ENOUGH TO MAKE A TRANSLATOR BLUSH

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Category: Old Testament

Bible translators have to deal with all sorts of complex concepts; justification, sanctification and lots of other theological '-ations'. However, the Bible doesn't just contain a lot of high-flown language, it deals with rather more - how shall I put it? - earthy issues, too.

Scott McKnight has a fascinating little post devoted to a phrase which occurs numerous times in the Authorised translation of the Old Testament, but which tends to be expressed a little less literally, but more genteelly in most modern versions. Here are a couple of examples.

> ***1 Sam 25:34****Â For in very deed,Â asÂ the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any thatÂ pissethÂ against the wall.*
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> ***1 Kings 14:10****Â Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him thatÂ pissethÂ against the wall,Â andÂ him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.*

With their modern equivalents from the NIV:

> ***1 Sam 25:34****Â Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.â€*
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> ***1 Kings 14:10****Â â€œ â€˜Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israelâ€”slave or free. I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung, until it is all gone.*

Citing some interesting research, McKinight suggests that far from being a physical description of an action, the phrase in question is actually an insult. It's fascinating stuff and well worth a read.

It will also come as a bit of a shock to this man.

If you don't like some of the language in this post, don't blame me, blame King James!