Deuteronomy 30:4: If any of thine be driven out unto the outermost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and thence will he fetch thee.

Even the Skeptic’s Annotated Bible missed this one. God gathering from the outermost parts of heaven? Sounds like He is not going to miss a trick. He will even pick up the Jewish astronaut and bring him back.

Or did you hear the one about the man in Michigan who is suing Zondervan and Thomas Nelson for $70 Million dollars for mistranslating *malakos* in the NIV and other current Bible translations as *homosexuality* in I Corinthians 6:9. By using the word homosexuality for *malakos* where is it listed as sin, it has made him an outcast from his family, caused him periods of physical discomfort and demoralization.
The KJV translates *malakos* as *effeminate*. Maybe that is more politically correct. *Malakos* is used only two other times in the New Testament (Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25) which references *soft clothing*. Only the wealthy and those associated with royalty could afford fabric that was *soft*. Jesus was making a contrast to John the Baptist who did not use his prophetic gifts to enrich himself. However in I Corinthians 6:9 it seems obvious that listing *soft clothing* as a sin does not seem to fit the profile of a horrible sin, so he must have been referring to something else. Thus our litigated friend is asking, why call it *homosexuality* and thus cause everyone to throw rocks at him?

To be sure he is representing himself in this legal case and probably knows he doesn’t stand a snow ball’s chance in summer time of prevailing, but he has found a chance to make a statement and claim his 15 minutes of fame.

Still he does make a good point about translations being opinion. Indeed translating *malakos* is an opinion. It is a translator’s best guess. But it is a good opinion or guess based upon how the word is used in extra Biblical sources and the use of proper exegetical principles. Still much of our translations, just as in science, medicine, and law are just man’s best guess.

This brings us to out attempts to translate Deuteronomy 30:4. How or why do we translate *bikeseh hashimayim* as *outermost parts of heaven*? Are we talking about space travel here? Or is it just a metaphor?
Remember, nothing is placed in the Bible by accident. Every note and detail has a reason for it being placed there. So there must be a reason why God is speaking of gathering the nation of Israel from the outermost parts of heaven. Bikeseh comes from the root kesah with the proposition in or Beth in front of it and literally means in the end or extremity. The following word hashimayhim is from the root shama’ which means heaven in a plural form preceded with a definite article, hence the heavens. It could sometimes be used to describe heaven as in our final resting place, but most often it is used to describe the sky or outer space. If the writer wanted to depict God gathering the Jews from the ends of the earth he would have said kesevi eres. But why the heavens or sky? Here is where opinion comes into play and like malakos, we are left with few alternatives in making an opinion or guess that makes sense.

We could say the writer is really prophetic and speaking of Jewish astronauts but even that stretch would not fit as these are outcast, in other words they are not in outer space by choice. You could say he is mixing in some extraterrestrials or space aliens. If you hold to that idea I know a good padded cell. Thus, we are left with just a metaphor, a poetic expression and a wonderful one at that. God will not only search out every corner to restore the ones he loves, but he will even look in the most unlikely places, like outer space.

Before I sent my book off to the publisher I went over it and over to find every possible spelling and grammatical error. Yet when the editor went over it she found many errors I overlooked and when it went through another editing process there were even more errors.
So too when God says he is seeking us, He wants there to be no doubt in our minds that he will search every corner and under every rock and will not miss a trick. He will even check in places he will not obviously find us, like in outer space. Our God is a very thorough, He doesn’t miss a trick like many of us fallible translators. We may think we covered every ground until some first year student pops up with something we overlooked. Nobody is going to find anything God overlooked.