

Shayla: Is it sandals or bolts at Deuteronomy 33:25?

Midrash:

- [Deuteronomy 33:25 NKJV](#) Your sandals shall be iron and bronze; As your days, so shall your strength be.
- [Deuteronomy 33:25 HCSB](#) May the bolts of your gate be iron and bronze, and your strength last as long as you live.

The word that the translators are struggling with is *min'al* (Strong's # 4515). It looks like this:

מִנְעַל

The difficulty lies in the fact that this is the ONLY occurrence of the word. The word “bolt” is pronounced *manool* (Strong's 4514). It looks like this:

מִנְעוּל

As you can see, they look similar but not enough for one to be *necessarily* a variant of the other.

A colloquialism is a short informal phrase that has come to mean something not immediately apparent by a literal translation of the words. For example “hit the road” doesn't mean that you will actually strike the asphalt. What it means is “I'm going to leave.” If I were to try to translate that literally into French “frappez la route” it wouldn't make any sense. Instead, I use a French colloquialism “prendre la route” which literally means “take the road” but is used in the same sense – “I'm going to leave.”

All the translators understand that “man'al barzel ve nech'osheth” is a colloquialism that basically means “you'll be strong” or “you'll be unbeatable.” The problem is that they just aren't sure what the exact colloquialism is!

The translators of the KJV apparently chose to associate it with:

- [Revelation 1:15 HCSB](#) His feet like fine bronze fired in a furnace, and His voice like the sound of cascading waters.

What it looks like they did was to take the general meaning of the colloquialism, find another like it (even though it's a different language i.e. Greek) and give us that. The translators of the Bible in Basic English, the Douay Rheims, the World English Bible, and Young's Literal Translation also take the same approach.

What it looks like pretty much everybody else did (I even checked French Louis Segonde, Martin and Darby, as well as Korean), was to take the word that seemed closest to min'al (i.e. manool) and decided that one must be a variant of the other.

Personally, I prefer this (more popular) choice because it fits with another blessing given in the same language. We see it here passively:

- [Psalms 147:13 HCSB](#) For He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your children within you.

And actively:

- [Genesis 22:17 HCSB](#) I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the gates of their enemies.
- [Genesis 24:60 HCSB](#) They blessed Rebekah, saying to her: Our sister, may you become thousands upon ten thousands. May your offspring possess the gates of their enemies.

- [Psalms 107:15-16 HCSB](#) Let them give thanks to the LORD for His faithful love and His wonderful works for the human race. (16) For He has broken down the bronze gates and cut through the iron bars.

You may ask “why iron and copper?” It is apparently plentiful in that area.

- [Deuteronomy 8:9 HCSB](#) a land where you will eat food without shortage, where you will lack nothing; a land whose rocks are iron and from whose hills you will mine copper.
- [Joshua 22:8 HCSB](#) he said, "Return to your homes with great wealth: a huge number of cattle, and silver, gold, bronze, iron, and a large quantity of clothing. Share the spoil of your enemies with your brothers."
- [1 Chronicles 22:14 HCSB](#) "Notice I have taken great pains to provide for the house of the LORD--3,775 tons of gold, 37,750 tons of silver, and bronze and iron that can't be weighed because there is so much of it. I have also provided timber and stone, but you will need to add more to them.
- [Job 28:2 HCSB](#) Iron is taken from the ground, and copper is smelted from ore.

That fact has caused some Jewish commentators to lean more toward the idea that the blessing was simply indicating what kind of land Asher would have. So, some Jewish commentators take it to mean that there will be so much iron and copper in the area that they'll be literally walking on it; thus the “shoes of iron and copper.”

I understand what they're saying, and I agree that Asher has been blessed with tremendous mineral wealth. I just don't see that being the appropriate translation here. It's a few too many jumps for me. I agree with the NASB, Holman, and NET in their rendering of “bolts of your gates.”