



# the messenger

Winter 2023

## RESTRICTED

*Reaching the Unreached*  
...page 4

# 1. PRAY FOR \*SHI BELIEVERS

Thank you, Lord, for your steadfast love that gives hope to our brothers and sisters in the NOLA Scripture Engagement program, especially those in the \*Shi and \*Khon language communities.

Thank you, Father, for the overflowing joy of the Khon who now desire to walk alongside the Shi oral Bible story team to help develop a panorama of stories from the Old Testament.

We pray for the linguistic analysis of the Shi language as a writing system develops. We pray for open doors to work with local Shi leaders.

We pray for You to increase the confidence of our Shi brothers and sisters, as they tell oral Bible stories to friends and family and lead discussions based on these stories.

We praise you for the Khon's desire to bring Your Word to their neighbors, the Shi. We pray for perseverance in the engagement and translation work ahead.



## 2. Papua New Guinea

Pray the Lord will raise up men and women like Pastor Zumunu – to be passionate ministry entrepreneurs to help the Waria community and the entire Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG embrace Bible translation.

## 3. Ethiopia

Pray that translated materials will reach all the groups in the Ale, Dhirayta, Hamer, Konso, Tsa'makko, and Zayse language communities.

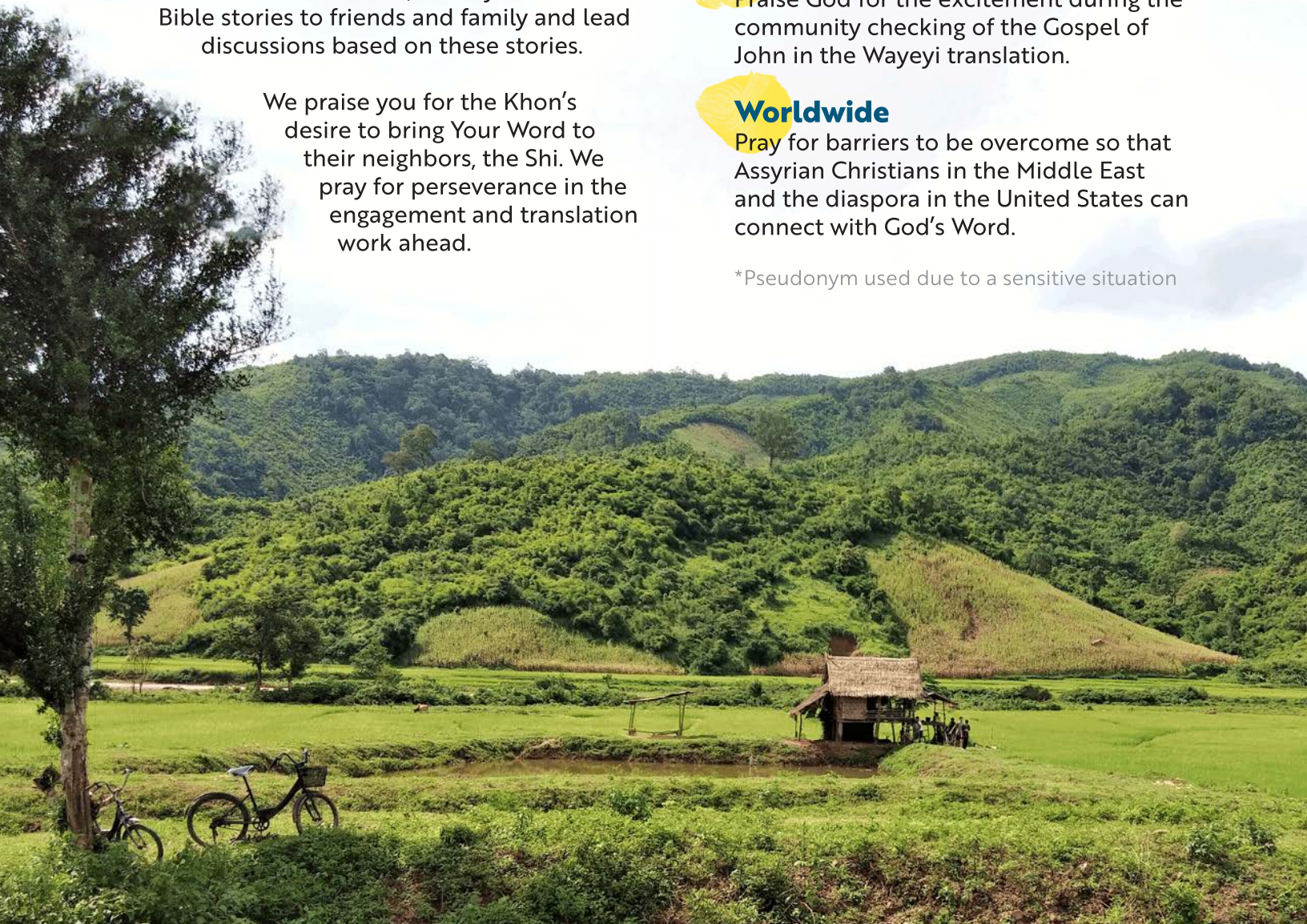
## 4. Botswana

Praise God for the excitement during the community checking of the Gospel of John in the Wayeyi translation.

## Worldwide

Pray for barriers to be overcome so that Assyrian Christians in the Middle East and the diaspora in the United States can connect with God's Word.

\*Pseudonym used due to a sensitive situation



# MORE THAN WORDS

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## FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

*Dear friends:*

### THE ROAD AHEAD IN BIBLE TRANSLATION IS NOT SMOOTH.

The work is often in remote, hard to reach places. Teams will face spiritual, environmental, and complex challenges. Ministry will be increasingly difficult, sometimes dangerous – yet, we must press on for the sake of sharing the hope, life, and transformation of God’s Word!



**REV. DR. RICH RUDOWSKIE**  
Executive Director + CEO

Let’s look ahead to 2033. As a member of the collective impact alliance illumiNations, we commit to “All Access Goals” - most notably, ensure EVERY language has some measure of Scripture in the language they understand best within 10 years.

Your support accelerates the mission. How can you partner with us? Pray. Give. Advocate.

**PRAY** - Prayer is the strategy. Without God’s guiding hand, the mission will not be fulfilled.

**GIVE** - Your gifts fund the mission. \$35 translates a verse to a new language. A full chapter costs around \$1000. A printed New Testament is \$10 and a complete Bible is \$20.

**ADVOCATE** - Martin Luther pioneered Bible translation. 500 years later, you and I can continue this legacy and bring Scripture to the ends of the Earth.

2024 is the 60th year of Lutheran Bible Translators’ ministry. My fervent prayer is for a year of strengthening partnerships – with local leaders, mission organizations, and you.

Thank you for being part of the Bible translation movement.

*In Christ,*

**REV. DR. RICH RUDOWSKIE**

*Executive Director + CEO*

**On the cover:** A woman in a sensitive region of SE Asia holds a digital audio device loaded with Bible stories. Her face is blurred to protect her identity.

# MORE THAN WORDS

## GOD'S FAITHFULNESS THROUGH THE MORE THAN WORDS CAMPAIGN

Leading into 2019, God guided the leadership at Lutheran Bible Translators to step out in faith to start a five-year More Than Words campaign and extend the goal beyond our comprehension (and current capacity). Large goals were set, such as doubling the number of active language communities from 72 to 144. To date, the ministry now serves 132 language communities! Your prayers and support continue to grow the impact areas of capacity building, deepening engagement, and driving translation forward. See the campaign progress on page 9.



### CAPACITY BUILDING:

Equipping local leaders with resources and tools

The Helge Center for Scripture Engagement continues to show God's hand in Ethiopia as translation consultants engage in meaningful discussions with current Bible translation students.



### DEEPENING ENGAGEMENT:

Removing barriers to accessing the Gospel

Literacy classes in Liberia teach members of the language communities to read and write in their language so they can read the Bible for themselves.



### BIBLE TRANSLATION:

The critical aspect of this movement

The Dhirayta New Testament is printed and will be delivered to the language community in Ethiopia. 



# RESTRICTED REACHING THE UNREACHED

**FROM THE ISOLATED AND MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA TO THE POLITICALLY CHARGED ZONES OF SOUTH GUMUZ IN ETHIOPIA,** the geographical and environmental challenges ahead require us to radically broaden involvement - identifying opportunities for growth and removing unnecessary barriers to mission participation. We must achieve alignment with the Church, fostering interdependent mission partnerships domestically and internationally. Above all, let us keep prayer at the forefront - persistent, specific, faith-building, and unified prayer.

## SOUTH GUMUZ TRANSLATION: PERSEVERANCE & STRENGTH AMIDST DETOURS

In western Ethiopia, the South Gumuz language community is located in the throes of political instability, further intensified by the presence of oppressive forces causing what locals refer to as “peace problems.”

Asosa, the city at the heart of its operations, is not just a workplace but also **A HUB FOR VITAL REVIEWER WORKSHOPS. THIS LOCATION IS IDEAL DUE TO ITS ACCESSIBILITY TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD.** However, traveling to the language group being served is no small feat.

The direct route between their homes and Asosa takes 4 hours. However, due to problems with a neighboring language group, translators must travel a safer route around the danger area – which adds 1-2 days. Yet, they may still encounter resistance.

**...A BRIGHTER, MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE FOR ALL.**

Amidst the adversities, the effort of four organizations and individuals

dedicated to the cause shines. In the complicated challenges of South Gumuz, the enduring spirit of translation, community involvement, and honoring of the rich tapestry of languages promises a brighter, more inclusive future for all.



**WORKING IN THE SOUTH GUMUZ OFFICE  
COMMUTE CAR ARRIVING**



In 1975, the Subula dedicated the New Testament. Not many Subula could read at that time, and Christians were sparse. Years later, Faith Comes by Hearing recorded the New Testament, and faith spread rapidly. This excitement led them to search for the long-forgotten printed copies, but, to their dismay, termites had ravaged the storehouse. The Lutheran church did have a Bible songbook, however. The Subula asked Lutheran Bible Translators missionaries to transcribe into a computer. After many hours of laborious typing, they printed 600 copies, which quickly sold out.

**NOW, THESE BIBLE SONGS IN THE LANGUAGE THEY UNDERSTAND BEST ARE STIRRING AFFECTION FOR GOD'S WORD IN THE HEARTS OF THE SUBULA. THEY ARE ASKING AND LONGING FOR A FULL BIBLE.**

## \*SUBULA TRANSLATION: WHILE THE DOORS ARE OPEN

Deep in the heart of Cameroon, the Subula-speaking people have a history of facing oppression and cultural struggles.

**"AT ANY POINT, TRANSLATION COULD BECOME RISKY IN THIS CONTEXT,"** commented the Regional Director for West Africa. A door is currently open for Bible translation, and we must equip local leaders if missionary partners must depart for any number of reasons.

The community, after listening to the Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH) recording of the New Testament, was moved by the Holy Spirit to declare, "We are Christians!" Now, they yearn for a complete Bible.

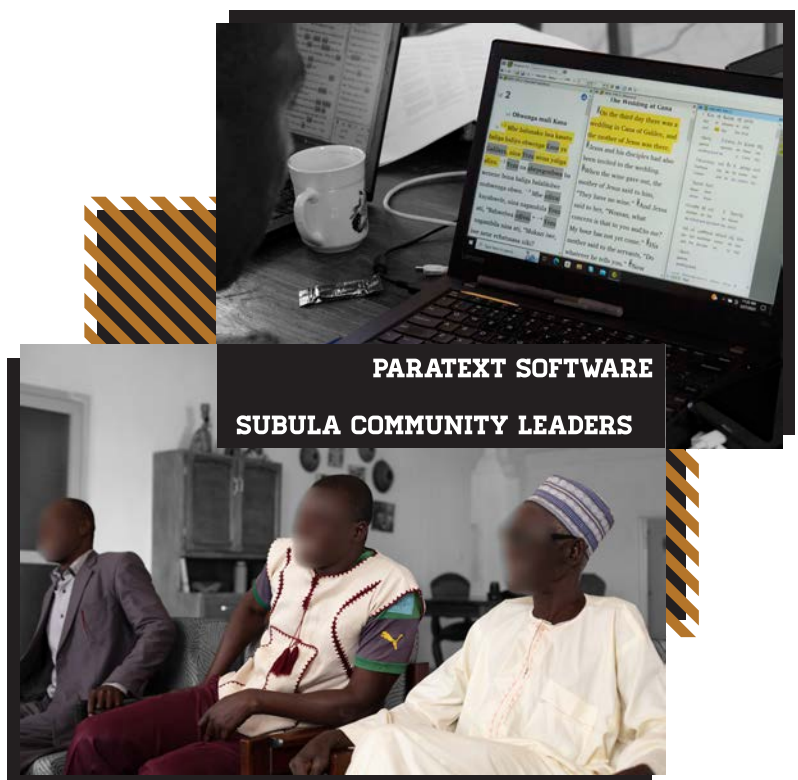
The Bible Society of Cameroon recognized that Lutheran Bible Translators, as a more agile organization, can work alongside smaller and often neglected people groups.

The project is helped by two dedicated teams, each comprised of three local leaders. **"NATIONAL CHURCHES ARE ASSIGNING TRAINED PASTORS AS BIBLE TRANSLATORS FOR THEIR OWN LANGUAGES.** Not one but two pastors were assigned to the Subula

Bible translation project, along with four other well-educated Subula translators," shared Joan Weber, missionary to Cameroon.

This project is more than just a translation. It's a reclamation of identity, faith, and culture. Local leaders, equipped and empowered, are driving this project forward, ensuring the Subula voice continues to resonate for generations.

**IT'S CRITICAL THAT THIS TRANSLATION HAPPEN NOW BEFORE THE DOORS CLOSE.**



# \*SHI TRANSLATION: BECOMING DYNAMIC STORYTELLERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In a remote mountain region of Southeast Asia, the Shi-speaking people dwell in isolation, retaining a unique, primarily monolingual lifestyle. Demanding animistic religious practices and a crippling drug addiction crisis have covered the Shi in darkness. God is working miracles to free people from demon possession and drug addiction, but believers experience scrutiny and suffer persecution. **TO BRING GOD’S WORD TO THE SHI, INNOVATION IS NEEDED.**

\*Mark and Marie, urban-based missionaries, have trained a team of believers from the \*Khon language project in methods of Oral Bible Story Crafting, and the Khon team is working with the Shi to develop the first Bible stories in the Shi language. **THIRTY STORIES FROM THE GOSPEL OF LUKE HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED IN THE SHI LANGUAGE AND DISCREETLY DISTRIBUTED ON AUDIO PLAYERS, YOUTUBE VIDEOS, AND PHONE APPS.**

Next, the Khon team will help the Shi develop a panorama of Old Testament stories and grow in confidence to re-tell these stories and lead simple oral Bible studies in Shi communities. Among the Khon, digital materials are replacing books to present rich biblical media for the Khon, including a Bible story-based basic Christian discipleship curriculum! Videos help leaders and new believers learn concurrently, and discussion questions prompt animated interactions that strengthen the discipleship journey. **DESPITE POTENTIAL RISKS, THE KHON MEDIA TEAM DISCREETLY NAVIGATES THE TIGHTROPE OF OUTREACH AND SAFETY.**

Marie shared, “Our co-worker expressed, ‘Every time I go out, I don’t know if this will be the last time I will be allowed to do this.’ People here are willing to take risks for the Gospel.” The Shi people need God’s Word to reach them in the darkness. **m.**



**“...PEOPLE HERE ARE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS FOR THE GOSPEL.”**



**GROUP BAPTISM**



**ACCESSING SCRIPTURE VIA DIGITAL AUDIO DEVICE**

### **\*PSEUDONYM USED**

When a sensitive area requires an alternate language name, a team creates a realistic-sounding name and spends many hours dialoguing and researching databases to evaluate the potential for confusion. Each pseudonym must be unique to avoid harming any other languages.



# JAARS Pilot Training

**A**fter 24 months of intense mechanics and flight study, new Lutheran Bible Translators missionary Nathan Federwitz began the next level of training: Jungle Aviation and Relay Service (JAARS).


**Training is vigorous, but Nathan has a strong support system.** His wife, Sarah, an LCMS Deaconess, encourages him through long hours of studying manuals. Alvina Federwitz, Nathan's grandmother, served as a Lutheran Bible Translators missionary for over fifty years and is thrilled to have her grandson join the mission. Nathan's father, Jonathan Federwitz, is a former missionary pilot and Lutheran Bible Translators associate.

Jonathan will be Nathan's primary trainer at JAARS. "I have trust in him I don't have with anybody else," Nathan expressed, "We understand each other at a level nobody else understands... we're both working toward the same

goal." This trust will prove vital as Jonathan instructs Nathan in the specifics of missionary piloting. Nathan laughed, "[As a missionary pilot] **you're not just going to follow a GPS straight down all the way to touchdown.** You're going to have to have a better understanding of how weather and navigation work without all the helpful aids we have in the U.S."

**...we're both working towards the same goal.**

Through this season of JAARS training, Nathan and Sarah remember, "We're enabling the people working on translation to get God's Word to the people as efficiently as possible."

The Federwitzes will be traveling and speaking. **"It allows us to connect with Lutheran churches on an impactful level, so they can be a part of taking God's Word to the nations."** 

**We're enabling the people working on translation to get God's Word to the people as efficiently as possible.**



**Nathan, Sarah, and their son, Enoch**

Nathan's JAARS training is funded in part by the Missionary Training Fund. To support this fund, visit [go.lbt.org/misstraining](http://go.lbt.org/misstraining).

Learn more about the Federwitzs at [go.lbt.org/nsfederwitz](http://go.lbt.org/nsfederwitz).



# Field Notes

NEWS AND EVENTS IMPACTING THE BIBLE TRANSLATION MOVEMENT



## 1 MOBILE BOOKSTORE

“[The Bible Society of Sierra Leone] can get their bookstore into marketplaces...even elementary school campuses...they can get Scripture into the hands of kids at a faster rate,” shared the Regional Director of West Africa about the success of mobile bookstores, which led to the purchase of a third vehicle.

## 2 PUTTING A BIBLE IN THE MUSEUM OF THE BIBLE

Rev. Kierien Ekpang Ayugha presented the C’Lela New Testament at the 2023 More Than Words Gathering in Washington, D.C. The book was added to the permanent collection of translated Bibles on exhibit in the illumiNations room.



## 3 PNG VISIT

After a four-hour boat ride, Regional Director Sarah Esala received a walking stick to help her scale a small, steep mountain to reach the Zaka Church Circuit headquarters. The Waria language projects greeted her with a full ceremonial welcome: traditional attire, dance, and music. Hefty travel budgets and timing logistics are challenging, but worth the effort for the joyful commitment of the people.



MORE THAN  
WORDS

81.7%

35.9 MIL  
as of 11/1/23

## Member Information

Lutheran Bible Translators bylaws define who may vote and **give you a chance to participate in nominating and electing the Board of Directors** as well as participate in changes to the Lutheran Bible Translators bylaws (charter document).

Thank you for participating in mission through your membership.

*Contributions are solicited with the understanding that Lutheran Bible Translators has complete discretion and control over the use of all donated funds. Lutheran Bible Translators will attempt to honor gifts preferenced to support particular workers, but the final decision on the use of all funds rests with the organization.*

*Lutheran Bible Translators is a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization and your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

*To view Lutheran Bible Translators' financial reports, visit [lbt.org/financial-accountability](http://lbt.org/financial-accountability).*

## 2024 MARKS 60 YEARS OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Lutheran Bible Translators was founded on May 13, 1964. In 2024, we celebrate the 60-year milestone and praise God for His leading and faithfulness. We also pray for His continued guidance as the More Than Words campaign concludes at the end of 2024. There is much work to be done in Bible translation.

Your partnership fuels this mission and God is faithful. We see His hand at work through your faithful giving and praying.

# More Than Words

## GATHERING 2023



**BIG GOALS** are achieved in the Bible translation movement through prayer; letting God's guidance and wisdom lead. **The More Than Words Gathering held Oct. 20-21 in Washington, D.C., provided a time for attendees to be refreshed by God's Word and inspired to advocate for the Bible translation movement.**

Main speakers shared about God's callings for our lives (Rev. Dr. Jeff Leininger), how we each matter to God (Heather Ruesch), and stewarding His gifts for His glory (brothers Cody Hobelmann and Dr. Kealan Hobelmann).

Dr. Abdul-Massih Saadi, Rev. Kierien Ayugha, and Rev. Linus Otronyi recounted stories of their involvement in the Bible translation movement. Videos featured the Komba and NOLA language communities.

Touring the Museum of the Bible with Chief Curator Dr. Jeff Kloha gave attendees a deeper sense of urgency. The illumiNations room brought silence to the group. **"It was overwhelming to see blank cases for each of the thousands of languages waiting for God's Word. It moved me to tears,"** shared Alyssa Petty, director for development.

Times of intentional prayer were woven into the entire gathering, and prayers filled the room as attendees focused on the Waria Multi-Language Translation Program, the Komba Bible Translation, Botswana Language Exploration, and the Southwest Ethiopia Bible Translation Coordination Office. "This event was a blessing in many ways..." expressed Jeremy Pekari.



Watch the recap of the event  
[go.lbt.org/mtwg23recap](https://go.lbt.org/mtwg23recap)

## UPCOMING GATHERINGS

### JAN. 12, 2024

Concordia University Irvine

### DATES COMING SOON

for Concordia, MO, and Chicago, IL, events.

Learn more at: [lbt.org/gathering](https://lbt.org/gathering).

# THE messenger

**Editors:** Seth Hinz, Molly Poppe, & Jill Inman  
**Creative Direction:** Caleb Rodewald  
**Layout Designer:** Sarah Rudowski  
**Executive Director & CEO:** Rev. Dr. Rich Rudowski

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205 S. Main St, Bldg 5, PO Box 789, Concordia MO 64020.  
1-660-225-0810 | [go.LBT.org](http://go.LBT.org) | [info@LBT.org](mailto:info@LBT.org)

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**Lutheran Bible Translators**

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