

SINCE 1976

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REPORT

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# Unto the Least of These

By Shani Sorko-Ram Ferguson

**A**rik was born in Israel to a Persian-Jewish mother and a Russian-Jewish father. His family was of the secular persuasion—solid Jewish lineage with no affinity for anything religious. His dad was a dedicated provider. In fact, working hard was his answer for everything. His mother suffered from emotional challenges in those early years, so Arik spent a good part of his childhood between his frustrated father and visiting his ill mother in the hospital.

Arik was the youngest child, so by the age of 14, with his sisters already gone, he moved out of his parents' home. The teen culture of the day was the artsy, dark, underground stuff where everyone was special—especially you. Still, in the midst of it all, Arik had two life goals: 1. Prepare for his mandatory military service by completing his high school requirements. 2. Upon completion of his military service, join his youngest sister in New York.

About one month before he completed his military service, Arik, who would stay at his parents' home when he wasn't on the army base, was flipping through their pirated cable service and came across a movie called *Ben-Hur*. It was an old film but the Jewish-Roman story line was intriguing. Then came the scene where Ben-Hur was in the desert, parched and exhausted and unable to walk any further. A man comes up and gives him water. Later in the movie the man is revealed to be Yeshua.

After the movie, Arik continued to sit there, stunned by the water in the desert scene. It was clear to him that Yeshua had not only given Ben-Hur water for his body to drink, but living water for his soul. Arik felt betrayed. No one had ever told him about this Yeshua—not his school, not the army, no one—and he knew no one who could help him work out what he was feeling.

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Two weeks later his oldest sister, Shoshi, who had married a Swedish man, arrived from Sweden for a visit. After their parents had gone to bed, she sat him down and told him she had something important to share with him. Hesitantly she began, “I have come to believe in Yeshua as the Messiah of the Jewish people.” Arik interrupted her, “What? Yeshua? I just saw this movie about Him and I don’t understand why I never heard anything about this man...”



Arik (middle) as a child with his family

As it turns out, Arik had come across that movie, just as his sister’s congregation in Sweden had been praying for God to prepare the ground in Arik’s heart for when she visited. In her wildest dreams Shoshi never imagined he would be so willing to take the giant leap. They spoke into the late hours of the night and Arik went to bed beyond elated.

Still, even with such a supernatural experience, the mind sometimes has a hard time catching up with the heart. When Arik woke up in the morning, his mind screamed in protest at the complete life change that following Yeshua would require. For years he had planned to move to New York with his youngest sister, and he just couldn’t give up that dream. And so, as planned, Arik

broke up with Mona, his childhood sweetheart and bought a one-way ticket to NYC.

### A New Man

“Nothing happened like I had imagined it would. I remember flying over the city before we landed and thinking it looked so... icky. My sister greeted me at the airport and took me straight to an underground club. This club was incredible and should have been the highlight of my life. But it was then I realized my

old life was gone. I had no appetite for this lifestyle anymore. Suddenly, words like “clean” and “pure” became attractive to me. All I could think at this point was how I could get out of New York and go to Sweden to learn more about what I knew I believed—and then go back to Israel and marry Mona, the love of my life.”

From Sweden, Arik kept in touch as much as he could with Mona, and told

her of his desire to commit to life together with her. He also shared about all the spiritual changes he was going through, though she didn’t understand any of what he was talking about. In her mind, she imagined Arik turning into a monk or a Catholic priest walking

the shock of what this “changed man” would look like. But when the doors slid open at the airport exit, it was just him. He looked the same, though perhaps more stylishly dressed than when he left.

Arik took Mona to a local congregation of believers, but Mona didn’t understand the strange terminology and was bothered by the fact that everyone was smiling all the time. Life is hard in Israel, so, Israelis don’t smile as a daily habit. One of the young believers at the congregation, Anat, saw her walk out and spent the rest of the service outside talking through all her concerns. From that day forward, Anat and Mona became close friends. Once Mona understood the Jewishness of it all, she dove into the New Testament scriptures.

After reading about immersion following a confession of faith, Mona called Anat one day and told her she had filled up her bathtub and wanted Anat to come immerse her in water. Immersion is a Jewish tradition, but Anat, also a new believer, explained she thought it’d be best if they found some congregational leaders to help.



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around with a big cross on his chest. She liked the idea of them getting married, but first, she would need to change him back into “a normal Jewish man.”

She wasn’t sure what would greet her at the airport when he arrived back home and braced herself for

“We were innocent in those days,” Arik remembers. “We had several congregational leaders come join us at the beach for Mona’s immersion, to which she showed up in her bikini! But our faith was genuine.” Despite their past difficulties, Arik’s parents recognized the impact





Arik and his sister, Shoshi

Yeshua had had on their son and embraced Him as their Messiah as well! They soon joined Ari and Shira's congregation. They were very active in the congregation (his mother once portrayed Queen Esther in a hilarious rendition of Purim) until they were no longer able to attend because of advanced age.

With his difficult childhood, Arik always had a deep sense of empathy for people who were suffering. And so, soon after they were married, Arik began working as a social worker, helping single parent families and children designated for adoption after they were removed from unsafe family situations.

Arik and Mona were busy raising two daughters, when they were approached by CBN to work in their humanitarian branch in Israel called E.L.Y. (In the Dec. 2019 Maoz Report we shared how ISWI partnered with E.L.Y. to help set up the lone soldier home.) At first Arik wasn't excited about the idea of working for a ministry because of prior bad experiences with overseas ministries. But after praying about it, he agreed to take on the job so long as they allowed him to be hands-on with the people. "It felt right to me, since true religion is taking care of widows and orphans (James 1:27). We know believers have a hard time getting help from

regular charities in Israel because of the social stigma against Messianics, so I wanted to use my gifts to help the local Body," Arik explained.

Once Arik began helping Jewish believers in Israel, he discovered that in the world of Messianic Jewish charities, many organizations specialized in specific areas. So with CBN's agreement, Arik began working with a variety of ministries across the country. This Kingdom mindset is what makes Arik's work so effective in Israel.

"Because I am allowed to focus on the people, rather than paperwork and other desk duties, I can spend time getting to know their situations and am able to find ways to help each person or family as needed. If the person has a drug problem, I can get them into a believing drug rehab—because we know restoration of the body and the soul go hand in hand.

"If the issue is human trafficking, I know of a safe place for them. If they need furniture, there is a believing organization that can help with that. If they need clothes for their kids, I know of a place for that. If they are new immigrants, there is an organization to help them get settled. If they have money issues, I am able to counsel them how to manage their funds, rather than just get them a sum of money that only puts a band-aid on their life habits."

Arik joined *I Stand with Israel's* vetting committee several years ago. ISWI is Maoz Israel's humanitarian outreach and works with 70 congregations across Israel—both Jewish and Arab. Every request comes through a vetted congregation with the pastor's recommendation. Arik then makes personal contact with each applicant to understand how best to help them.

"What I enjoy about working specifically with *I Stand with Israel*

is their flexibility in adapting to unique situations. They love to collaborate on projects with other ministries and they have the ability to get behind Israeli believers in a massive way. Their ability to give significant sums towards a specific need means they are able to change the course of that person's life journey.



Understanding the immediate need, *I Stand with Israel* and E.L.Y. joined forces to deliver goods to hundreds of needy families before the Passover. (Excerpt from video. See it at [MaozIsrael.org](http://MaozIsrael.org))

"Sometimes you have a bright child that comes from a poor family, and ISWI can get them into a college or trade school which they would've never been able to get into—and now that child will not only have an education, but he can support his whole family. Other times someone will come to us with a debt that was caused by a tragic situation, and not from poor life choices. In Israel, such debts can result in imprisonment or confiscation of everything inside one's home. But with ISWI, we can go with legal aid, sit with the bank, reach a settlement and wipe out a debt that would've been with this person for the rest of their lives. These are life-changing moments for individuals and the Body of Messiah in Israel and I feel honored to play a small part in them." ■





# The Bible Comes to the Americas

By Shira Sorko-Ram

PART VI

The harassment and execution of Bible-believing Christians droned on by the popes and Catholic royals throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Then, by a series of flukes, England's famous King Henry VIII threw out the Catholic Church and its papal control and declared himself the head of the new Church of England (which would become known as the Anglican Church). He did this because the pope wouldn't let him divorce his wife who was not able to bear him a male heir to the throne.

Not surprisingly, all the shameless control and utter corruption of the Catholic Church was swiftly transferred to the royal leadership of the newly created Anglican Church. When a group called the Pilgrims saw little improvement in

doctrine and deeds, they continued to gather in secret to worship according to their understanding of the Bible.

Sometime after Henry VIII died, his daughter Queen "Bloody Mary" took the throne. She was determined to return England to Catholicism. She burned nearly

first English version, translated exclusively from the original languages, called the *Geneva Bible*. It was printed in the year 1560—some 50 years before the *King James Version*. Almost no one has heard of this Bible today, but for generations it was popular among many Protestants, including the Pilgrims.

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***Pioneers came to the New World searching for a place to freely worship God. America became the most prosperous nation in the history of man.***

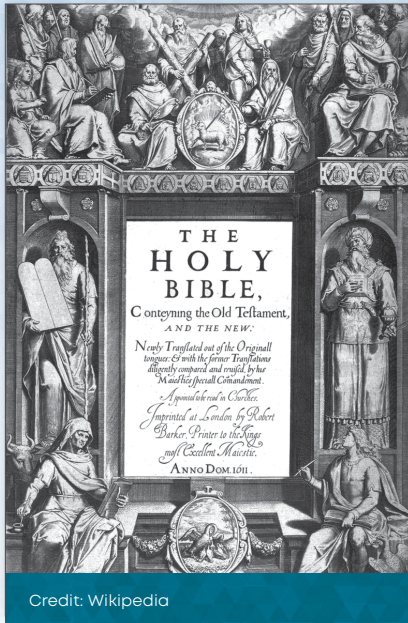
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300 Anglican scholars at the stake, while another 800 fled to the Continent. Many of them went to Geneva and studied under John Calvin.

It was these Biblical scholars who ended up translating the very

So why did a British king call for another new English translation when one had just been recently finished? King James I was offended by the commentary notes printed alongside the Scripture verses in the Calvin-influenced





Credit: Wikipedia  
Title page to the 1611 first edition of the Authorized Version of the Bible

*Geneva Bible*; they taught that the Law of God ruled over the king! God, not the king, was supreme! King James I wanted a version *without* those notes.

Indeed, despite his tainted motives, the king would prove the inevitability of God's word: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise you." (Psalm 76:10) For the king's scholars would go on to translate what would become the most widely-read version of all time—the *King James Bible*.

### Another Famine of the Word Of God

In the year 1620, 102 Pilgrims boarded the *Mayflower* ship and sailed to the Americas with their *Geneva Bibles* in search of a land where they could worship God according to the words of the Bible. Only 52 survived the first winter. Only their faith sustained them, although they could not have imagined the greatness of the nation they were birthing.

As the population in the New World grew, more Bibles were needed.

Unfortunately, there was no press in America that could print a Bible. Besides, believe it or not, according to British law, Bibles could be printed only in England. And since Britain was in constant conflict with the colonies, they refused to ship Bibles to the New World.

The Word of God became scarce in the colonies. It would be 160 years after the arrival of the *Mayflower* Pilgrims that the printing of the first *King James Bible* called, "The Bible of the Revolution," would be authorized by an act of Congress on September 12, 1782.

### Their Faith Paved the Way

Many years ago, my university professor told us how the early English pioneers who arrived in the New World were searching for a place where they could freely worship God. With that foundation, America has become the most prosperous nation in the history of

### Translation of Bibles into new languages is seen as crucial to spreading the Word of God.

man. In contrast, South American nations were founded by Spanish and Portuguese conquistadores who were hunting for gold. Most of these nations have suffered centuries of great poverty and crime and little access to the Bible.

The Roman Catholic Church has dominated these nations, and wherever it has had the upper hand, it fought a continuous bitter war against Protestants and their "local language" Bibles. In fact, until the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Latin *Vulgate* (a long dead language) was the only

translation the Catholic church would permit.

But God has not forgotten the people of the Spanish and Portuguese languages. In the last few decades, many nations in South America are experiencing great revival and incredible growth in evangelical and Pentecostal churches. They are shaking off the shackles of a religion that, until recently, continued to discourage their members from reading the Bible.

### Translations of the Bible Expand Exponentially

As for Protestants, from the 1800's on, translating the Bible into other languages became a full-fledged passion—especially in English-speaking countries. In that century, 400 new language groups received a translation—including the first Chinese Bible. (A more accurate Chinese Bible was finished in 1992.) More recently, in the 75 years that Wycliffe Bible Translators have been in existence, they were able to translate the Bible into 500 languages in 67 years. The second 500 translations took only 17 years!

Today, the Bible is the most translated book in the world. Still, there is so much more work to do. At the present, there are over 7,000 languages in the world. **But one truth unifies these translators: Translation of Bibles into new languages is seen as crucial to spreading the Word of God.**

It just so happens that in our present generation, technology to translate the Bible has changed the world far beyond the scale of the printing press in the 1400's. Man will now be able to translate and publish the Bible in literally every language and tongue in the world over the next few years through digital printing and the internet!



### A Plan of Ten United Bible Agencies

In 2010, one of the most important meetings in the history of the world took place. Ten of the largest Bible translation agencies came together to determine how they could eradicate “Bible poverty” from the world. Out of that meeting came the “Every Tribe Every Nation” (ETEN) alliance where they all agreed to pool their resources and collaborate with the goal of having at least a portion of Scripture translated in every living language by the year 2033!

Their aim is to produce enough Scripture in each language so that the message of salvation will be clear. Together with more than 500 years of collective experience, these ten organizations began translating and publishing Bibles near the speed of light!

### Thirteen More Years

So the plan to finish this monumental task in just 13 more years is on a roll. They have chosen to put aside their egos and logos in order to meet this goal. Collaborating together is making sure there is no duplication of projects among the agencies, and they are sharing data, languages and techniques for the quickest and most accurate translations.

Technology has aided virtually every step of Bible translation. Where Bible translations once took 25-30 years to complete, advancements in technology have made it possible to translate new languages in a fraction of the time. Now through a Digital Bible Library, the Bible agencies have uploaded over 2,100 versions of the Bible, free to over six billion people!

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***Bible societies have uploaded over 2,100 versions of the Bible on the internet, free to over six billion people!***

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But God has more technology just around the corner in order to get His Word out to the world. One of several plans to supply high speed internet to the globe’s poorest is a creation of Elon Musk, CEO of SpaceX. He plans to launch thousands of satellites about 700 miles above the earth’s surface to create the largest broadband network ever.

Whatever Musk’s primary purposes may be for this network, his or some other company’s technology will make access to the Bible possible from any machine in the world that can connect to the internet.

### Books are Still Number One

Since the Protestant Reformation, it is estimated that over 6 billion Bibles have been printed, with a hundred million hard-copy new Bibles *sold* yearly!

My brother, Gilbert Lindsay, has been printing Bibles in Belarus for three decades. He arrived in Minsk in November 1990, a year right after the Soviet Union dissolved. Miraculously, he was allowed to stay. Over the last 30 years, Gilbert has printed 30 to 40 million Bibles for 115 countries in approximately 100 languages.

When I talked to him recently, he had just shipped 80,000 Bibles to South Sudan—one of the most desolate and dangerous countries in the world. At the moment he is working on orders in these languages: Polish, French, Chinese, Bulgarian, Laotian, Asang Khongca and Thai. His Spanish edition will go to many South American countries including the stricken nation of Venezuela. In fact, he has just sent one million New Testaments to Papua New Guinea to be used in their schools!

### One More Miraculous Component

There is still one more ingredient to complete this story. A sign. A miracle. A marvel of God’s handiwork in these end times. I found it in the *New York Times* of all places. Obviously, they had no clue they were writing prophetically in this front-page article that said:



“A half century ago, a majority of the world’s people had always been illiterate; now we are approaching 90 percent adult literacy. There have been particularly large gains in girls’ education—and few forces change the world so much as education and the empowerment of women. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been elimination of diseases, illiteracy and the most extreme poverty.

“Just sixty years ago, a majority of the world’s population had always been illiterate and lived in extreme poverty. *Within a couple of decades, illiteracy and extreme poverty may be almost completely eliminated.*” *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 2019

Do we see yet one more sign that the coming of the Lord is near? Here it is: John the Apostle in his vision of heaven saw the redeemed saints who were in heaven—“a great multitude that no one could count...”

They were “*from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*” (Revelation 7:9)

## 7,353 Languages in the World 1 in 5 People have No Bible

698 Languages	- Have Full Bible
1,548 Languages	- Have New Testament
1,138 Languages	- Have some Portion of Bible
2,617 Languages (approx.)	- In Process of Translation
1,800 Languages (approx.)	- Still Need to Begin Translation

<https://www.wycliffe.org.uk/about/our-impact/>



God has ordained within a generation the entire world will be literate for the first time in history! Furthermore, He has given men and women the capacity to create a communication tool that reaches into the farthest corners of the earth.

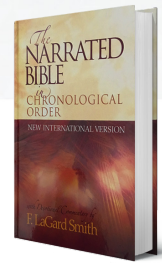
And He has raised up heroic translators, dedicated to bringing the Bible to every single language group in the world.

The Scriptures foretell that when this Age ends, the Gospel will have reached every single nation, tribe, people and language. We’re almost there!

I conclude this article with deep gratitude and excitement that in

coordination with the Israel Bible Society, and Maoz’ wonderful, faithful partners, we have been able to play a small part in making sure no people group is left without a Bible they can understand—not even Israel.

Maoz will soon be publishing *The Narrated Bible in Chronological Order* in modern Hebrew! It will enable countless Israelis to read and more easily understand the Hebrew language Old and New Testaments for the first time in Israel’s modern history. Our Maoz partners have given all the funds needed (\$539,000) to publish this Bible and we are aiming for publication by the end of 2020! ■



1 <https://outreachmagazine.com/features/global/42457-a-bible-for-every-language.html>



Ari & Shira meet with Bible scholars for the Narrated Bible project





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