

At this point I believe that we must decide that the translators of the King James Version were wrong. Careful examination of the passage indicates that it would have been better to translate the word as "land" in all nine instances.

Someone may object that the Hebrew language must be very strange if the same word may mean "earth" and describe the entire planet, or "land" and simply refer to one country, but instances where there is similar variety in the use of words are found in all languages. Since the possible combinations of meanings differ from one language to another, no translation can ever be a complete substitute for careful study of an original.

Thus our English word "earth" may indicate the entire planet, or merely a small amount of soil, as in 2 Kings 5:17, where Naaman asked for "two mules' burden of earth" (though, in the Hebrew, this latter idea requires a different word). Similarly our English word "land" may refer to a particular country, and is often so used in the King James Version, or it may refer to the dry land in contrast to the ocean, thus having two distinct meanings, but never meaning the entire globe. Again, the word "country" may be used for a particular national area, or it may be used for a rural district as opposed to the city. English words have at least as many possible interpretations as Hebrew words, but the combinations are different.

This Hebrew word may mean "earth" and indicate the entire planet, or it may mean "land," and designate only a section of the world, such as one country, or one specific area. The Hebrew Bible contains abundant evidence of both possibilities. On the one hand, it is used in the statement in Genesis 1:1 that "God created the heaven and the earth," and in many similar passages, as in Isaiah 37:20, 45:18, and 66:1. On the other hand, it is regularly used in such phrases as "the land of Egypt," "the land of Israel, or "the land of Assyria." Even without a qualifying word, it often refers simply to one country. Striking evidence of this is contained in Isaiah 36:17-18, "Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of