

## The Translation of “عسى” in the Glorious Qur'ān into English

Lect. Yasir Younis Abdulwahid  
Branch of Public Policy  
College of Political Science  
University of Mosul

Lect. Osama Hameed Ibraheem  
Department of Translation  
College of Arts  
University of Mosul

Received: 19/12/2012 ; Accepted: 31/1/2013

### Abstract:

This research investigates the translation of “عسى” in the Glorious Qur'ān into English. It attempts to show the way translators have rendered it, and then, based on the accredited Qur'ānic interpretations, correcting the translations of the ayas concerned. The research hypothesizes that treating single “عسى” the same way as the collocated “عسى” leads to erroneous translation. From analyzing five translations of “عسى” in the Glorious Qur'ān, it has been found that the translators produced inaccurate translations as far as collocated “عسى” is concerned. In order to achieve better understanding on the part of the TL reader, revising these translations is recommended.

### ترجمة “عسى” في القرآن الكريم الى الإنكليزية

م. أسامة حميد إبراهيم  
قسم الترجمة  
كلية الآداب

م. ياسر يونس عبد الواحد  
فرع السياسة العامة  
كلية العلوم السياسية

جامعة الموصل

### ملخص البحث:

يَتَحَرَّى البَحْثُ تَرْجَمَةَ "عَسَى" فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْكَرِيمِ إِلَى اللُّغَةِ الْإِنْكِلِيزِيَّةِ وَيُحَاوِلُ إِظْهَارَ طَرِيقَةِ تَرْجَمَتِهَا مِنْ قِبَلِ الْمُتَرْجِمِينَ ، ثُمَّ تَصْحِيحَ الْآيَاتِ الْمَعْنِيَّةِ إِعْتِمَادًا عَلَى التَّفَاسِيرِ الْقُرْآنِيَّةِ الْمَوْثُوقَةِ . يَفْتَرِضُ البَحْثُ أَنَّ مُعَامَلَةَ "عَسَى الْمَنْفَرَدَةِ" بِنَفْسِ طَرِيقَةِ مُعَامَلَةِ "عَسَى الْمُتَصَاحِبَةِ" تَقُودُ إِلَى تَرْجَمَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ . وَبِتَحْلِيلِ خَمْسِ تَرْجَمَاتٍ لِلْقُرْآنِ الْكَرِيمِ وَجَدَ أَنَّ الْمُتَرْجِمِينَ خَرَجُوا بِتَرْجَمَاتٍ غَيْرِ دَقِيقَةٍ عَلَى قَدْرِ تَعَلُّقِ الْأَمْرِ بِاسْتِخْدَامِ "عَسَى" الْمُتَصَاحِبَةِ ، وَلِتَحْقِيقِ فَهْمٍ أَفْضَلَ لَدَى الْقَارِئِ الْهَدَفِ يُوصَى بِتَنْقِيحِ هَذِهِ التَّرْجَمَاتِ .

## 1-1- Statement of the Problem

This research investigates the translation of “عسى” in the Glorious Qur’ān into English. “عسى” comes in two cases, either single or collocated. What we mean by "single" is that "عسى" occurs without collocating with Allah or His terms of majesty; otherwise, it is collocated. According to scholars, in the first case, i.e. single "عسى", it denotes hope and uncertainty, whereas in the second one, i.e. collocated "عسى", it denotes obligation.

Since there is a big difference between hope and uncertainty on the one hand and obligation on the other, then mistranslating "عسى" will definitely and inevitably lead to misunderstanding on the part of the TL readers.

## 1-2- Aims of the Research

This research attempts to show the way translators have rendered “عسى” in the Qur’ānic ayas, where it has collocated with the utterances of “الله”, “ربكم”, “ربي”, “ربه”, and “ربنا”; and then, based on the accredited Qur’ānic interpretations, correcting the translations of the ayas concerned.

## 1-3- Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that, treating single “عسى” the same way as the collocated “عسى” leads to erroneous translation, since, according to Qur’ān scholars and interpreters, the first one gives the meaning of hope and probability, while the second one refers to certainty.

## 1-4- Procedure and Data Collection

The following procedure will be carried out:

- 1- Selecting the ayas from different Qur’ānic suras, which comprise the total 13 occurrences of the collocated “عسى” in the Glorious Qur’ān.
- 2- Presenting the authoritative interpretations for the selected ayas, on which the TL text analysis will be based.
- 3- Presenting 5 translations for each of the selected ayas.
- 4- Analyzing the English translations of the selected ayas, based on the authoritative interpretations mentioned in (2).
- 5- Suggesting a new translation in the light of the analyses achieved, in case no accurate translation is found.

## 2. Definition of “عسى”

Before defining "عسى", it is useful to have a look at the following table, which shows its occurrences in the Glorious Qur’ān:

No.	"عسى" Construction	No. of Occurrences	Sura	Ayas no.
1	Single "عسى"	14	Al-Baqara	216 (twice)
			An-Nisā'	19
			Al-A'rāf	185

			At-Tawba	18
			Yousuf	21
			Al-Isrā'	51,79
			Al-Qahf	24
			Mariam	48
			An-Naml	72
			Al-Qasas	9, 67
			Al-Hujurāt	11
2	Collocated "عسى الله"	6	An-Nisā'	84, 99
			Al-Mā'ida	52
			At-Tawba	102
			Yousuf	83
			Al-Mumtahana	7
3	Collocated "عسى ربكم"	3	Al-A'rāf	129
			Al-Isrā'	8
			At-Tahrīm	8
4	Collocated "عسى ربي"	2	Al-Qahf	40
			Al-Qasas	22
5	Collocated "عسى ربه"	1	At-Tahrīm	5
6	Collocated "عسى ربنا"	1	Al-Qalam	32
<b>Total</b>			<b>27</b>	

The Table above shows that the total no. of occurrences of "عسى" in the Glorious Qur'ān is 27, with different constructions, either single or collocated. Single "عسى" has 14 occurrences, whereas collocated "عسى" has 13 occurrences comprising "عسى الله", "عسى ربكم", "عسى ربي", "عسى ربه", and "عسى ربنا" with 6,3,2,1,1 occurrences respectively.

It is worth noting that in aya no. 79 of the sura of Al-Isrā':

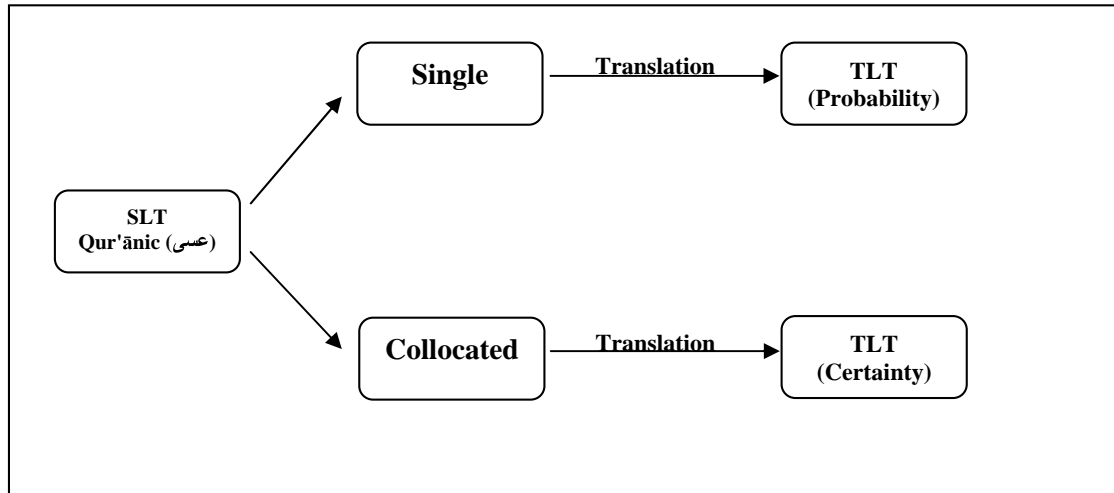
﴿ وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا ﴾ (79) سورة الإسراء

"عسى" is also considered to be, although indirectly, a collocated one, here "عسى ربك". Yet in this aya we have foregrounding and backgrounding.

Defining "عسى", Ibnu Mandhūr (1993:15/54), Ar-Rāziyy (1997:113) and Ar-Rāziyy (1999:209) write that "عسى" refers to appropinquation "المقاربة". Wright (1996:106,107) puts it under the category of appropinquation verbs "أفعال المقاربة" that imply hope of occurrence. Among

many other scholars, Al-Farāhīdiyy (n.d.:200), Ar-Rāziyy (1979:4/317), Al-Mursiyy (2000:2/220), Al-Harawiyy (2001:3/55), and Al-Fairūzabadiyy (2005:1311) argue that if "عسى" is collocated with Allah or His terms of majesty then it refers to certainty and obligation on His part, otherwise it refers to hope and uncertainty.

Accordingly, we can propose the following diagram as a model for translating "عسى" in the glorious Qur'ān:



### 3. Probability in English and Arabic

Quirk et al. (1985:588) state that to imply probability we can use unmodified *well* preceded by *can*, *could*, *may*, or *might*; provided that they are put in a positive declarative clause. They give the following example:

It	{	may might can could	well be true that he beat her
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Aziz (1989:77) says that probability is realized in English by means of the modal verbs; although being also expressed non-verbally by certain nouns (there is a probability that ...), adjectives (it is probable that...), and adverbs (probably he is ...). Greenbaum (1996:80) puts probability under modality that refers to the factuality of what is said; the judgment is then grammaticalized through modal auxiliaries.

Aziz (1989: 84) discusses probability in Arabic, saying that the main lexical items used to express it are the verb يُرَجَّحُ, the prepositional phrase من الأرجح, and the constructions الأرجحُ and أغلبُ الظن. He gives the following examples:

It is probable that Ali is at home	يُرَجَّحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَلِيٌّ فِي الدَّارِ
My brother will probably arrive from Baghdad tomorrow	من الأرجح أن يصل أخى غداً من بغداد
The match will most probably have finished by now	

أغلبُ الظنَّ/الأرجحُ/ أن يكونَ السياقُ قد انتهى الآنَ

For more details on English and Arabic probability, see Al-Tamimi (2012).

### 3. Text Analysis

In this research five translations of the Glorious Qur'an have been considered to analyze the way translators have rendered the Qur'anic ayas that contain "عسى" in its two forms, the single and the collocated. The translations chosen are those of Pickthall (1930), Daryabadi (1957), Ali (1984), Ahmed & Ahmed (1995), and Qaribullah & Darwish (2001).

#### SL Text (1):

﴿فَقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ إِلَّا نَفْسَكَ وَحَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَكُفَّ بَأْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاللَّهُ أَشَدُّ بَأْسًا وَأَشَدُّ تَنْكِيلًا﴾ (84) سورة النساء

#### TL Texts:

##### 1- Pickthall (1930)

So fight (O Muhammad) in the way of Allah Thou art not taxed (with the responsibility for anyone) except for thyself and urge on the believers. Peradventure Allah will restrain the might of those who disbelieve. Allah is stronger in might and stronger in inflicting punishment.

##### 2- Daryabadi (1957)

Fight thou therefore in the way of Allah thou are not tasked except for thy own soul, and persuade the believers; belike Allah will withhold the violence of those who disbelieve. And Allah is stronger in violence and Stronger in chastising.

##### 3- Ali (1984)

So fight on in the way of God (irrespective of the others). You cannot compel anyone except your own self; but urge the believers to fight. It may well be that God will keep back the might of the infidels, for God's might is greater, and severe His punishment.

##### 4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)

So fight/kill in God's sake, you are not burdened/imposed upon except (with) yourself, and instigate/urge/encourage the believers, maybe that God prevents/stops those who disbelieved's might/power, and God (is) stronger power/might, and stronger severe exemplary punishment.

##### 5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)

Therefore, fight in the way of Allah. You are only responsible for yourself. Urge the believers on, in order that Allah may restrain the might of those who disbelieve. Allah is stronger in might, and stronger in punishment.

#### Discussion:

In this aya Allah the Almighty orders the Prophet and his companions to fight the disbelievers for the sake of Allah, and that the Prophet has to encourage the believers to do so (Al-Balkhiyy (2002: 393/1)). Then Allah the Almighty guarantees that the triumph will be on the side of the believers through mentioning the phrase "عسى الله" in the aya, which refers to obligation

or compulsiveness on the part of Allah, because Allah the Almighty once promises something, He fulfills it (Al-Ālūsiyy(n.d.:5/97), Al-Nisabori (1994:2/88), As-Sam’āniyy (1997:1/454), and Al-Baidhāwiyy (1997:2/87)).

The following table shows the translations of “عسى الله” in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	Peradventure Allah will ...
Daryabadi	Belike Allah will ...
Ali	It may well be that God ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	maybe that God ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	Allah may ...

As shown in the table above, all translators fail to give a meaning for “عسى الله” that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: “Allah shall ward off the might of the disbelievers...”

### SL Text (2):

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا فَأُولَئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا \* إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانَ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا \* فَأُولَئِكَ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا ﴾ (97-99) سورة النساء

### TL Texts:

#### 1- Pickthall (1930)

Lo! as for those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves, (the angels) will ask: In what were ye engaged? They will say: We were oppressed in the land. (The angels) will say: Was not Allah's earth spacious that ye could have migrated therein? As for such, their habitation will be hell, an evil journey's end. \* Except the feeble among men, and the women, and the children, who are unable to devise a plan and are not shown a way. \* As for such, it may be that Allah will pardon them. Allah is ever Clement, Forgiving.

#### 2- Daryabadi (1957)

Verily unto those whom the angels carry off in death, while they are yet oppressors of their souls, they will say: what were ye in? They will say: Weakened were we in the land. They Will say: was not Allah's land wide so that ye could migrate thereto. These: their resort is hell an evil retreat! \* Excepting the weak ones among men, women and children, unable to find a stratagem and not guided to a way. \* These: belike Allah will pardon them, and Allah is ever Pardoning, Forgiving.

**3- Ali (1984)**

As for those whose souls are taken by the angels (at death) while in a state of unbelief, they will be asked by the angels: "What (state) were you in?" They will answer: "We were oppressed in the land." And the angels will say: "Was not God's earth large enough for you to migrate?" Their abode will be Hell, and what an evil destination! \* But those who are helpless, men, women and children, who can neither contrive a plan nor do they know the way, \* May well hope for the mercy of God; and God is full of mercy and grace.

**4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)**

That those the angels make them die, unjust (to) themselves, they said: "In what you were/have been?" They said: "We were weakened in the Earth/land." They said: "Was not God's Earth/land wide/spacious you emigrate in it." So those, their shelter/refuge (is) Hell, and it was a bad/evil end/destination. \* Except the weakened from the men, and the women, and the children, they are not able (of a) solution (means) and nor they be guided a way/path. \* So those, maybe God that He forgives/pardons on them, and God was/is often forgiving, (a) forgiver.

**5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)**

And the angels who take those who wronged themselves will say: 'In what condition were you? ' They will reply 'We were oppressed in the land. ' They (the angels) will say: 'Was not the earth of Allah wide enough for you in order that you migrate in it? ' Those, their shelter will be Gehennam (Hell), an evil arrival. \* Except the men, women, and children, who, being abased have no means and they are unable to guide themselves to a way. \* Those, Allah may pardon them, He is the Pardoner, the Forgiver.

**Discussion:**

In this aya, Allah the Almighty blames and severely threatens those who did not embark on emigrating from Mecca, where they were oppressed by disbelievers, to Medina or Abyssinia, where they could have established their religion properly. Allah the Almighty exempts those weak people who were unable to emigrate, such as the elderly and the children, whom Allah shall forgive (As-Sābūniyy (1997:276) and As-Sa'diyy (2000:195)).

The following table shows the translations of “عسى الله” in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	it may be that Allah will ...
Daryabadi	belike Allah will ...
Ali	May well hope for ... God
Ahmed & Ahmed	maybe God ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	Allah may ...

The table above shows that all translators fail to translate “عسى الله” in a way that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.  
Suggested Translation: “Allah shall forgive them ...” .

### SL Text (3):

﴿ فَتَرَى الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ يُسَارِعُونَ فِيهِمْ يَقُولُونَ نَخْشَى أَنْ تُصِيبَنَا دَائِرَةٌ فَعَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ أَوْ أَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ فَيُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا أَسْرُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ نَادِمِينَ ﴾ (52) سورة المائدة

### TL Texts:

#### 1- Pickthall (1930)

And thou seest those in whose heart is a disease race toward them, saying: We fear lest a change of fortune befall us. And it may happen that Allah will vouchsafe (unto thee) the victory, or a commandment from His presence. Then will they repent of their secret thoughts.

#### 2- Daryabadi (1957)

Wherefore thou seest those in whose hearts is a disease hasten toward them saying: we fear lest there may befall us a reverse. But belike Allah may bring a victory or some affair from Himself; then they shall find themselves, for which they hide in their souls, remorseful.

#### 3- Ali (1984)

You will notice that those whose hearts are afflicted with sickness (of doubt) only hasten to join them and say: "We fear lest misfortune should surround us." It may well be that God may soon send (you) success, or other command of His. Then will they be repentant of what they had concealed in their hearts.

#### 4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)

So you see those who in their hearts/minds (is) sickness/disease, they rush/speed in (to) them, they say: "We fear that disaster strikes/hits us, so maybe that God comes with the victory or an order/matter from at Him." So they become on what they kept secret in themselves regretful.

#### 5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)

You see those in whose hearts is sickness racing with one another to come to them. They say: 'We fear lest a change of fortune should befall us. ' May Allah bring victory or make known His ordinance, then, they shall regret what they had hidden in themselves.

### Discussion:

In this aya, Allah the Almighty informs about those hypocrites who used to seek intimacy from Jews and Christians, explaining their stance that they are afraid that those disbelievers one day might have the upper hand over the Muslims, so the hypocrites would be on the safe side. On the contrary to the latter's expectations; Allah the Almighty makes the Muslims victorious over the disbelievers (Az-Zajjāj (1988:2/181), Al-Baghawiyy (1997:3/67), and As-Sa'diyy (2000:235)).



The following table shows the translations of “عسى الله” in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	and it may happen that Allah will ...
Daryabadi	But belike Allah may ...
Ali	It may well be that God may ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	maybe that God ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	May Allah ...

The table above shows that all translators fail to give a meaning for “عسى الله” that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: “Allah shall bring victory ...” .

#### SL Text (4):

﴿وَأَخْرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾  
(102) سورة التوبة

#### TL Texts:

##### 1- Pickthall (1930)

And (there are) others who have acknowledged their faults. They mixed a righteous action with another that was bad. It may be that Allah will relent toward them. Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful.

##### 2- Daryabadi (1957)

And others have confessed their faults; they have mixed up a righteous work with a not her vicious. Belike Allah will relent toward them; verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

##### 3- Ali (1984)

But there are others who admit their sins of mixing good deeds with evil. It may be that God will accept their repentance, for God is forgiving and kind.

##### 4- Ahmed and Ahmed (1995)

And others confessed/acknowledged because of their crimes, they mixed/mingled correct/righteous deeds work and other bad/evil, maybe/perhaps God that He forgives on them, that God (is) forgiving, merciful.

##### 5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)

There are others who have confessed their sins; they intermixed good deeds with another evil. It may be that Allah will turn towards them in mercy. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

## Discussion:

This aya was revealed when some people lagged behind the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and did not accompany him in Tabūk raid. They addressed themselves saying: “How come! We are staying here with women, while the Prophet and his companions are fighting the disbelievers”. Therefore, they repented from their mistake and tied themselves to a column in the mosque saying: “no one shall untie us except the Prophet Muhammad”. The Prophet did not accept to untie them until Allah the Almighty accepted their repentance and forgave them as this aya was revealed (Az-Zamakhshariyy (1987:2/306-307), Al-Baghawiyy (1997: 4/90), and Al-Baidhāwiyy (1997:3/96)).

The following table shows the translations of “عسى الله” in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	It may be that Allah will ...
Daryabadi	Belike Allah will ...
Ali	It may be that God will ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	maybe/perhaps God that ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	It may be that Allah will ...

As shown in the table above, all translators fail to give a meaning for “عسى الله” that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: “Allah shall accept their repentance ...” .

## SL Text (5):

﴿ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَصَبِّرْ جَمِيلٌ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴾ (83)

سورة يوسف

## TL Texts:

### 1- Pickthall (1930)

(And when they came unto their father and had spoken thus to him) he said: Nay, but your minds have beguiled you into something. (My course is) comely patience! It may be that Allah will bring them all unto me. Lo! He, only He, is the Knower, the Wise.

### 2- Daryabadi (1957)

He said: nay! yourselves have embellished for you an affair; so seemly patience! Belike Allah may bring them all unto me; verily He! only He Is the Knowing, the Wise.

### 3- Ali (1984)

"No," said (the father). "You have made up the story; but patience is best; God may bring them back to me. He is all-knowing and all-wise."

**4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)**

He (their father) said: "But your selves enticed/tolerated for you an order/command/matter/affair, so graceful patience, perhaps God that (He) brings them to me all together, that He (is) the knowledgeable, the wise/judicious."

**5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)**

'No' he (Jacob) said, 'your souls have tempted you to do something. But come sweet patience. Allah may bring them all to me. He alone is the Knowing, the Wise.'

**Discussion:**

In this aya, Prophet Jacob addresses his sons telling them that they were hiding something with regard to his sons Benjamin and Robel, in addition to Joseph whom he had lost previously. Then he asks Allah the Almighty to bring them all back using "عسى" (Al-Baghawiyy (1997:4/267), Al-Qasimiyy (1997:6/209), and Ibnu Kathīr (1998:4/347)).

That was actually fulfilled as all were finally brought together. Their reunion is mentioned in ayas number 99 and 100 the sura of Joseph:

﴿ فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ آوَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَبْوَيْهِ وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مَعِيَ إِنِّ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَرَفَعَ أَبْوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا وَقَالَ يَا أَبْتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُءْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾ ﴾

سورة يوسف

The following table shows the translations of “عسى الله” in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	It may be that Allah will ...
Daryabadi	Belike Allah may ...
Ali	God may ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	perhaps God that ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	Allah may ...

The table above shows that all translators fail to translate “عسى الله” in a way that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: “Allah shall bring them all to me ...” .

**SL Text (6):**

﴿ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَوْدَّةً وَاللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾ (7) سورة الممتحنة

**TL Texts:**

**1- Pickthall (1930)**

It may be that Allah will ordain love between you and those of them with whom ye are at enmity. Allah is Mighty, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

**2- Daryabadi (1957)**

Belike Allah may appoint between you and those of them whom ye hold as enemies affection. And Allah is Potent, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

**3- Ali (1984)**

It maybe that God will create love between you and your enemies. God is all-powerful, and God is forgiving, ever-merciful.

**4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)**

Maybe/perhaps that God makes/puts between you, and between those whom you made animosity with, from them, love/affection/friendship, and God (is) capable/able and God (is) forgiving, merciful.

**5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)**

It may be that Allah establishes love between you and those with whom you are at enmity. Allah is the Powerful, Allah is the Forgiving and the Most Merciful.

**Discussion:**

Since the early companions of the Prophet were very steadfast in their faith and stood firmly against the idolaters, even if they were their siblings and relatives, Allah the Almighty was calming the companions down that those, whom they were at dispute with, will one day embrace Islam and mix with them in kinship (Al-Ālūsiyy (n.d.:20/462), Al-Baghawiy (1997:8/95), and An-Nasafiyy (2005:4/195)).

The following table shows the translations of “عسى الله” in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	It may be that Allah will ...
Daryabadi	Belike Allah may ...
Ali	It may be that God will ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	Maybe/perhaps that God ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	It may be that Allah ...

As shown in the table above, all translators fail to translate “عسى الله” in a way that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: “Allah shall make intimacy between you and ...” .

**SL Text (7):**

﴿ قَالُوا أُوذِينَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَأْتِيَنَا وَمِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا قَالَ عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ (129) سورة الأعراف

**TL Texts:**

**1- Pickthall (1930)**

They said : We suffered hurt before thou camest unto us, `and since thou hast come unto us. He said: it may be that your Lord is going to destroy your

adversary and make you viceroys in the earth, that He may see how ye behave.

**2- Daryabadi (1957)**

They said: oppressed we have been ere thou camest unto us and since thou hast come unto us. He said: belike your Lord will destroy your enemy and establish you in their stead in the land, that he may see what wise ye act.

**3- Ali (1984)**

They said: "We were oppressed before you came, and have been since you have come to us." He answered: "It may well be that soon God may destroy your enemy and make you inherit the land, and then see how you behave".

**4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)**

They said: "We were mildly harmed from before that you came to us, and from after what you came to us." He said: "Maybe/perhaps (hopefully) your Lord, that He destroys/perishes your enemy and He makes you successors in the earth/Planet Earth/land, so He sees/watches how you do/work".

**5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)**

They replied: 'We were hurt before you came to us, and after you came to us. 'He said: 'Your Lord may destroy your enemies and make you inheritors in the land. Then He will see how you conduct yourselves'.

**Discussion:**

In this aya, the Children of Israel address Prophet Moses saying that they have been grieved before and after he has come to them, as Pharaoh used to afflict them with grievous torment, slaying their sons and sparing their women. Then Prophet Moses pacifies them that Allah shall terminate their adversary. That was actually fulfilled when they ruled the reign of Egypt in the period of the Prophets David and Solomon, controlling Jerusalem. Their foe, Pharaoh, was drowned in the sea with his soldiers (Al- Qurtubiyy (1964:7/263), Al-Qasimiyy (1997:5/170), and As-Sa'diyy (2000:300)).

The following table shows the translations of “عسى ربكم” in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	it may be that your Lord is going to ...
Daryabadi	belike your Lord will ...
Ali	It may well be that soon God may ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	Maybe/perhaps (hopefully) your Lord, that ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	'Your Lord may ...

The table above shows that all translators fail to translate “عسى ربكم” in a way that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Transaltion: “Allah shall devastate your enemy ...” .

**SL Text (8):**

﴿ عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عُدْنَا وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا ﴾ (8) سورة الإسراء

**TL Texts:****1- Pickthall (1930)**

It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if ye repeat (the crime) We shall repeat (the punishment), and We have appointed hell a dungeon for the disbelievers.

**2- Daryabadi (1957)**

Belike your Lord may yet have mercy on you; and if ye still revert, We will revert. And We have appointed Hell for the infidels a prison.

**3- Ali (1984)**

Your Lord may haply be merciful to you. But if you repeat it, We shall do the same. We have constituted Hell as prison for unbelievers.

**4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)**

Maybe/perhaps that your Lord has mercy upon you, and if you returned, We returned, and We made/put Hell confining/surrounding for the disbelievers.

**5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)**

Perhaps Allah will have mercy on you. But if you return, We will return. We have made Gehenna (Hell) a prison for the unbelievers.

**Discussion:**

In this aya Allah the Almighty addresses the Children of Israel saying that He shall show mercy unto them by saving them from Pharaoh and making them kings and rulers, but once they return to sins, He shall return to punishment and make Hell a prison for the disbelievers. This fact is expressed utilizing the phrase “عسى ربكم”. What happened actually is that, Allah sent the Prophet Mohammed to them. They paid the Jizyah to him with willing submission (Al-Qurtubiyy (1964:10/223), Ibnu 'Āshūr (1984:15/38), and As-Sam'āniyy (1997:3/221)).

The following table shows the translations of “عسى ربكم” in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	It may be that your Lord will ...
Daryabadi	Belike your Lord may yet ...
Ali	Your Lord may haply be ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	Maybe/perhaps that your Lord has ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	Perhaps Allah will ...

As shown in the table above, all translators fail to give a meaning for “عسى ربكم” that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: “Your God shall have mercy on you ...” .

**SL Text (9):**

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ (8) سورة التحريم

**TL Texts:**

**1- Pickthall (1930)**

O ye who believe! Turn unto Allah in sincere repentance! It may be that your Lord will remit from you your evil deeds and bring you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, on the day when Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will run before them and on their right hands: they will say: Our Lord! Perfect our light for us, and forgive us! Lo! Thou art Able to do all things.

**2- Daryabadi (1957)**

O ye who believe! turn Unto Allah with a sincere repentance. Belike your Lord will expiate from you your misdeeds and cause you to enter Gardens whereunder rivers flow, on the Day whereon Allah will not humiliate the prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will be running before them and on their right hands, and they will say: our Lord! perfect for us our light, and forgive us; verily Thou art over everything Potent.

**3- Ali (1984)**

O you who believe, turn to God truly in repentance. Perhaps your Lord may forgive your ills and admit you to gardens with rivers flowing by on the day when God will not humiliate the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will move in front of them and to their right, and they will say: "O Lord, perfect our light and forgive us. You have power over every thing."

**4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)**

You, you those who believed, repent to God, a sincere/honest repentance, maybe/perhaps your Lord that He covers/substitutes from you your sins/crimes, and He makes you enter treed gardens/paradises, the rivers/waterways flow from beneath it, a day/time God does not shame/scandalize (disappoint) the prophet and those who believed with Him, their light strives/moves quickly between their hands, and at their rights they say: "Our Lord complete for us our light, and forgive for us, that You are on everything capable/able".

**5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)**

Believers, turn to Allah in sincere repentance. Your Lord may acquit you of your sins, and admit you to Gardens underneath which rivers flow on a Day when Allah will not degrade the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will run before them and on their right hands, and they will say: 'Our Lord, complete our light for us and forgive us. Surely, You have power over all things'.

## Discussion:

In the beginning of this aya Allah the Almighty addresses the believers, sermonizing them to turn to Him with sincere repentance, so that He could definitely forgive them their sins and admit them to gardens under which rivers flow (Al-Qurtubiyy (1964:18/200), Ash-Shawkāniyy (1993:5/303), and Ibnu Kathīr (1998:8/191)).

The following table shows the translations of “عسى ربكم” in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	It may be that your Lord will ...
Daryabadi	Belike your Lord will ...
Ali	Perhaps your Lord may ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	maybe/perhaps your Lord that ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	Your Lord may ...

The table above shows that all translators fail to give a meaning for “عسى ربكم” that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: “Your God shall acquit your sins ...” .

### SL Text (10):

﴿ فَعَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن يُؤْتِيَنِي خَيْرًا مِّنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتُصْبِحَ صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا ﴾ (40) سورة الكهف

#### 1- Pickthall (1930)

Yet it may be that my Lord will give me better than thy garden, and will send on it a bolt from heaven, and some morning it will be a smooth hillside.

#### 2- Daryabadi (1957)

Then belike my Lord will vouchsafe unto me something better than thy garden and send thereon a belt from the heaven that it becomes a plane slippery.

#### 3- Ali (1984)

Yet, my Lord may haply give me a garden better than yours, and He may send a thunder-bolt, from the skies and in the morning it will be a barren plain.

#### 4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)

So maybe/perhaps my Lord that He gives/brings me better than your treed garden and He sends on it thunder storms/small arrows from the sky/space, so it becomes/becomes in the morning slippery/slithery dust.

#### 5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)

Maybe my Lord will give me a garden better than yours, and send down a thunderbolt from heaven, so that in the morning it will be a slope of dust.



## Discussion:

This aya and its eight antecedent ayas tell the story of two men, a believer and a disbeliever, who both inherit a fortune. One of them, the believer, spends his money for the sake of Allah through doing good deeds, whereas the other buys lands and gardens. The disbeliever debates with the believer. He starts to be arrogant and proud of himself and the wealth he has as compared to the believer. The latter asks Allah the Almighty to reward him in the hereafter with a reward better than the disbeliever's gardens and lands. Through using "عسى", the believer is confident that Allah the Almighty will respond to his request. He also asks Allah to devastate the disbeliever's gardens with a punishment from the heaven, so that they become barren (Az-Zamakhshariyy (1987:2/720-723), Al-Baidhāwiyy (1997:3/280-282), and As-Sa'diyy (2000:476,477)).

The following table shows the translations of "عسى ربي" in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	it may be that my Lord will ...
Daryabadi	belike my Lord will ...
Ali	my Lord may haply ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	maybe/perhaps my Lord that ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	Maybe my Lord will ...

As shown in the table above, all translators fail to give a meaning for "عسى ربي" that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: " My God shall give me a garden better than yours ...".

## SL Text (11):

﴿ وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تَلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسَى رَبِّي أَن يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴾ (22) سورة القصص

### 1- Pickthall (1930)

And when he turned his face toward Midian, he said: Peradventure my Lord will guide me in the right road.

### 2- Daryabadi (1957)

And when he betook himself toward Madyan, he said: belike my Lord will guide me even way.

### 3- Ali (1984)

Then as he turned his face to Midian, he said: "Maybe my Lord will show me the right way."

### 4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)

And when he aimed/turned towards Madyan, he said: "Maybe/perhaps my Lord that He guides me the road's/path's straightness."

### 5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)

And when he turned his face towards Midian, he said: 'It may be that my Lord will guide me on the right way.'

### Discussion:

This aya tells about Prophet Moses who was heading to Madian, a town near Egypt, after having mistakenly killed somebody in Egypt. Moses asks Allah the Almighty to guide him through his way to Madian. He uses "عسى ربي" seeking definite fulfillment. Allah the Almighty guides Moses until he reaches his destination. Although Moses was barefooted, with no food and no money, he managed to reach Madian alone through Allah's guidance (Al-Qurtubiyy (1964:13/266), Az-Zamakhshariyy (1987:3/400), Al-Baidhāwiyy (1997:4/174), and Ibnu Kathīr (1998:6/203,204)).

The following table shows the translations of "عسى ربي" in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	Peradventure my Lord will ...
Daryabadi	belike my Lord will ...
Ali	Maybe my Lord will ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	Maybe/perhaps my Lord that ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	It may be that my Lord will ...

The table above shows that all translators fail to give a meaning for "عسى ربي" that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: "My God shall guide me to the right road ...".

### SL Text (12):

﴿عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُ إِن طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَن يُبَدِّلَهُ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِّنْكَ مَسْلِمَاتٍ مُّؤْمِنَاتٍ قَانِتَاتٍ تَائِبَاتٍ عَابِدَاتٍ سَائِحَاتٍ ثَيِّبَاتٍ وَأَبْكَارًا﴾ (5) سورة التحريم

### TL Texts:

#### 1- Pickthall (1930)

It may happen that his Lord, if he divorces you, will give him in your stead wives better than you, submissive (to Allah), believing, pious, penitent, inclined to fasting, widows and maids.

#### 2- Daryabadi (1957)

Belike his Lord, if he divorces you, will give him in exchange wives better than you, Muslims, believers, devout, penitent, worshippers, given to fasting, both non-virgins and virgins.

#### 3- Ali (1984)

In case he divorces you, his Lord will give him better wives in return, who will be modest, true believers, obedient to God, repentant, observant of prayer and fasting, both widows and virgins.

#### 4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)

Maybe/perhaps his Lord if he divorced you that He exchanges/replaces for him wives better than you, Moslems/submitters, believers, worshipping humbly, repentant, worshipping, fasting and secluded in mosques (devout), divorced/widowed/non-virgin, and first borns/virgins.

#### 5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)

It may be that if he divorces you his Lord will give him in your place better wives than yourselves, women who have surrendered, believing, obedient, penitent worshippers and given to fasting; who were (previously) married, and virgins too.

#### Discussion:

In this aya, Allah the Almighty addresses the Prophet's wives preaching them that He is to replace them in case the Prophet divorces them. However, the wives had never been replaced because they had not been divorced. The mentioning of divorce in this aya is preceded by "عسى ربه". Some Qur'an interpreters say that in the whole Qur'an all occurrences of "عسى", which is collocated with "الله", "ربكم", or "ربه", refer to obligation by Allah, except in this aya it refers to probability. Other interpreters argue that it refers to obligation in this aya too, provided that it is connected with divorcing them. It is to be mentioned that the Prophet had not divorced them at all (Al-Qurtubiyy (1964:18/193), Ibnu 'Ashūr (1984:28/361), and Ash-Shawkāniyy (1993:5/299)).

The following table shows the translations of "عسى ربه" in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	It may happen that his Lord, ... ,will ...
Daryabadi	Belike his Lord, ... , will ...
Ali	his Lord will ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	Maybe/perhaps his Lord ... that ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	It may be that ... his Lord will ...

As shown in the table above, all translators, except for Ali, fail to give a meaning for "عسى ربه" that confirms with the interpretation of this aya. Ali uses "his Lord will give him..." which denotes certainty, however; using "shall" gives more emphasis on certainty.

Suggested Translation: "His God shall replace him with better wives in case he divorces you..."

#### SL Text (13):

﴿ عَسَىٰ رَبُّنَا أَنْ يُبَدِّلَنَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا رَاغِبُونَ ﴾ (32) سورة القلم

## TL Texts:

### 1- Pickthall (1930)

It may be that our Lord will give us better than this in place thereof. Lo! we beseech our Lord.

### 2- Daryabadi (1957)

Belike our Lord may exchange for us better garden than this; verily we are Unto our Lord beseechers.

### 3- Ali (1984)

Maybe our Lord will give us better than this. We turn to our Lord in supplication".

### 4- Ahmed & Ahmed (1995)

"Maybe/perhaps that our Lord exchanges/substitutes (for) us better than it, that we are to our Lord desiring/wishing."

### 5- Qaribullah & Darwish (2001)

It may be that our Lord will give us better than it in exchange. To our Lord we humbly turn.

## Discussion:

This aya tells the story of those people who owned a garden of colorful fruits. Allah the Almighty tested them to see whether they give charity out of this garden or not, but they did not. Allah devastated their garden. Afterwards they repented to Allah, asking him to replace their devastated garden by introducing their supplication with "عسى ربنا". Their repentance was actually accepted, as Allah replaced their garden with a better one (Al-Baidhāwiyy (1997:5/236), Al-Baghawiy (1997:8/197), and As-Sa'diyy (2000:880)).

The following table shows the translations of "عسى ربنا" in this aya:

Translator	Translation
Pickthall	It may be that our Lord will ...
Daryabadi	Belike our Lord may ...
Ali	Maybe our Lord will ...
Ahmed & Ahmed	Maybe/perhaps that our Lord ...
Qaribullah & Darwish	It may be that our Lord will ...

As shown in the table above, all translators fail to give a meaning for "عسى ربنا" that confirms with the interpretation of this aya.

Suggested Translation: "Our God shall replace us with ...".

## 4. Conclusion

From analyzing the translations of the Glorious Qur'an by Pickthall, Daryabadi, Ali, Ahmed & Ahmed, and Qaribullah & Darwish, for 13 sample ayas, it is found that the translators were unaware of the different denotations

of "عسى" in its two cases, the single, which shows probability, and the collocated, which shows certainty.

The following table shows the denotations, i.e. probability vs. certainty, given to the collocated "عسى" in the 13 Qur'ānic ayas translations:

Translator SL Text no.	Pickthall	Daryabadi	Ali	Ahmed & Ahmed	Qaribullah & Darwish
1	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
2	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
3	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
4	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
5	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
6	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
7	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
8	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
9	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
10	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
11	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability
12	probability	probability	certainty	probability	probability
13	probability	probability	probability	probability	probability

From the table above it becomes evident that collocated "عسى" has been incorrectly rendered in a way that denotes probability, instead of denoting certainty. The percentage of probability denotation is (100%) for four translations under study, the other translation, i.e. Ali's, achieved (92.3%). The following table shows the percentage for each translator:

Translator	Collocated "عسى" Denotation	
	Probability	Certainty
Pickthall	100 %	0 %
Daryabadi	100 %	0 %
Ali	92.3 %	7.7 %
Ahmed & Ahmed	100 %	0 %
Qaribullah & Darwish	100 %	0 %

Finally, it can be concluded that paying attention to the translation of "عسى" in its different forms in the Glorious Qur'ān plays a significant role in attaining better understanding on the part of the TL reader. Hence, revising the translations under study is strongly recommended.

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