

pagan altar, and also killed the officer who was forcing him to sacrifice. A large number of Jews then took to the hills (verse 28).

What followed must have represented a tremendous crisis of conscience for all Jews faithful to their national traditions. At first, when they were attacked on the Sabbath, they refused to defend themselves, either actively by throwing stones (perhaps the only weapons they had), or even passively by barricading the caves in which they had taken shelter (verse 36). About a thousand of them were killed (verse 38).

Under Mattathias's leadership, the Jews then reversed their policy of non-resistance, deciding that they would "fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the sabbath day" (verse 41, NRSV). This policy was put into effect, both against pagan foreigners and against unfaithful Jews (verses 42-48).

It is reasonable to assume that this crisis of faith left deep scars on the consciousness of the Jewish community, which remained even 200 years later at the time of Jesus' public ministry. If so, Jesus' words in Mark 3.4 could have the sense: "If it was right for those national heroes the Maccabees to kill on the Sabbath, how much more is it right for me to heal someone on the Sabbath?"

What does this understanding of the text mean for translators? First, they should translate "kill" literally, with KJV and some modern translations. Second, they should consider adding a note referring to 1 Maccabees 2.15-48, or at least a cross-reference to 1 Maccabees 2.41.

PAUL ELLINGWORTH

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"Safe and sound" (Judges 8.9)

As is well known, the range of meaning of the Hebrew word *shalom* is quite wide, including the ideas of peace, security, contentment, health, welfare, and prosperity. According to the Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon, the most basic idea of the term is to be "complete" or "sound." While its meaning is commonly given as "peace," in translation other renderings are often more suitable.

One obvious case in point is Judges 8.9. Gideon, who is in hot pursuit of the kings of Midian, asks the people of Penuel to provide food for his soldiers. When the people of Penuel refuse his request, he makes this threat: "When I return *beshalom*, I will break down this tower." It comes as a surprise that a translation as recent as NKJV still translates *beshalom* as "in peace." The literal rendering "in peace" is a poor choice precisely because Gideon is making a threat. Gideon will hardly be bringing peace for those people when he returns.

A rendering more appropriate to the context is given by CEV, which says, "I'll come back **safe and sound** ... but when I do, I'm going to tear

down your tower.” Gideon expresses confidence that he will not die in battle, but will return fully able to punish those who did not support his mission. The rendering “safe and sound” is well within the range of meaning of *shalom*, but places emphasis on Gideon’s personal well-being.

Many recent translations of Judges 8.9 have rendered *beshalom* as “victorious” (NRSV), “in triumph” (NAB, NIV), or “in victory” (NLT). These renderings suit the context fairly well, because Gideon’s boast assumes that his mission will be successful. However, the idea of “victory” itself goes well beyond the range of meaning of *shalom*.

Jephthah’s vow before the battle with the Ammonites (Judges 11.30-31) is another text where many modern translations render *beshalom* with the idea of “victory.” Indeed, the idea of victory is clear from the first half of the vow (“If you will give the Ammonites into my hand . . .” NRSV). But it may be argued that the second half of the vow refers not to the victory but to Jephthah’s safe return from the battle. In fact Jephthah can only fulfill his vow if he himself returns “safe and sound.”

There are other reasons to question using the idea of “victory” to render the Hebrew *beshalom*. One is the fact that those translations that use the idea in Judges 8.9 and 11.31 fail to do so in two other very similar texts. Joshua 10.21 describes what happened after the successful battle against five Canaanite kings. Here NIV, NRSV, NAB, NLT, and NCV all refer in one way or another to the “safe” (Hebrew *beshalom*) return of the Israelite army – not to its “victorious” return. Surprisingly, CEV does not render *beshalom* at all, but simply says, “The Israelite army returned to their camp . . .”

1 Kings 22.27-28 (2 Chronicles 18.26-27 is parallel) reports a conversation between the prophet Micaiah and King Ahab of Israel before a military campaign. Micaiah has prophesied disaster for Ahab, and Ahab orders Micaiah to be thrown into prison until he comes back *beshalom*. Micaiah then says to Ahab that if he (Ahab) does return *beshalom*, the Lord has not spoken through him (Micaiah). As the outcome of the story shows, it is clearly the personal fate of Ahab that is in view, and not the success of the expedition. The parallel account in 2 Chronicles makes this even clearer: Ahab dies in battle, but Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returns home *beshalom*, “safe and sound.” Most recent translations (NIV, NCV, NLT, and CEV) agree in rendering *beshalom* as “safely” in the conversation between Micaiah and Ahab. NKJV and NRSV, however, still prefer the literal translation “in peace.”

Jacob’s vow at Bethel (Genesis 28.21) is one more example where the expression *shub beshalom*, “return in a state of *shalom*,” seems to focus on the personal well-being of the speaker. This is clear from the fact that Jacob’s prayer focuses on such essentials as food and clothing. Jacob promises to worship the Lord if the Lord will provide these things and bring him home *beshalom*, “safe and sound.” Many modern translations render *beshalom* here as “safely” (NIV, CEV, NLT), while others prefer the traditional rendering “in peace” (NKJV, NRSV, NCV). Unlike the previous examples, no military expedition is in view, which makes it impossible to render *beshalom* with the idea of “victory.”

We see that modern translations remain somewhat inconsistent in their rendering of texts that speak of a person returning *beshalom*. NKJV routinely uses the literal (but not always appropriate) rendering “in peace.” NRSV varies between “in peace,” “safely,” and “victorious.” Others such as NCV, CEV, and NLT, likewise alternate between ideas of safety and ideas of victory. I do not mean to suggest that the phrase *beshalom* should always be rendered the same way. Other renderings of *beshalom* are still appropriate for other contexts; for example, a translation such as “peaceably” seems required in 1 Samuel 29.7. However, when *beshalom* occurs with the verb *shub* “return,” as in the examples above, the focus often seems to be on the speaker’s personal well-being. When this is the case, the idiomatic phrase “safe and sound” renders the sense well in English. It is closer to modern everyday English speech than alternatives such as “in safety,” and captures some of the broader meaning of the Hebrew term *shalom* as well. Yet only the translators of CEV seem to have availed themselves of the rendering “safe and sound,” and then only in Judges 8.9. The passages discussed above suggest that such a rendering deserves to be considered more seriously.

JAMES N. RHODES

HOW WAS THAT?

In an edition of the CEV Bible that has major division headings as well as section headings, the following headings appear together at Genesis 25 verse 1:

THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM

Abraham marries Keturah

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Three small boys were discussing their fathers and how important they were.

One said to the others, “My father just scribbles a few words on a piece of paper; he calls it a poem, and he gets \$50 for it.”

“Well,” said one of the others, “My father just scribbles a few words on a piece of paper; he calls it a song, and he gets \$100 for it.”

“That’s nothing,” said the third boy. “My father just scribbles a few words on a piece of paper; he calls it a sermon, and it takes eight people to collect all the money!”

[Editor’s question:

What do you get if you scribble a few words on a piece of paper and call it a Bible translation?]