

## Deo Volente And The Epistle Of James

The Latin phrase Deo Volente, usually translated God-willing - and similar to the Muslim Inshallah, إن شاء الله - is derived from chapter 4, v.15 of the Epistle of James (Ιάκωβος) dating from c.250-300 CE,

ἀντὶ τοῦ λέγειν ὑμᾶς· ἐὰν ὁ κύριος θελήσῃ καὶ ζήσομεν καὶ ποιήσομεν τοῦτο ἢ ἐκεῖνο. <sup>1</sup>

pro eo ut dicatis si Dominus voluerit et vixerimus faciemus hoc aut illud. <sup>2</sup>

The context is:

13 Ἄγε νῦν οἱ λέγοντες· σήμερον ἢ αὔριον πορευσόμεθα εἰς τήνδε τὴν πόλιν καὶ ποιήσομεν ἐκεῖ ἐνιαυτὸν καὶ ἐμπορευσόμεθα καὶ κερδήσομεν,

14 οἵτινες οὐκ ἐπίστασθε τὸ τῆς αὔριον ποῖα ἢ ζωὴ ὑμῶν - ἀτμίς γάρ ἐστε ἢ πρὸς ὀλίγον φαινομένη, ἔπειτα καὶ ἀφανιζομένη -

15 ἀντὶ τοῦ λέγειν ὑμᾶς· ἐὰν ὁ κύριος θελήσῃ καὶ ζήσομεν καὶ ποιήσομεν τοῦτο ἢ ἐκεῖνο.

16 νῦν δὲ καυχᾶσθε ἐν ταῖς ἀλαζονείαις ὑμῶν· πᾶσα καύχησις τοιαύτη πονηρὰ ἐστίν.

17 εἰδότες οὖν καλὸν ποιεῖν καὶ μὴ ποιοῦντι, ἁμαρτία αὐτῶ ἐστίν.

### Interpretation Of Meaning

13 Go from this you speak today or the next day - that we depart to a particular community <sup>3</sup> and be there a year to buy, sell, and profit -

14. To not being sure about the next day. For what is life? Only a cloud <sup>4</sup> appearing for a while to disappear away.

15 Say instead: if the Lord allows it, then we shall live and do something or whatever.

16 Yet now a prideful posturing, with all posturing an error. <sup>5</sup>

17 It is therefore an error if the one who knows the good does not do it.

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v.1.02

Extract from a letter to a personal correspondent

[1] Novum Testamentum Graece, 28. Barbara und Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini und Bruce M. Metzger, *Zusammenarbeit mit dem Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung*, 2012 Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart.

[2] Jerome, *Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio*.

[3] cf. πῦρ καὶ ἀτμίδα καπνοῦ, Acts 2:19, "fire and a cloud of smoke".

[4] Community - πόλις.

In ἱστορία Ἰουδαϊκοῦ πολέμου πρὸς Ῥωμαίου, Josephus wrote: σχεδὸν δὲ καὶ ὧν ἀκοῆ παρειλήφαμεν ἢ πόλεων πρὸς πόλεις ἢ ἔθνῶν ἔθνεσι συρραγέντων about which I commented, in a footnote to my commentary on chapter five of the Gospel of John:

A conventional translation would have πόλις as 'city' and ἔθνος as 'nation' so that the latter part would conventionally be translated along the following lines: "cities would have fought against cities, or nations against nations." However, the terms 'nation' and 'city' are or can be misleading, given their modern connotations, whereas a historical approximation for ἔθνος would be 'tribe', 'people', or 'community', and for πόλις - understood here as referring to a particular named place with a history of settlement - town, fortified town, burg, borough, municipality. Such choices would produce a translation such as: "municipality would have fought municipality, community with community." The evocation is thus more parochial, more regional, as befits the historical past and the context: here, an insurrection, a conflict between the people of Judaea and the armed forces commanded by Roman citizens (those "of Rome") duly appointed to positions of power.  
<https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/myatt-gospel-john-1-5.pdf>

Here, in Jerome, community for πόλις seems apposite: cf. Luke 2:4 - Ἀνέβη δὲ καὶ Ἰωσήφ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἐκ πόλεως Ναζαρέτ εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν εἰς πόλιν Δαυεὶδ ἣτις καλεῖται Βηθλεέμ, διὰ τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἐξ οἴκου καὶ πατρίδος Δαυεὶδ - where πόλις occurs in relation to Bethlehem and Nazareth of Galilee which were not in the time of Jesus 'cities' or even towns in the modern sense.

[5] As I have noted in several essays, and in my translation of the Gospel of John, I prefer to translate the Greek term ἁμαρτία not by the conventional 'sin' but rather by 'error' or 'mistake'. As I wrote in the essay *Exegesis and Translation*, <https://perceiverations.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/exegesis-and-translation-partsone-two.pdf>

<quote>

One of the prevalent English words used in translations of the New Testament, and one of the words now commonly associated with revealed religions such as Christianity and Islam, is sin. A word which now imputes and for centuries has imputed a particular and at times somewhat strident if not harsh moral attitude, with sinners starkly contrasted with the righteous, the saved, and with sin, what is evil, what is perverse, to be shunned and shudderingly avoided.

One of the oldest usages of the word sin – so far discovered – is in the c. 880 CE translation of the c. 525 CE text *Consolatio Philosophiae*, a translation attributed to King Ælfred. Here, the Old English spelling of syn is used:

þæt is swiðe dyslic & swiðe micel syn þæt mon þæs wenan scyle be Gode

The context of the original Latin of Boethius is *cogitare*, in relation to a dialogue about goodness and God, so that the sense of the Latin is that it is incorrect – an error, wrong – to postulate/claim/believe certain things about God. There is thus here, in Boethius, as in early English texts such as *Beowulf*, the sense of doing what was wrong, of committing an error, of making a mistake, of being at fault; at most of overstepping the bounds, of transgressing limits imposed by others, and thus being 'guilty' of such an infraction, a sense which the suggested etymology of the word *syn* implies: from the Latin *sons, sontis*.

Thus, this early usage of the English word *syn* seems to impart a sense somewhat different from what we now associate with the word *sin*, which is why in my translation of John, 8.7 I eschewed that much overused and pejorative word in order to try and convey something of the numinous original:

So, as they continued to ask [for an answer] he straightened himself, saying to them: "Let he who has never made a mistake [Ἀναμαρτητος] throw the first stone at her."

ὥς δὲ ἐπέμενον ἐρωτῶντες αὐτόν, ἀνέκυψεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὁ ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ' αὐτήν βαλέτω λίθον.

Jesus here is not, in my view, sermonizing about sin, as a puritan preacher might, and as if he is morally superior to and has judged the sinners. Instead, he is rather gently and as a human pointing out an obvious truth about our human nature; explaining, in v.11, that he has not judged her conduct:

ἡ δὲ εἶπεν· οὐδεὶς, κύριε. εἶπεν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· οὐδὲ ἐγώ σε κατακρίνω· πορεύου, ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε

[And] she answered, No one, my Lord. Whereupon Jesus replied "Neither do I judge [κατακρίνω] you, therefore go, and avoid errors such as those."

</quote>