



While Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve are both times for reflection, such reflection generally faces pretty stiff competition from celebrations and festivities of various sorts, so I'm not sure how much reflection we actually do. One of the quiet rituals I look forward to on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day is the completion of the year's journey through the Scripture, which I did this morning, and the beginning of the next year's journey, which I'll do tomorrow morning.

One blessing of life at the Interfaith Center is that I'm learning lots of new things from our Jewish friends. One thing that's a little bit embarrassing is that until earlier this year, it had never occurred to me that Jewish folk might have a different English translation of their Scriptures than that which is found in Christian Bibles . . . but they do.

Although both Jews and Christians use the same Hebrew text, known as the Masoretic Text,¹ there are quite a number of English translations of that text, both Jewish and Christian. Some of these translations have been done by a single scholar, while some of them were done by translation committees of various sorts. I've always believed that committee translations are to be preferred, since such an approach brings the most scholarship to the task while minimizing the personal inclinations of any one scholar.

I've told you before that my favorite committee translations of the Christian Bible are the New International Version, the New Living Translation, and the English Standard Version. As you may remember, the New Living Translation is a "thought-for-thought" translation; the English Standard Version is a "word-for-word" translation; and the New International Version strikes a balance between the two. Each has its place, and I use all of them.

Our OMI Rabbis have indicated that the Jewish Publication Society translation of 1985 is generally considered to be the best English translation of the Hebrew Scriptures from a Jewish perspective. The Hebrew Scriptures are frequently called the TANAKH, which is an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of each of the Masoretic Text's three traditional subdivisions: **Torah** ("Teaching," also known as the Five Books of Moses), **Nevi'im** ("Prophets") and **Ketuvim** ("Writings") — hence **TaNaKh**.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text

Having learned this in 2013, one of the things I'm going to add to my Scripture reading in 2014 is the reading of the Hebrew Scriptures from the JPS TANAKH. However you choose to go about it, I encourage you to begin tomorrow (or tonight!) to read some portion of the Bible each and every day. I fully expect that you intend to nourish your body every day in 2014. How much more important is it that you nourish your spirit as well?!

Taking good care of your physical body is a spiritual exercise in itself, and I hope you'll do it in 2014. However we understand the mind-body-spirit connection, it seems clear that we have absolutely no way to talk to God, to hear God, or to experience God except through the cells of our physical bodies. Those cells are our "antenna" by which to communicate with God, and we need to keep that antenna in tip-top shape!

In a similar way, care of our spiritual selves involves "eating" through Bible study,² "breathing" through prayer,³ and "exercise" through ministry,⁴ among other things.⁵ There's no time like the "hinge of the year" to get started on building a healthier and stronger you! ***Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth*** (2 Timothy 2:15).

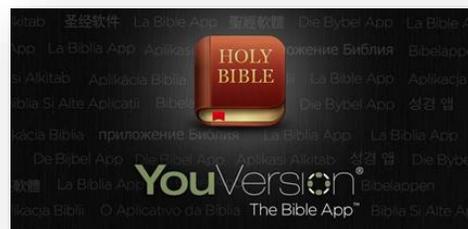
For your convenience, I've attached again the schedule of reading that I follow each year, but there are many others. One of the easiest ways to keep such a schedule with you is to put a Bible app on your phone, tablet, or computer. Probably the best-known such app is *YouVersion*,⁶ but there are many others, such as *Accordance*, *Logos Bible*, *Glo Bible*, *Olive Tree Bible*, *Bible.Is*, and *Bible Gateway*. Each of these has multiple versions of the Bible and many reading plans built in.

As you think about your life tonight compared with where you were a year ago, how are you doing on those "seven deadly sins" of *sloth, greed, anger, lust, envy, gluttony, and pride*? How are you doing on the nine "fruit of the spirit" – *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*?

This is not the time for "resolutions." This is the time for resolve. It's quite likely that some of us who read these words (or the one who writes them) may see Jesus face to face before 2014 is done. Let us live the days given to us both joyfully and well, for the glory of our King!

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen (Revelation 22:20-21).

Dave



² Hebrews 5:11-14.

³ Talking is similar to "exhaling," and listening to God is similar to "inhaling" (Luke 6:12, Matthew 6:9-13, Ephesians 1:17-19).

⁴ Ephesians 2:8-10, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.

⁵ 2 Peter 1:5-8; Galatians 5:22-23.

⁶ Check out <http://blog.youversion.com/2013/12/our-year-with-the-bible-infographic>.