

The Biblical Heritage Center's
DISCOVERING THE BIBLE

*Learning what the words of our Bibles meant to their ancient authors,
and following their historical journey through the centuries to us.*

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Did Someone Put “Lucifer” in Your Bible?

By Jim Myers

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! (KJV Isaiah 14:12)

The name Lucifer appears only one time in the King James Version of the Bible. The only translations with it are those that relied on or used the KJV in making their translations. Below is a translation of Isaiah 14:12 which is like those found in most other translations:

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! (NAS Isaiah 14:12)

There is obviously a huge difference in the way one understands this verse, depending upon whether they read the name “Lucifer” or “star of the morning.” Let’s look up the word “Lucifer” at dictionary.com and see how it is defined:

1. a proud, rebellious archangel, identified with Satan, who fell from heaven.
2. the planet Venus when appearing as the morning star.

Notice that the definitions above reflect the way translators split on the translation this verse; so after looking it up, we are right back where we started. Next, let’s see what we can find out about the origin of the word “Lucifer.” The place we will begin our investigation is in Jerome’s translation of Isaiah 14:12 in the Latin Bible, which is called the Vulgate.

quomodo cecidisti de caelo lucifer qui mane oriebaris corruisti in
terram qui vulnerabas gentes

You may not be able to read Latin, but I bet you can find the word that translated as “Lucifer” in the English translation.

lucifer = Lucifer

The English word “Lucifer” is simply a transliteration of the Latin word “lucifer.” A transliteration is created by substituting the equivalent English letters for the Latin letters of the original word. This is the same situation that we have written about in other newsletters concerning the word “Christ.” Bible translators have three choices when they are working with the words in ancient manuscripts:

- (1) Select one of the English translations given for the ancient word.
- (2) Transliterate the ancient word by substituting equivalent English letters.
- (3) Ignore the ancient word altogether and leave it out of their translation.

There are plenty of examples where translators used all three options to produce their translations. In this case, the use of the transliteration “Lucifer” reveals the Latin Vulgate’s influence upon the King James translators.

Lucifer was originally a Latin word meaning "light-bearer" (from *lux*, "light", and *ferre*, "to bear, bring"), a Roman astrological term for the "**Morning Star**", the planet Venus. (<http://www.monstropedia.org/index.php?title=Lucifer>)

Readers of Jerome’s Latin translation would have understood the word “Lucifer” to refer to Venus, the Morning Star.” The morning star appears in the heavens just before dawn, heralding the rising sun. But, I have no doubt that readers of the King James Version had another image in their minds when they read the same verse. If you are familiar with the way Bible studies are conducted at the Biblical Heritage Center, then you know that the first question we want to answer is – *What did the words mean to their ancient author?* Therefore, we start by looking at the most ancient version, which, in this case, is written in Hebrew:

אֵיךְ נִפְלֵת מִשְׁמַיִם הַיְלֵל בֶּן-שָׁחַר נִגְדַעַת לְאָרֶץ חוֹלֵשׁ עַל-גּוֹיִם:

Don’t forget that Hebrew is read from right to left (←). The words in question are those in the larger size font; words number four, five and six. Their transliteration would be: HEYLEL BEN ShChar, which is translated as "day star, son of the dawn." The Latin meaning above agrees with this translation of the Hebrew text.

In the KJV the association of Lucifer with the morning star, the bringer of light, creates confusion for some Christians because Christ is also associated with the morning star:

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star. (KJV Revelation 22:16)

An important rule that we follow at BHC is that words must be examined ***in their original context***. The context of this verse begins in Isaiah 13 with a long section known as "Oracles against Foreign Nations." Part of the oracle is directed against Babylon because of its arrogance and lack of concern for other nations.

The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. Lift up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my sanctified ones; I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, *even* them that rejoice in my highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: YAHWEH of hosts musters the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, *even* YAHWEH, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land. (KJV Isaiah 13:1-5)

Isaiah 13:10, specifically mentions the failure of Babylonian gods which are related to the heavens (constellations, sun, moon).

For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

In chapter 14 readers find the promise that Israel will return from their Babylonian exile. They also find a message concerning the Babylonian king:

"You shall take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, 'How has the oppressor ceased! The golden city ceased! YAHWEH has broken the staff of the wicked, *and* the scepter of the rulers. He who smote the people in anger with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, *and* none hinder. The whole earth is at rest, *and* is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yes, the fir trees rejoice with you, *and* the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*, 'Since you are laid down, no one is come up against us. SHEOL from beneath is moved for you to meet at your coming: it stirs up the dead for you, *even* all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto you, 'Have you also become weak as we? Have you become like us? Your pomp and the music of your harps have been brought down to SHEOL; Maggots are spread out beneath you, and the worms are your cover.'" (Isaiah 14:4-11)

This formed the immediate context in which verse 12 must be viewed. The ancient author's message would have been understood something like this:

How you have fallen from the heights of heaven, O king of Babylon, son of the Morning Star! You have been cut down to the ground, because you weakened the nations! (v. 12)

The king would fall from his high place and be buried in the lowest place of all. Instead of being covered in garments of fine cloth and gold, he will be covered with maggots and worms that will feed off of his flesh. The message is clear and the king to whom it was addressed was without question.

The name "Lucifer" would have been meaningless to the ancient Jewish audience. It would not have been associated with a god or "fallen angel." The Jewish Encyclopedia states:

Judaism does not believe in fallen angels (as do Christians). In Judaism angels do not possess free will and thus cannot rebel against God. It is only in folk tales and homily called Midrashim aggadah where such tales are found in Judaism. . . In Judaism there is no concept of a devil or a fallen god. There is SATAN which is a Hebrew word meaning "adversary" and in the Tanakh one will find many instances of the word being used to describe human and angelic adversaries to man.

This raises several important questions:

- (1) How did Lucifer become associated with Satan?
- (2) How did Lucifer become a fallen angel?
- (3) How did Satan become the serpent in Genesis 3?

For many Christians the names Lucifer, Satan and the Devil are synonymous and are applied to the same being. They believe that he was an evil being that God kicked out of heaven for attempting to lead a rebellion against him. He was also the serpent in the Garden of Eden who deceived Eve and tricked her into giving the forbidden fruit to Adam, which led to the first sin and the ultimate downfall of all mankind.

The King James Version has played an important role in supporting those beliefs for English speaking audiences. Theologians support this belief construct by linking the fall of the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:12 with a prophecy spoken against the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:11-19 (pay close attention to underlined words):

Again the word of YAHWEH came to me saying, "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the master YAHWEH, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and

perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of ELOHIYM. Every precious stone was your covering; the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you.

On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of ELOHIYM; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned. Therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of ELOHIYM. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.

I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you. You have become terrified, and you will be no more."

As I stated above, the well known Christian belief is supported by three separate texts, written by different authors about three different entities, and linking them together to support their particular doctrine. They took the serpent from Genesis 3; the king of Babylon (Lucifer) from Isaiah 14; and, the king of Tyre from Ezekiel 28 and wove them into a single story about one being -- Satan, the Devil, aka Lucifer. As we have witnessed many times over the years, when people are allowed to "cut & paste," i.e., take words out of their original context and combine them with other words, which have also been removed from their original context, they can make the words of the Bible support any thing they desire. I used to demonstrate this by taking one verse from the *Gospel of John* and another from the *Book of James* to prove that all the devils would go to heaven and enjoy eternal life with God!

Another point that we must realize is that readers of the KJV, including certain theologians, were not just reading the King James Version of the Bible. The printing press had been around for centuries when the KJV was published in 1611. There were many other very influential writings in circulation before and after the KJV became popular. Durante degli Alighieri (May/June c.1265 – September 14, 1321), commonly known as Dante, wrote the *Divine Comedy* circa 1300. It described Dante's journey through Hell (*Inferno*), Purgatory (*Purgatorio*), and Paradise (*Paradiso*), guided first by the Roman poet Virgil and

then by Beatrice, the subject of his love and of another of his works, *La Vita Nuova*. The vision of Hell, the *Inferno*, is very vivid and may seem strange to modern readers.

Dante's Hell had a three-headed giant named Lucifer that was plunged waist-deep into the ice. His body pierced the center of the Earth, where he had fallen when God hurled him down from Heaven. Each of Lucifer's mouths chewed one of history's three greatest sinners: Judas, the betrayer of Christ, and Cassius and Brutus, the betrayers of Julius Caesar. Virgil leads Dante on a climb down Lucifer's massive form, holding on to his frozen tufts of hair. Eventually, the poets reach the Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, and travel from there out of Hell and back onto Earth. They emerge from Hell on Easter morning, just before sunrise. Keep in mind that this was written centuries before the King James translators made their translation.

(35) Were he (Lucifer) once as beautiful as now he's ugly. (And yet he raised his fist against his Maker!) Well may all our grief come down from him! Oh how much wonder was it for me when I saw that on his head he had three faces: One in front — and it was fiery red — (40) And two others, which joined onto this one above the center of his shoulder blades, and all three came together at his crown. The right face seemed halfway white and yellow while the left one looked the color of the race (45) that lives close to the source of the Nile.

Beneath each face there sprouted two large wings, suitably massive for such a bird of prey: I never sighted sails so broad at sea. They had no feathers but looked just like a bat's, (50) and he kept flapping these wings up and down so that three winds moved out from in around him. This was the cause Cocytus was all iced. With six eyes he wept, and from his three chins dripped down the teardrops and a bloody froth.

(55) In each mouth he mashed up a separate sinner with his sharp teeth, as if they were a grinder, and in this way he put the three through torture. For the one in front, the biting was as nothing compared to the clawing, for at times his back (60) remained completely stripped bare of its skin.

<http://www.italianstudies.org/comedy/Inferno34.htm>

Not long after the King James Version was published John Milton wrote his famous epic poem -- *Paradise Lost*. It was originally published in 1667 in ten books. A second edition followed in 1674, redivided into twelve books (in the manner of the division of Virgil's *Aeneid*) with minor revisions throughout and a note on the versification. The poem includes the Christian story of the Fall of Man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Milton's purpose, stated in Book I, is to "justify the ways of God to men" and elucidate the conflict between God's eternal

foresight and free will. The tremendous influence of this poem on later generations of Christians has been noted by many scholars. The Argument in Book 1 states:

"This first Book proposes, first in brief, the whole Subject, Mans disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was plac't: Then touches the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent, or rather Satan in the Serpent; who revolting from God, and drawing to his side many Legions of Angels, was by the command of God driven out of Heaven with all his Crew into the great Deep. Which action past over, the Poem hasts into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his Angels now fallen into Hell, describ'd here, not in the Center (for Heaven and Earth may be suppos'd as yet not made, certainly not yet accurst) but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest call'd Chaos: Here Satan with his Angels lying on the burning Lake, thunder-struck and astonisht, after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up him who next in Order and Dignity lay by him; they confer of thir miserable fall. Satan awakens all his Legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded; They rise, thir Numbers, array of Battel, thir chief Leaders nam'd, according to the Idols known afterwards in Canaan and the Countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his Speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining Heaven, but tells them lastly of a new World and new kind of Creature to be created, according to an ancient Prophetie or report in Heaven; for that Angels were long before this visible Creation, was the opinion of many ancient Fathers. To find out the truth of this Prophetie, and what to determin thereon he refers to a full Council. What his Associates thence attempt. Pandemonium the Palace of Satan rises, suddenly built out of the Deep: The infernal Peers there sit in Council."

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/pl/book_1/index.shtml

One final point concerning the King James translation of Isaiah 14:12 is that it some argue that it was influenced by Shakespeare. I first became aware of this when I looked up "Lucifer" in the 1913 *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*: "How wretched Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favors! . . . When he falls, he falls like **Lucifer**, Never to hope again. *Shak.*" It took a little work but I finally discovered the source of Webster's quote; *King Henry VIII*, Act III:

Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye;
I feel my heart new opened: O, how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!
There is, betwixt that smile he would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and his ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have;
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again ---

The dates of Shakespeare's writings are difficult to determine, but some scholars argue that the above poem was well known at the time translators were working on the King James translation. They conclude that the translators intentionally linked Isaiah to Shakespeare by linking their translation of Isaiah 14:12 to his.

As time passed, readers of the King James Version would find images of Dante's Lucifer "chewing up sinners" and the deeds of Milton's fallen angels filling their minds as they read its words. Over time many of the images became fused with the words of many of the books of the Bible. When you read Isaiah was your initial picture that of a Babylonian king or a fallen angel who was at war with God? Did you consider Dante's or Milton's influence? Why not? **BHC**

November Memorials

In Loving Memory

**PAMELA
STRYKER**

December 11, 1941
November 21, 2000

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*



LIFE

In Their Remembrance

*May their memories inspire us to
seek those qualities of mind and
heart which they shared when we
walked life's journey together.*

*May we help to bring closer to
fulfillment their highest ideals and
noblest strivings.*

*May their memories deepen our
loyalty to those things which we
valued and shared --
faith, love, peace and devotion and
our spiritual heritage.*

*As long as we live, they too will live;
for they are now a part of us, as we
remember them.*

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor
Reflections - The New Mahzor - The Prayer
Book Press)

*Remember your loved
one with a BHC
Memorial in this
newsletter and in our
online Memorial Garden.*

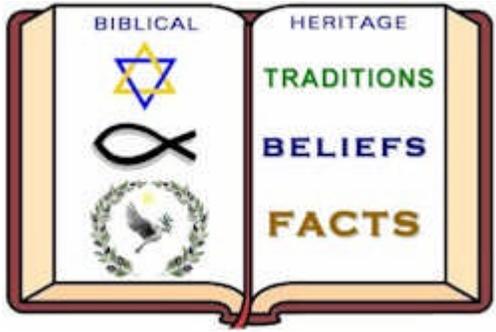
*Visit our website and
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information.*



SHALOM

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	<p><u>BHC Primary Guideline</u></p> <p><i>Our beliefs must be large enough to include all the facts; open enough to be tested; and, flexible enough to change when new facts are discovered.</i></p>
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