60 PROBLEMS WITH THE IDEA OF "SATAN" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction: The purpose of this paper is to show Old Testament references to Satan as the superhuman enemy of God are in error. We will show the word satan actually means "adversary," a common morally neutral noun. In most English translations of the Bible, the same Hebrew word is translated in two very different ways. One is accurate and the other is not. "Adversary" is accurate and "Satan, the superhuman adversary of God," is not.

Foundational Facts regarding Strong's Word #7854 pronounced "saw-tawn'."
A) Each original Hebrew/Aramaic word of the Old Testament is keyed to Strong's numbering system.
B) The word translated as "satan" in the Old Testament is Strong's word #7854 and is defined as "opponent." (New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words).
C) "Opponent" is a morally neutral term—for example: opponents in tennis, debates, political elections, court, etc.
D) Strong's online Concordance for #7854 definition states: "satan: adversary, also the name of the superhuman adversary of God." (https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7854.htm)
E) "Adversary" is a morally neutral term and is synonymous with Strong's Dictionary definition "opponent".
F) Defining #7854 as the "superhuman adversary of God" using the word "also" signals it is an "add-on" which is illogically connected to the morally neutral word "adversary". Making satan into a proper noun "Satan", only adds to the illogic: adversary ≠ Satan.
G) When we see this kind of incoherence, we might suspect the translators are working to maintain a bias. In this case, it appears they are working to maintain the belief in an entity roughly equivalent to Yahweh's evil twin, acquired into Jewish thought during the Babylonian exile.
H) "Satan" is not found anywhere in Young's Literal Translation. The translator rightly used the word "Adversary." However, "adversary" should not be capitalized at the whim of the translator, since it is a common, not a proper noun.
I) The words "adversary" or "satan" should be accompanied with articles to denote their common noun status: the adversary, an adversary, the adversaries, the satan, a satan, the satans.

In most translations, Old Testament passages have the word, #7854, used for "adversary" AND "Satan," introducing error into the scriptures. It is not the role of translators to arbitrarily change the meaning of words to fit their assumptions.

#7854 IS TRANSLATED "SATAN". These translations are in error.
1. In Zechariah's vision, "Satan" (adversary #7854) was standing at Joshua's right hand.
"He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before Yahweh's angel, and Satan [the adversary #7854] standing at his right hand to be his adversary." Zech. 3:1 [WEB]

2. In Job, "Satan" (adversary #7854) is considered to be the personal name of the adversary of Job.
"It happened on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, that Satan (adversary #7854) came also among them to present himself before Yahweh." Job 2:1 [WEB]
"They [Job's brothers, sisters, acquaintances] comforted him [Job], and consoled him concerning all the evil that Yahweh had brought on him." Job 42:11

3. The Chronicle translator inadvertently construed Yahweh to be "Satan" (adversary #7854), that is, a "superhuman adversary of Himself." This is nonsense.
"The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them, saying, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.'" 2 Sam. 24:1
"Satan [adversary #7854] stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel." 1 Chr 21:1

#7854 IS TRANSLATED "ADVERSARY". These translations are correct.
4. The angel of the Lord was an adversary (satan #7854) to Balaam.
"God's anger was kindled because he [Balaam] went [to Moab]; and the angel of Yahweh placed himself in the way for an adversary [#7854 "satan"] against him…The angel of Yahweh said to him, 'Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come forth as an adversary [#7854 "satan"], because your way is perverse before me.'" Num 22:22, 32

5. The Philistine princes were afraid David would turn on them in battle and be an adversary (satan #7854) to the Philistines instead of a helpful mercenary.
"The princes of the Philistines were angry with him [Achish]; and…said to him, "Make the man [David]… go back to his place… lest in the battle he become an adversary (satan, #7854) to us." I Sam 29:4

6. The sons of Zeruiah were adversaries (satans #7854) to David.
David said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be adversary [satan #7854] to me?" 2 Sam. 19:22

7. David had rest and no more adversaries (satans #7854) to bother him.
"Now Yahweh…has given me rest… There is neither adversary [#7854 satan], nor evil occurrence." I Kgs 5:4

8. The Lord raised up adversaries (satans #7854), Hadad and Rezon, to oppose Solomon.
"Yahweh raised up an adversary [satan #7854] to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite…. God raised up an adversary [satan #7854] to him, Rezon the son of Eliada…He was an adversary [satan #7854] to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the mischief that Hadad [did]." I Kgs 11:14, 23-25

9. David wanted those who had betrayed him to be harassed by a wicked adversary (satan #7854).
"They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. Set you a wicked man over him: and let an accuser [#7854 satan] stand at his right hand." Ps. 109:6

CONCLUSION: We need to remember it is the original text of the Bible that is inspired, not translations and where they are in conflict, we must always adhere to the original language meaning. Following is an addendum where we list some scriptures that show there is simply no "room" for Satan in the Biblical cosmology.

ADDENDUM: YAHWEH THE ONLY POWER. NO ROOM FOR "SATAN."
1. "I am Yahweh, and there is no one else. I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create calamity. I am Yahweh, who does all these things." Is 45:5-7
2. "See now that I, even I, am he, there is no god with me. I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal. There is no one who can deliver out of my hand." Dt. 32:39
3. "Does the trumpet alarm sound in a city, without the people being afraid? Does evil happen to a city, and Yahweh hasn't done it?" Amos 3:6
4. "For the inhabitant of Maroth waits anxiously for good, because evil has come down from Yahweh to the gate of Jerusalem." Micah 1:12
5. "It was shown to you so that you might know that Yahweh is God. There is no one else besides him." Dt 4:35
6. "Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is one: 5 and you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." Dt 6:4-5
7. "Therefore you are great, Yahweh God. For there is none like you, neither is there any God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears." 2 Sam. 7:22
8. "That all the peoples of the earth may know that Yahweh, he is God. There is none else." I Kings 8:60
9. "For you are great, and do wondrous things. You are God alone." Ps 86 :10
10. "For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens." Ps 96:5
11. They [Job's brothers, sisters, acquaintances] comforted him [Job], and consoled him concerning all the evil that Yahweh had brought on him. Job 42:11
12. "Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be Yahweh's name." Job 1:21.
13. "Giving thanks always concerning all things [even apparent evil] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God, even the Father." Eph 5:20
14. "We know that all things [even apparent evil] work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28
15. "For whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." Heb. 12:6

Highly Recommended: *The Real Devil* by Duncan Heaster https://heaster.org/rd.pdf (no longer in print)
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