

Testimonial



Dr. Noah Lee

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The Journey of Dr. Noah Lee to Jerusalem, HBT, and Beyond

Last year Dr. Noah Lee celebrated the publication and dedication of an Old Testament translation project he had assisted for years. Holding the fresh hard copy of the new Bible, a national pastor publicly prayed thanksgiving to God with tears in his eyes.

This was a wonderful moment for everyone. For Dr. Lee, he also praised God for his life's journey that brought him to this moment—a journey of learning to bring a quality translation to a large people group—the very first Scripture ever in their mother tongue.

Three factors converged in Noah's life to motivate him to master Biblical Hebrew better. While working on this Old Testament project, Noah and the translation team faced several challenges that made them realize their need for knowing Biblical Hebrew better. Noah expressed it this way, "We just wanted to give the highest quality Bible to the people. Yet, how could we get this quality if we cannot read and understand the Hebrew text?"

Secondly, Noah's organizational association proposed that he assist other projects as a translation consultant. Noah had acquired a beginning knowledge of Biblical Hebrew before. Yet, as he put it, "the Hebrew text was unclear to my eyes. I felt desperate and thirsty for more." Noah thus began his journey to learn Biblical Hebrew at a deeper level.

While considering universities in Europe, America, or South Africa, a colleague encouraged him to come to Jerusalem and the Home for Bible Translators' Old Testament program through the Hebrew University. Trusting the Lord in this step, he and his family arrived in Israel mid-1999. For one and a half years, including a semester with the HBT program for Bible Translators, Noah and his wife saturated themselves with the study of Biblical Hebrew.

Noah testifies to his experience in Israel: "Two major factors made Jerusalem a superior choice for my study quest. First, Jerusalem is a center of many scholars and students proficient in Biblical Hebrew. I could easily meet with someone to ask questions about Hebrew lexical and grammatical features. Another factor is the tremendous advantage attained in studying the language of the Bible in the Land of the Bible, where the geographical and cultural context of the Bible comes alive before your eyes. Besides experiencing the landscape and climate of the Holy Land, I was able to visit various museums and sites of major Biblical events, both Old Testament and New Testament. The comprehensive semester program of the Hebrew University and HBT offered me a rich experience to upgrade my understanding of Biblical Hebrew. I am totally grateful to the Lord for having given me this opportunity. Of course, I am still thirsty. Learning any language never ends. Still, the semester program set a good foundation on which I could develop my skills."

After this experience, Noah reports that his translation project progressed more rapidly and with higher quality than before. As a consultant, his visits to other teams to check their translations and to train team members for Old Testament translation had a new level of proficiency.

Yet in each translation project, he observed a common cry: "I repeatedly saw the same felt need that I had years ago—the desire to upgrade their understanding of the Hebrew text. Of course, we consultants gladly help the teams fine-tune their drafts, but it will be far better if the teams knew Hebrew themselves. The training of local translators is a critical need today because of the double need of quality and efficiency. They could go or stay anywhere in the world for training; but I think the most efficient and strategic location is in Jerusalem and the Home for Bible Translators.

"The Old Testament is not available in more than 90 percent of the nearly 6,700 languages of the world. When I asked a young Christian in Korea how she would feel if there was no Bible

available in her language, she responded emotionally, 'It will be suffocating to me. I could suffer poverty and my understanding of God would be hazy and thin.' The task of Old Testament translation into the remaining languages is both enormous and urgent; it requires quick work while maintaining quality in translation. How can we do this? The only viable solution is to train native translators as specialists in Biblical Hebrew and other Old Testament related subjects. If one specialist is required for each language group to attain the needed speed and quality, then we must train several thousand translators. HBT is in a strategic position as an instrument of God for today to quickly train Old Testament translation specialists for the Bible-less people groups of the world."