

Delitzsch Hebrew-English Gospels

The following is a written summary of our [full-length video reviews](#) featuring excerpts, discussions of key issues and texts, and lots of pictures, and is part of our [Bible Review series](#).

Do you recommend it? Why?

Two thumbs up! Read on to learn why we highly recommend the Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels.

Who's this Bible best for?

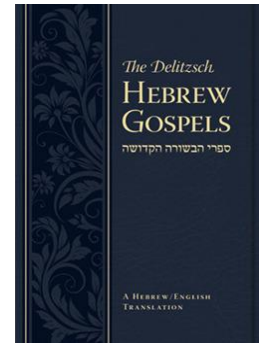
If you're looking for a genuinely Jewish presentation of the story of Yeshua using Hebrew words in a holy book format, or if your heart is longing to return to your first love, the Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels will be perfect for you.

Would you suggest this as a primary or a secondary Bible? Why?

The DHE is a specialty Bible in that it only features the four Gospels. For this reason you'll probably want to pick up one of the other Bibles recommended in this series for regular reading and then use your Delitzsch for special reading. The DHE is perfect for deep study of the Gospels in their historical Jewish context, intimate times with the Master losing yourself in his story and words, and for practicing your Hebrew. You could even use your DHE in our Hebrew Verses in Matthew course [here](#) where we read word for word through Delitzsch's

translation of Matthew!

At first glance you may be disappointed that this beautiful book is limited to the story of Yeshua as told in the four Gospels and that a translation of the entire New Testament isn't forthcoming. Upon closer inspection though, this limitation is actually one of the DHE's greatest strengths. It's an invitation to return to your first love, to renew that "pure and simple devotion" that Paul spoke of, to plant yourself at the dusty feet of your Rabbi and choose the "one thing necessary" that can never be taken from you. Handled right, your DHE can make you more Christ-centered than you even thought possible.



In discussing the backstory to this version the publishers explain that this focus is indeed one of their chief objectives. Not only to publish the most Jewish presentation of the Gospels today or to encourage intensive study by pulling these four books out and elevating them as a superior text, but to give you a personal experience of "hitkashrut" or "intense connection". In Jewish spirituality reading the words of a sage is tantamount to being in his very presence. Similarly, as the repository of the precious words of our holy Teacher, these Gospels are our closest connection to Him.

How's this version's relationship with the Jews and Judaism?

In the beginning, the story of the Jewish Messiah was foreign to Gentile ears. Ironically, two thousand years later Christianity has drifted so far from her roots that Jewish people now see the message of Christ as a different religion and therefore irrelevant. The DHE changes all that. The Publishers in their preface announce their intent to give the Gospels back to the Jewish world by "returning the words and deeds of Yeshua back to a Jewish milieu by restoring the Gospels to their original Semitic voice, thereby allowing our brothers and sisters to consider his words and glean from his teachings without hindrance."

This becomes apparent from the moment you pick this Bible up. It opens from right to left like a classic Jewish "sefer" or holy book. In keeping with the Jewish tradition of beautifying the Torah its aesthetics from cover to layout to font are nothing shy of intoxicating. The Introduction summarizes the life of Rabbi Yeshua and shows how he can be seen both as the suffering "Mashiach Ben Yosef" and as the conquering "Mashiach Ben David" and then leads in the traditional Jewish prayers that are



Who's the publisher and when did it come out?

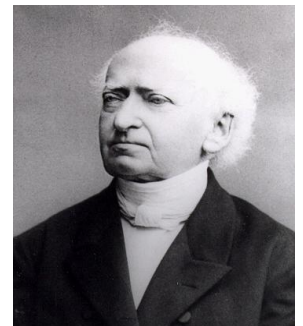
Professor Franz Delitzsch's Hebrew translation of the New Testament was first released by the British Foreign Bible Society in 1877 and, 11 revisions later, was published in its final form in 1890. Over a century later the Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels was released in 2011 by Vine of David, "A publishing arm of the ministry of First Fruits of Zion dedicated to providing liturgical resources for the Messianic Jewish movement and to resurrecting the voices of Messianic pioneers and luminaries." The staff at Holy Language Institute informally refer to FFOZ as our "ministry crush" and we highly recommend their resources which can be found at www.ffoz.org and www.vineofdavid.org.



VOD's stated mission is to "Reveal Yeshua as the light to the nations and as the hope and glory of his people Israel" and the DHE is dedicated to Franz Delitzsch "For his love for the Jewish people and the Jewish context of Scripture, which came at great personal sacrifice. He stood firm in an era when the majority of Christian scholars were moving ever further away from Jewish interpretation and progressing toward the hate and ignorance that culminated in the Holocaust. May we in a small way be able to carry on his work and vision." Read on to see why VOD's aim would have resonated so deeply with Franz Delitzsch and how the DHE truly is a testament to the legacy of this great Bible scholar.

Who translated it and what's their story?

The Hebrew translation was the masterpiece of Professor Franz Delitzsch who was a Christian theologian, Hebrew scholar, and friend of the Jewish people who lived in Germany in the 1800s. For his full story see our [Messianic History](#) series.



The English translation was mainly done by Aaron Eby, who is the Director of Vine of David and part of the teaching team at First Fruits of Zion. Aaron lives in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area and is actively involved with Beth Immanuel, a traditional Messianic synagogue. Aaron has been working for years to develop liturgical resources that will strengthen Messianic Judaism, with the DHE being just one of his projects.



The tireless work and passionate scholarship of Franz Delitzsch continue to touch the lives of Jews and Gentiles, individuals and congregations, a full century after his death. We believe the same will be said of Aaron Eby and that what we've seen thus far is but a firstfruits of the degree to which his brilliant mind and chasidic devotion will shape the Messianic Jewish world of the future.

Is it more word for word or thought for thought?

The Hebrew and the English translations are both very literal. In his Hebrew translation of the New Testament, Franz Delitzsch sought to accurately represent the Greek text while at the same time reconstructing the original Hebrew words and thought patterns of Yeshua and his disciples. He wrote, "The principle which I followed in my translation was to render the New Testament into Hebrew of such a kind as the sacred writers would themselves have employed." Accordingly, while the structure is Biblically styled Hebrew, the content includes a sprinkling of Mishnaic Hebrew terms and even the occasional Greek loanword which weren't used in the Old Testament but were used in Jewish literature from the New Testament era and thus would have been recognizable to the authors of the Gospels. He explained, "And there too I laid down the principle that the translation should not avoid rabbinical expressions, if they supply the words and formulae in which, without undue straining, the New Testament Greek can be made intelligible to those who employ the post-biblical literature."

The notion of Jesus and his apostles speaking Hebrew instead of Aramaic or even Greek may startle some people, but this was the belief of the learned Franz Delitzsch over a century ago who pointed out that "Hebrew remained, even after the exile, the language of Jewish literature" and asserted that "the Shemitic woof of the New Testament is Hebrew, not Aramaic. Our Lord and his apostles thought and spoke for the most part in Hebrew." Since then more evidence has come forth to support the professor's conclusion that, while Aramaic was used in Second-Temple Israel, Hebrew was also spoken as a living language and that there was considerable overlap between the two. For a more detailed discussion of this topic along with an overview of the available evidence please see the ["Hebrew History" section](#) of our Hebrew Quest course.

In keeping with Delitzsch's attempts to reconstruct the original language of the Jesus narratives and draw the reader into the story - versus serving the story to the reader on a culturally eviscerated silver platter - the English translation follows the syntax of the Hebrew as closely as possible. This parallelism is one of the greatest strengths of the DHE and is especially useful if you're reading verse by verse through the Hebrew and consulting the English when unsure of a word or phrase.

Reflecting the underlying Hebrew sentence structure is just one way the English translation is very literal. Another way is how it handles idioms, which the publishers describe as "clumsy phrases that don't transfer properly or that mean something beyond their literal reading". The DHE is "fairly wooden in preserving the Hebrew idioms" while at the same time explaining their meanings in the glossary.

For a more in-depth discussion of the translation philosophy behind the DHE and a personal example of how the parallelism of the DHE made it perfect for our Director to read with his daughter, watch the [video reviews](#).

Does it also have the Hebrew text?

It's obvious by now that the DHE features a Hebrew text so this question may seem superfluous, but we chose to include it from the standard "20 questions" we ask in this Bible Review series as a segue to further discuss the Hebrew text. We tell the story of Professor Delitzsch's translation in the [video reviews](#), so here we'll just touch on a couple specific questions.

One of the questions that frequently come up in conjunction with discussions about Semitic versions or translations of the New Testament is "Do you think there's something wrong with the Greek text?" This question is phrased in the FAQs to the Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels as "Do you accept the authority of the Greek texts?" The answer is, "Absolutely yes. Delitzsch's Hebrew translation of the original Greek text does not undermine their authority or composition, but we believe that he accomplished his goal of restoring the original Hebrew voice in a beautiful and authentic manner."

Professor Delitzsch himself approached the Greek New Testament with utmost respect and careful scholarship. His translation was primarily based on the Codex Sinaiticus which is considered to be the earliest and most reliable set of manuscripts, but it also drew on the Textus Receptus which is what the King James Version is based on. This care is reflected in the textual layout, where passages that have weak support but are still acknowledged to be from an early date are enclosed with a single set of curly brackets, e.g. {text}, and passages that are generally believed to have been later additions to the text are indicated with a double set, e.g. {{text}}. Variant readings are also listed in the DHE's footnotes on the English side as "Some manuscripts read" and on the Hebrew side with n"a, a rabbinic acronym for "nusach acher" which means "another reading". The Publishers explain, "We chose Delitzsch's translation, not because it represents alternative readings, but because it faithfully represents the best text we have. Also, it presents the text in a Hebrew voice in an informed and accurate way. With Delitzsch, we know where his sources and interpretations come from."

If you're unfamiliar with the history of how the Bible came to us and the field of "textual criticism", all this may seem troubling. How can the infallible Word of God have different manuscripts and readings and still be the infallible Word of God? Be reassured that these textual differences are slight and that they still agree with the rest of the Bible. It should also be reassuring to see the exactitude with which the manuscripts of the New Testament have been handled and to know that if there is such a high degree of transparency on the most minute textual differences, then surely we can trust the general body of these writings as they have been handed down to us. For a more detailed discussion of the history of these manuscripts, the 30 alternate readings in the DHE, and the bigger question of whether we can trust the New Testament as we have it, watch the [video reviews](#).

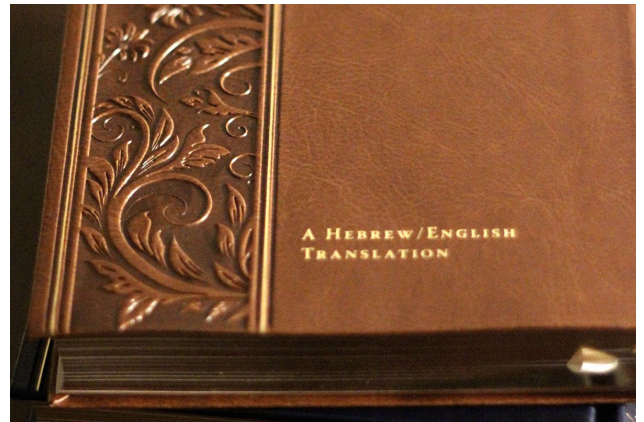


One controversial question in the realm of Hebrew translations of the New Testament is which word should be used in the verse about Yeshua "fulfilling" the Torah. Did that mean "filling" as if the Torah were somehow

empty or incomplete, or did it mean "upholding" in contrast with abolishing? Read the Translator's Preface for yourself or watch the [video reviews](#) for a more detailed discussion of this question and for several historical quotes showing that the one thing Jews know for sure about the *real* Jesus is that he said he didn't come to do away with the Torah.

In light of Delitzsch's objective to place the Gospels back into their Hebrew context, you may be surprised when reading his translation to see the occasional Greek word written in Hebrew letters! Delitzsch's incorporation of a small handful of Greek loanwords actually reflected the use of those same Greek terms in other Jewish writings from the New Testament era and adds an even greater ring of Second-Temple era authenticity. For two examples of this see the "Names of God" section below and the 57th lesson in our [Mishnah Snapshots course](#), starting at 22:45.

In addition to questions about the Hebrew and Greek, you may also have a question about the English side of the DHE. *Why translate a translation?* The Translator's Preface answers this very question, beginning with the big picture. "There really is no such thing as an English Bible. There are only English interpretations of the Bible. In fact, every Bible is a "translation of a translation." Moreover, every translation is a commentary because in order to translate, one must first decide what the source text *means*, not just what it *says*. Deciding what something means is by definition interpretation and even the most literal, word-for-word translation must do this, even if only in the words the translator chooses." The Preface then goes on to explain more specifically, "Delitzsch's work is not merely a translation, but in a real sense it is also a reconstruction. Since Delitzsch intended to restore the original Hebraic concepts, in his Hebrew translation he actually clarifies and highlights some passages that the Greek text leaves obscure and unclear. As a result, our translation of Delitzsch's Hebrew translation into English will make the meaning of some passages clearer than if the Greek text were translated directly into English." The Preface goes on to unpack six examples: "up to the wrist" in Mark 7:3, "its own trouble" in Matthew 6:34, "pardon our debts" in Matthew 6:12, "what is holy" in Matthew 7:6, "with the wild animals" in Mark 1:13, and "for he is gone" in Matthew 2:18. Of course this is but a small sampling. Our readers are encouraged to page through the DHE for themselves and note the many instances in which the story of Yeshua snaps into breathtakingly vivid focus when the Gospels are set in their original Semitic context.



How are Hebrew personal and place names written?

The translators say, "We want to bring the reader closer to the land of Israel and the Jewish people rather than bringing the land of Israel and the Jewish people closer to the reader. It's a way of transporting you into this story rather than transporting the story into your context." One way they do this is by using the original Hebrew pronunciations for people and places, starting with the names of the four Gospels themselves -

תַּחֲלֵת בַּ	1	✠
הַנָּ		Yochanan
פְּנֵי		THE IMMERSE
		MT 3:1-6; LK 3:1-6;
		YN 1:19-23
יְהוֹנָן הַ	4	<i>Mashiach</i> (מָשִׁיחַ mah-SHEE-ah), anointed one; Messiah
הַטָּאִים:		HASHEM (הַשֵּׁם hah-SHEM), the LORD; "the Name"
כָּלֵם עַל		Yochanan (יְהוֹנָן yoh-hah-NAHN), John, Johanan,
שַׁעַר גַּב		Joannas

Mattai, Markos, Lukas, and Yochanan. Similarly Simon Peter is Shim'on Keifa, James is Ya'akov, and Judas is Yehudah. Women such as Mary, Elizabeth, and Susanna are Miryam, Elisheva, and Shoshannah. Names from the Tanach are also preserved in their original form. So Isaac is Yitzchak, Moses is Moshe, Solomon is Shlomoh, and Isaiah is Yeshayah. Notably, all these are still good Jewish names that Jewish parents continue to name their kids. Same goes for place names, with the names of geographical areas and cities in the DHE exactly matching the modern Hebrew names of these places in Israel today. Galilee is the Galil, Capernaum is Kefar Nachum, Siloam is Shiloach, Arimathea is Ramatayim, Bethlehem is Beit-Lechem, and Jerusalem is Yerushalayim.

Wait a minute, you may object. Markos and Lukas aren't Hebrew names, are they? You're right! As you read the Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels you'll notice that Greek and Latin names are also transliterated exactly as they're written in the Hebrew text. Therefore Andrew is *Andrai*, Philip is *Pillipos*, and Caesar Augustus is...wait for it...*Keisar Ogustos*. You may question the spiritual value of trying to pronounce non-Hebrew names with a Hebrew accent. Aside from the fact that it doesn't sound so much like an intestinal disease, is saying "Tarchonah" instead of "Trachonitis" really so edifying? Why not go with the traditional English pronunciation on these ones? Our suggestion is that you once again slow down and give it a try. Say these old words in a new way and see if it doesn't break you out of your old mindset and transport you half a world away. Having said that, there is another less subjective reason for phrasing these names the way Hebrew lips would utter them - some of these figures appear not just on the pages of the Gospels, but in historical Jewish literature as well. In the Talmud, for instance, Herod goes down in infamy as *Hordos* and Nicodemus makes his appearance as *Nakdimon*, only the third richest man in Jerusalem.

We understand that these names may be formidable at first glance, especially if you're expected to read from the DHE in a public setting. The Glossary of Proper Names in the back should be helpful, but even that may leave you unsure of the exact pronunciation. Or, having consulted the Glossary, you may still find your memory struggling as you read. To help with this we created a video working through every one of these names, explaining exactly how they're pronounced, and then repeating them several times so they'll lock into your long-term memory. Watch that on the members-only [video reviews](#) page. We also go over every Hebrew name in the New Testament and teach you how to read and say them in [Lesson 18 of Hebrew Quest](#).

Two warnings. Please don't start a Sacred Name cult insisting on the "true" Hebrew pronunciation of Greek and Latin names. And just because Joda is written as *Yodah* means does not that in the Gospels is he.

How are the names and titles of God written?

On the Hebrew side the holy name of God which is spelled with the letters Yod, Hei, Vav, and Hei is written the same as it's written throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. This comes as no surprise but is worth noting because

a book containing the Sacred Name is regarded as a holy book in Judaism and is to be treated with the utmost care and respect. With this in mind, please don't put your DHE facedown or on the floor, bring it into a restroom, or put anything on top of it.

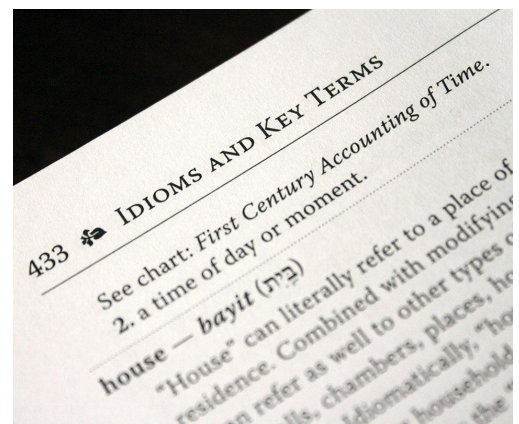
In the English text the name of God is represented by *HaShem* which means "The Name". Jesus is *Yeshua*. Messiah is *Mashiach* with the exception of John 1:41 where the situation warrants *Christos*. Nazarene is *Notzri* which ironically in modern Hebrew means "Christian". *Shaddai* is "Mighty One". The terms Holy Spirit and God aren't Hebraicized.

You may have heard the Holy Spirit referred to as the "Paraclete" before. This comes from a Greek word meaning helper or advocate and is used five times in John 14-16 and 1 John 2. You may be surprised when reading through the Hebrew side of the DHE to see that Greek word - *parakleetos* - written in Hebrew letters as *prakleet*. Why did Delitzsch use this Greek word instead of a Hebrew equivalent? For the answer to that question, which entails a discussion of how this Greek loanword is used in ancient Jewish writings and how this historical information can enrich your relationship with the Holy Spirit, watch the [video reviews](#).

How are key terms rendered?

The DHE is replete with Hebrew keywords and neutral English terms that don't carry the same baggage for Jewish people that their religiously charged Christian equivalents would. Apostles are *shlichim*, baptism is immersion, binding and loosing are forbidding and permitting, a blessing is a *brachah*, *ekklesia* is community, *ethnos* are Gentiles, the feast of Dedication is *Channukah*, law and commandments are *Torah* and *mitzvot*, Pharisees and Sadducees are *Prushim* and *Tzaddukim*, phylacteries are *tefillin*, and the Sabbath is *Shabbat*.

And that's just scraping the surface! The two glossaries in the back, "Idioms and Key Terms" and "Transliterated Hebrew Terms", run 29 pages and are such a crash course in frequently used Hebrew expressions that we would recommend the DHE just for the glossaries. You may experience the same unsurety in trying to pronounce these Hebrew phrases that you experienced trying to pronounce the Hebrew names we mentioned earlier. To help with that we also created two videos guiding you phrase-by-phrase through these two sections. Watch that on our members-only [video review page here](#).



How are the difficult words of Jesus interpreted?

Watch the [video reviews](#) for a look at how Yeshua's hard sayings and other ambiguous or controversial passages are phrased.

Does it open from right to left, or from left to right?

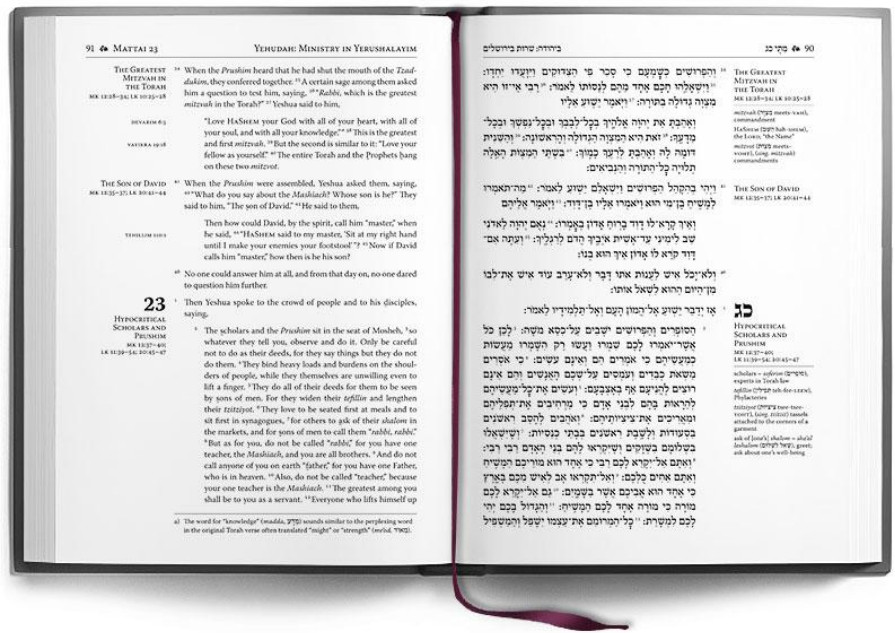
One of the many ways the DHE presents the story of Yeshua in a familiar Jewish way is how it opens from right to left, like a classic Jewish *sefer*.

How's the general layout and navigability?

One of the hallmarks of the Delitzsch Hebrew-English Gospels is its beauty, and this certainly comes through in how the text is arranged on the page. Not only is the layout aesthetically pleasing, it's also intended to facilitate a slow and reflective reading.

The top of every page has a "running table of contents" with the narrative's geographical location and theme so you always know where you're at in the story.

On the edge of the page you'll see several things. Subject heads tell you what each section is about. Parallel and Tanach cross-references give you the coordinates for related accounts in the other Gospels or quotes from the Hebrew Bible. Additionally, the pronunciations and English equivalents of Hebrew Names are given, and Hebrew terms and idioms are defined or explained. This material is placed outside the actual text so as not to interrupt your reading and to prevent the interjection of secondary content.



Likewise, footnotes at the bottom of the page give the fuller sense of key words and verses, explain Delitzsch's choice of words, and list the occasional alternate reading.

The text itself is presented in a single column instead of double columns. Longer quotations are indented as "block quotes" which enables the mind to better map out the narrative. Hebrew words are italicized. And passages with a poetic structure are sculpted in poetic fashion.

What does it have for notes, appendices, and extras?

The Translator's Preface, which we've quoted from several times already, is a thoughtful discussion of the Semitic context of the New Testament, Delitzsch's translation, and associated questions.

The Introduction to the Gospels, which can be found after the Translator's Preface, offers a rich look at Yeshua and the Gospels through Jewish eyes.

Following these is a collection of traditional or adapted prayers in Hebrew and English which would be both meaningful and appropriate to say before studying the Holy Gospels.

Before each of the Gospels themselves is a one-page introduction to that Gospel's author and historical milieu, anthologized from the writings of Rabbi Yechiel Tzvi Lichtenstein, a Jewish disciple of Yeshua and Orthodox Rabbi who lived in the 1800s.

And then in the back are three glossaries of Idioms and Key Terms, Transliterated Hebrew Terms, and Proper Names, concluding with a harmonization of the names of the 12 disciples. These resources are followed by a series of charts showing the Western equivalents of the ancient measures of volume, weight, distance, time, and currency used in the Gospels, and a collection of maps of Israel, Galilee, Jerusalem, and the Second Temple.

Producer Boaz Michael and Translator Aaron Eby discuss these features and many other topics related to the DHE in a series of 28 videos which can be viewed on the [Vine of David website here](#). Highly recommended!



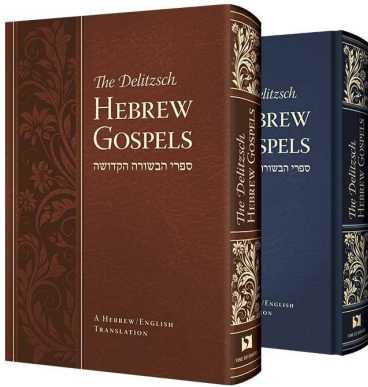
How would you summarize the positives and negatives of this Bible?

The DHE tells the story of Yeshua in a Jewish way and with beauty while simultaneously encouraging a slow and deep study of these narratives. It's also a goldmine of historical, linguistic, and cultural information on the Jewish world of Jesus and his disciples. These positives are perhaps best summarized by the prayer concluding the Preface: "That this work will help bring the world a step closer to the true message, character, and essence of the Messiah. We hope it will help to restore Yeshua's original intent and serve as a tool for focused study of

his life, words, and deeds."

We have no real negatives but as previously mentioned you may be disappointed that a full version of the New Testament isn't forthcoming. If coming from a traditional Western Christian background you may experience an initial disconnect as you're plunged into a foreign world. And from a user's perspective, the English translation may feel like less than easy reading because of the Hebrew words and sentence structure.

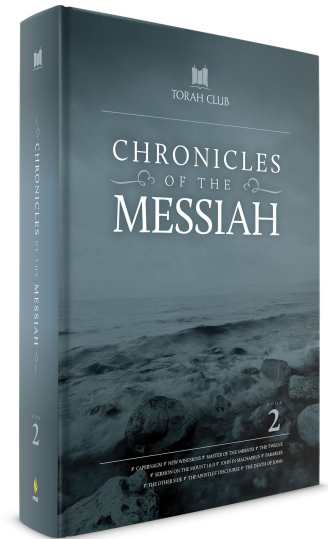
Which formats can I get it in, and where?



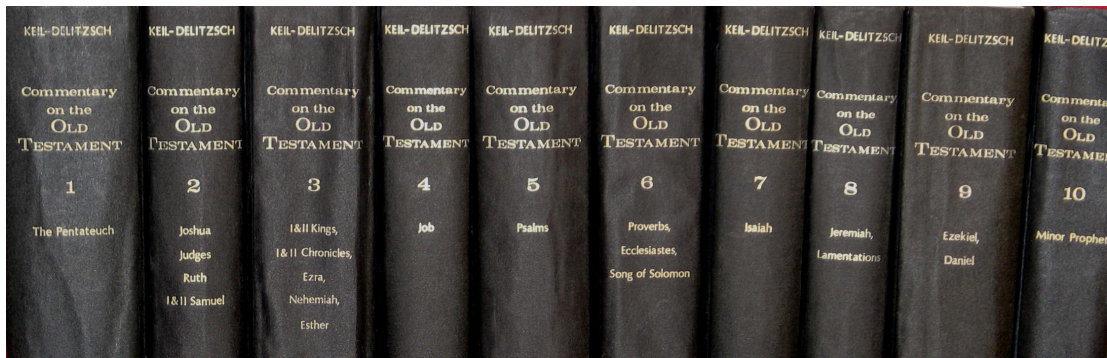
The DHE is available as a blue hardcover or brown softcover and can be purchased from the First Fruits of Zion website [here](#). Note the reduced prices for orders of five or more, and further reductions in price when ordered in packs of 12 [here](#). As explained on the [official page](#) of the DHE, a percentage of your purchase will go to distributing a special edition of the DHE to inquiring Jewish people at no cost.

No electronic versions of the DHE are forthcoming. This was intentional on the part of the Publishers who wanted to emphasize the timeless feeling of a book you can hold in your hands.

If you love the DHE you'll also love FFOZ's "Chronicles of the Messiah" commentary on the Gospels. In their own words, "While the DHE and its various glossaries stand out on their own and are in and of themselves extensive commentaries, the more complete and comprehensive commentary can be found in Torah Club: Chronicles of the Messiah by First Fruits of Zion. We created this commentary to expound on the Jewish background of the Gospels, on the Delitzsch translation and word use, and we have incorporated much of Rabbi Lichtenstein's commentaries and reflections on the Gospels texts. The commentary is extensive and is structured for a year-long study on the Gospels using a narrative style that chronologically works through the Gospels, pulling all of the synoptic sections together and giving the reader a comprehensive and systematic study of the life and teachings of Yeshua as revealed in the Gospels and related works." [Get it here](#).



In addition to the DHE and its extension in the Torah Club commentary, you may also be interested in reading the full version of Delitzsch's Hebrew New Testament for yourself. An online version is available [here](#), compliments of Holy Language Institute. For PDF and hard copy versions of the Delitzsch NT please see our members-only [Resources page](#) where you can also find online, pdf, and hard copy versions of several other Hebrew New Testaments including the more flowing paraphrase of Salkinson, the early simple version of Fry & Collier, the cantillated version of Margoliouth, and the Aramaic New Testament with a modern Hebrew translation.



The Keil & Delitzsch commentary on the Old Testament is also extremely valuable and worth noting. Learn how to get all ten volumes, along with the Delitzsch NT, on your computer or phone in our [e-Sword Bible Software Tutorials](#).

We hope this review was helpful! Be sure to also watch the [video reviews](#), check out our [Bible Review series](#), and say thank you for these reviews by [donating](#) or [becoming a member](#).