, and as *ho theos* in Is 25.8. Again there is no apparent contextual reason for the difference in renderings.

The LXX has a whole series of renderings for *YHWH sabaoth*: as *adonai kurie elwai sabaoth* (the first and third words are the Aramaic equivalents of the Greek or Hebrew word that follows [1 Sam 1.11]); as *kurios pantokrator* (2 Sam 7.26); as *kurion ton dunameon* (2 Sam 6.2); as *kurios sabaoth* (Is 1.9); as only *kurios* (Is 8.13); as *ho theos* (Is 10.26); and so on.

In 1 Kings 20.28 *YHWH* normally translated *kurios* by LXX here becomes "the God of Israel". In this case it seems as if only the function of the tetragrammaton has been translated.

Again, sometimes LXX translates *el*, even in place names like "Bethel" as *en topo theou* (Gen 31.13, 32.30), but it drops the *el* entirely in "el the *eloim*" (Gen 33.20, 46.3). Also see the next section for certain other seemingly arbitrary kinds of distinctions.

There are, of course, situations in which the target language either

because of style or conventional usage requires different treatment of the same source language word; for instance *adonai* in English in the GNB is translated as “Lord” (first letter capital) when referring to *God*, but as “sir” when referring to an ordinary human being (Gen 18.30 versus Gen 23.6). Another example in GNB could be in the case of *adonai elohim* where *adonai* is translated as “sovereign” because in spoken language “Lord LORD” would simply imply urgency rather than a title of respect, thus introducing a wrong connotation (see Gen 2.4l and Gen 15.2 respectively).

Introducing “biased” value judgments

We have already mentioned that English, French, and Spanish make a God/god distinction between the deity of the Hebrews and the deities of other nations. This obviously involves a value judgment which, while not out of keeping with the worldview of the Hebrews, does attempt to establish a value difference by means of a formal marker not found in the Hebrew original.

In general, it is probably fair to say that the LXX exhibits a number of translation decisions which our current translation principles would call “unwarranted value judgments”. While not making the God/god distinction, it frequently, though not consistently, uses derogatory labels to translate *elohim* when this term refers to the god/gods of other nations: *agalmata* (Is 21.9), *skenomata* (2 Sam 7.22), *eidolon* (Ex 15.17), and *diamona* (Ps 96.5). Of course, it shows its strongest disdain for the female deity *ashtoreth* by translating *elohim* as *bdelugmata*, “abomination” rather than the expected *thea* (1 Kg 11.5). Here it is interesting to note that French Segond also avoids the word *déesse* used by FC, and instead uses the sexless *divinité*, possibly in deference to LXX.

Using explicit deity markers

We see this in the case of the Syrian deity *Rimmon* whose name appears unmarked in 2 Kings 5.18. Three dynamic-equivalent-style translations: GNB, GN, and FC classify this proper name with the class noun *god* as “the god Rimmon”. They also introduce *God* as classifier in several cases where *shaddai* appears without *el*, such as Gen 49.25.

APPENDIX

This section contains a comparative listing of the translation of the various names in selected passages.

The different translations are referred to by a single letter, as follows: Septuagint (X), King James Version (K), Good News Bible (T), Luther (L), Die Gute Nachricht (G), Segond (S), Bible de Jérusalem (B), Français Courant (F), Nacar-Colunga (N), Spanish Version Popular (V).

It is important also to note several procedural explanations:

- (a) Parentheses within a biblical quotation indicate additional information necessary to specify the context.
- (b) Parentheses within a comparative listing indicate the antecedent of the pronoun found in the text.
- (c) The asterisk (as in **god* or **lord*) indicates that the language in question uses either only lower case (Greek) or only capital (German) letters and so the god/God or lord/Lord distinction does not apply.
- (d) # in a comparative listing marks a significant absence, that is, a name present in the original has been left out in the translation.
- (e) “o” will be used in comparative listings to mark vocatives.

el as a class noun (appellative) referring to the supreme GodIs 45.22 "look to me...all the ends of the earth, for I am *el*, and there is no one else"

X	the *god	K	God	T	the only God
L	*God	G	*God		
S	God	B	God	F	God
N	God	V	God		

This verse illustrates that *el*, especially when it occurs by itself, is translated "God" by all versions. T restructures the components and highlights the uniqueness with "only".

Hos 11.9 "I am *el*, and not a man"

X	*god	K	God	T	God
L	*God	G	*God		
S	God	B	God	F	God
N	God	V	God		

All translations use "God", but the usage in this verse suggests contrast between deity and humanity.

el as the proper name of a Canaanite deity (fn)Ezek 28.2 (In a prophetic oracle against Tyre and its king who says) "I am *el* in the seat of *elohim* I sit"

X	*god...gods	K	God...God	T	a god...a god
L	*God...God	G	a *God...a God		
S	God...God	B	a god...divine	F	a god...a god
N	a god...God	V	a god...gods		

No translation treats *el* as a proper name. X, K, L, and S equate it with "the Supreme God"; K, L, S, and N treat *elohim* as "the Supreme God"; T, G, F, and V treat both *el* and *elohim* as class nouns, N and B treat only *el* as a class noun; B uses the adjective *divine* to translate *elohim*; X and V treat *elohim* as a plural.

el as a class noun (appellative) referring to a pagan deityJg 9.46 "the house of *el* Berith"

X	Baal of the covenant	K	the god Berith
T	Baal-of-the-Covenant	L	the *God Berith
G	their Covenant-god	S	god Berith
B	El-Berit	F	Baal-Berith
N	El-Berit	V	El-berit

X, T and F, possibly on the basis of Judg 8.33 where a Baal by that name is mentioned, definitely mark it as an idol; B, N, and V treat it as a composite name and transliterate both words; K and S and possibly L treat it as a pagan deity, but G is ambiguous with the compound noun "Covenant-god", which could, in fact, refer to God.

el referring to polytheismDan 11.36 "magnify himself above every *el*"

X	all *gods	K	every god	T	any god
L	everything divine	G	all *Gods	S	all gods
B	all gods	F	the gods	N	all gods
V	all gods				

All translations use or imply plural gods.

elohim as a generic class noun (appellative) that could be translated "deity"

(elohe is its construct form)

2 Kg 5.15 "there is no *elohim* in all the earth, except in Israel."

X	no *god, but that one	K	no God
T	no god, but the God	L	no *God
G	only in Israel is there a *God	S	no God
B	no God	F	no other God, but the one
N	no God	V	no God

All translations render it "god/God", only T uses both lower case "god" and first letter capital "God".

elohim referring to the God of the universeDan 2.47 (King Nebuchadnezzar says to Daniel:) "your *elohim* truly is *elohim* of *elohim*"

X	*god...god...gods	K	God...God...gods
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T	God...the greatest...all gods	N	God...God...gods
G	God...is truly Lord...of all Gods	V	God...the biggest...all the gods
B	god...God...gods	L	*God...God...Gods
F	God...truly the greatest...all the gods	S	God...God...gods

Only in the third instance do all translations agree with the plural lower case "gods" with T, G, F, and V making explicit "all"; K, S, and N capitalize the first two, T, F, and V capitalize the first and use "the greatest" for the second; G has "truly lord/master" for the second.

elohim referring to polytheism (with plural verbs or plural modifiers)

Ex 12.12 "I will execute judgment on all the *elohim* of Egypt"

X	*gods	K	gods	T	gods
L	*Gods	G	*Gods	S	gods
B	gods	F	gods	N	gods
V	gods				

All translations use the plural "gods".

elohim in ambiguous contexts

Gen 3.5 "you shall be as *elohim* knowing good and evil"

X	*gods	K	gods	T	God
L	*God	G	exactly like *God	S	gods
B	gods	F	(God) him	N	God
V	God				

X, K, S, and B render it as plural, all the others read it as singular referring to God, G makes it emphatic with "exactly like God".

yhwh as God's personal name (very rare and somewhat doubtful, usually it is the personal name of God of the Hebrews)

Ps 83.18 (17) (God) "whose name alone is *yhwh*"

X	*lord	N	Yave	S	(19) the Eternal One
T	LORD	K	JEHOVAH	F	you are, Lord, the only God
G	*Lord	L	*Lord	V	Lord
B	Yahve				

All translations except K follow their standard rendering for *yhwh*, K transliterates it as JEHOVAH, F adds "only" with "God".

yhwh as the personal name of the tribal God of the Hebrews

Ex 15.3 "*yhwh* is his name"

X	*lord (fn)	K	LORD	T	LORD
L	*Lord	G	the only *Lord	S	the Eternal One
B	Yahve	F	the Lord	N	Yave
V	The Lord				

In this verse the translations follow what could be considered their normal way of rendering the tetragrammaton: B and N transliterate it; S translates it by its meaning; the rest all render it "Lord"—K and T with all capital letters, F and V with only the first letter capital; G introduces the emphatic "the only".

Ex 6.3 "unto Jacob, by my name *el shaddai*, but by my name *yhwh* was I not known unto them"

X	*lord	K	JEHOVAH
T	my holy name, the LORD	L	*Lord
G	*Lord	S	the Eternal One
B	Yahve	F	"LE SEIGNEUR" (the lord)
N	Yave	V	my true name: EL SEÑOR (the lord)

All translations, except K follow their normal rendering of *yhwh*, K again transliterates the name in all capitals; this all capital letters usage is followed by F and V; T and V make explicit qualifiers, possibly to mark it as the "ineffable name".

yh the shortened form of *yhwh* occurring alone

Ps 68.4 (5) "by *yh*, his name"

X	*lord	K	Jah	T	LORD
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L	*Lord	G	*Lord	S	the Eternal One
B	Yahve	F	the Lord	N	Yave
V	the Lord				

All translations except K follow their usual rendering for *yhwh*; K transliterates the name here.

***adon* marked as referring to God, often by other divine names (very frequent)**

Jos 3.11 "the ark of the covenant of *adon* of all the earth"

X	*lord	K	Lord	T	Lord
L	*Ruler	G	*Lord	S	Lord
B	Lord	F	Lord	N	owner
V	Lord				

L and N depart from their usual pattern and use "ruler" and "owner" respectively.

2 Sam 7.19 (David prayed saying:) "o *adonai*, o *yhwh*" (two vocatives)

X	o *lord o my lord	N	o my Lord, Yave	S	o Lord Eternal
T	o Sovereign Lord	K	o Lord GOD	F	o Lord my God
G	o Lord my God	L	o *Lord Lord	V	Lord
B	o Lord Yahve				

Only X retains two vocatives, all the others reduce it to one vocative but K, G, B, G, and N put a second name as an appositive; T, S and V reduce it to a single name, but T and S convert one of the names into a qualifier.

Gen 15.2 "Abraham said, *adonai yhwh*, what do you give to me?"

X	<i>despota</i> "absolute master"	N	Lord, Yave	S	Lord, the Eternal One
T	Sovereign LORD	K	Lord GOD	F	Lord my God
G	*Lord, my God	L	*Lord Lord	V	Lord and God
B	my Lord Yahve				

Only X reduces it to one name; G, B, and F translate the "my" of *adonai*, but G and F attach it to "God"; V joins two names with "and".

Composite *yhwh adonai*

Ps 68.20 (21) "to *yhwh adonai* are the issues of death"

X	the *lord lord	B	Lord Yahve	S	the Eternal One,
T	the LORD, our Lord	N	Yave who		the Lord
G	(*Lord) he is our	K	GOD the Lord	F	(God) he, the Lord
	*Lord who	L	*Lord Lord	V	(God) he

T departs from its usual pattern with "LORD, our Lord"; F and V use "God" as the antecedent; G, N, and V reduce it to one name.

Composite *yhwh elohim*

Jon 4.6 "and *yhwh elohim* ordained a plant"

X	*lord the god	N	Yave, God	S	the Eternal One
T	the LORD God	K	the LORD God	F	the Lord God
G	*God	L	*God the Lord	V	God the Lord
B	Yahve God				

Most translations follow their standard pattern; G reduces the composite name to "God", V inverts the order and makes *yhwh* the appositive.

Ex 3.18 "say to him, *yhwh elohim* of the Hebrews met us"

X	# the *god	K	the LORD God	S	the Eternal One, the God
T	the LORD, the God	L	the *Lord, the Hebrew's God	F	the Lord, the God
G	the *Lord, the God	N	Yave, God	V	the Lord, the God
B	Yahve God				

Only X, K, and B treat it as a composite name, all the others structure it as an appositive, X in addition leaves out *yhwh*.

***el elyon* (also see *yhwh elyon* under *yhwh*)**

Gen 14.18 (Melchizedek) "the priest of *el elyon*"

X	the *god the most high	K	the most high God
T	the Most High God	L	*God the Highest
G	the highest *God	S	the God Most-High
B	the God Most High	F	the God Most-High
N	The God Most-High	V	the God most high

The translations are very similar with variations only in capital versus lower case letters.

el olam

Gen 21.33 "called on the name of *yhwh*, the *el olam*"

X	*name of the lord god eternal	S	the Eternal One, God of eternity
K	the LORD, the everlasting God	B	Yahve, God of eternity
T	the LORD, the Everlasting God	F	the eternal God, calling him Lord
L	the *Lord, the everlasting God	N	Yave, the eternal God
G	the *Lord, the eternal God	V	the Lord, the eternal God

All translations render *olam* "eternal" or "everlasting"; only F inverts the order and changes the focus.

el shaddai

Gen 17.1 "I am *el shaddai*"

X	the *god of you	K	the Almighty God
T	Almighty God	L	the almighty *God
G	the God who possesses all power	S	the almighty God
B	El Shaddai	F	the almighty God
N	El Sadai	V	the almighty God

X leaves out *shaddai*; B and N transliterate the name; G gives a restatement of "almighty".

yhwh elyon

Ps 7.17 (18) "praise the name of *yhwh elyon*"

X	*lord the most high	K	the LORD most high
T	the LORD, the Most High	L	the *Lord, the Most High
G	the highest *God	S	of the Eternal One of the Most-High
B	of the Most-High	F	God Most-High
N	the Lord Most High	V	the Lord...the Most High

G and F substitute "God" for *yhwh*, some treat it as a combined name, others as an appositive.

yhwh sebaoth

Of all the praise names, those involving *sebaoth* are by far the most numerous and most widespread. They occur in Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi. In Isaiah and Jeremiah they occur well over one hundred times.

1 Sam 1.3 "yhw-sebaoth is victorious"

X	the *Lord god sabaoth	K	the LORD of hosts
T	the LORD Almighty	L	the *Lord Zebaoth
G	the *Lord, the God of Israel	S	the Eternal One of the armies
B	Yahve Sabaoth	F	the Lord God of Israel
N	Yave Sabaoth	V	the Lord Almighty

B and N transliterate the composite name, X and L only *sabaoth*; X, G and F introduce "god"; K and S translate *sabaoth* literally; G and F merge it with another phrase in the verse; T and V translate *sabaoth* "almighty".

Is 3.15 "saith *adonai yhwh sebaoth*"

X	*lord lord of the armies	S	the Lord, the Eternal One of the armies
K	Lord GOD of hosts	B	Lord Yahve Sabaoth
T	I, the Sovereign LORD Almighty	F	the Lord, the God of the universe
L	the *Lord Lord Zebaoth	N	the Lord Yave Sabaoth
G	(Lord) the God of the entire world	V	# the Lord Almighty

Only V leaves out *adonai*, all others translate it "Lord"; most handle *yhwh sebaoth* as in the earlier examples, but K translates it "armies", while G and F use "God of the universe".

*yhwh elohim sebaoth*Jer 38.17 "thus says *yhwh elohim sebaoth*, the *elohim* of Israel"

X	(45.17) *lord (only) # #
K	the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel
T	the LORD # Almighty, the God of Israel
L	the *Lord, the God Zebaoth, the God of Israel
G	the *God of Israel, the Lord of the world
S	the Eternal One, the God of the armies, the God of Israel
B	Yahve, the God Sabaoth, the God of Israel
F	the Lord, God of the universe and God of Israel
N	Yave Sebaot, the God of Israel
V	the Lord # Almighty, the God of Israel

X reduces the whole expression to "lord" only; T and V leave out *elohim*; others follow their standard renderings.

JEAN-MARC BABUT

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION OF THE DIVINE NAMES IN THE FRANÇAIS COURANT BIBLE

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The Committee responsible for translating the Old Testament in Français Courant only started their formal work of translation after having met together to establish a number of conventions which would apply for the whole of the Old Testament. (We were in Geneva for this preparatory meeting - hence the name "Geneva Conventions" that we gave to them.) With these conventions worked out in advance we were able to avoid having to make numerous changes later in the work for the sake of consistency in the text.

At the start we decided on the translation of proper names, technical terms, stereotyped expressions and so on. And among the proper names (around 2750 altogether) the **divine names** have a prominent place.

The general rule which guided our choice of names was twofold. We wanted on the one hand to find simple solutions consistent with the principles of dynamic equivalence translating, without being different just for the sake of being different. But we wanted also to propose equivalents which would be acceptable to all the religious groups who would use our translation.

So it was that the word *DIEU* ("God"), was chosen to render the Hebrew *'elohim* or *'el*, in spite of its pagan origin and all the ambiguities that it carries with it. Here we just followed regular usage: the common noun *dieu*, "god", has become a proper name.

The true proper name for God, of which we really know only the consonants *YHWH*, has been rendered in various ways by the traditional French versions. Protestant and Jewish translations have *l'Éternel*, "the Eternal". But this seemed to us too impersonal and too coloured by its usage in certain churches. Furthermore it rests on an understanding of its origin which is not universally accepted (from the Hebrew *hayah*, "to be"). On their side the Catholic Bibles have decided for *Yahvé* (with some