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Table of Contents

unfoldingWord® Translation Notes	6
Judges	6
Introduction to Judges	7
Judges 1	9
Judges 2	46
Judges 3	70
Judges 4	102
Judges 5	127
Judges 6	159
Judges 7	200
Judges 8	226
Judges 9	262
Judges 10	320
Judges 11	339
Judges 12	380
Judges 13	396
Judges 14	422
Judges 15	443
Judges 16	464
Judges 17	496
Judges 18	510
Judges 19	542
Judges 20	573
Judges 21	622
unfoldingWord® Translation Academy	648
Abstract Nouns	649
Active or Passive	651
Apostrophe	654
Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information	656
Background Information	659
Biblical Distance	662
Biblical Money	665
Biblical Volume	667
Biblical Weight	671
Copy or Borrow Words	673
Direct and Indirect Quotations	675
Double Negatives	677
Doublet	679
Ellipsis	681
Euphemism	684
Exclamations	686
Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'	688
First, Second or Third Person	690
Forms of You	692
Go and Come	693
Hendiadys	695
How to Translate Names	698
Hyperbole	702

Hypothetical Situations	706
Idiom	709
Introduction of a New Event	711
Introduction of New and Old Participants	714
Irony	717
Litotes	720
Merism	722
Metaphor	724
Metonymy	730
Nominal Adjectives	732
Numbers	734
Order of Events	737
Ordinal Numbers	739
Parables	742
Parallelism	744
Personification	747
Poetry	749
Possession	752
Predictive Past	756
Quotes within Quotes	758
Rhetorical Question	761
Simile	764
Symbolic Action	767
Synecdoche	769
Translate Unknowns	771
unfoldingWord® Translation Words	774
covenant faithfulness, covenant loyalty, covenant love	775
curse, cursed, cursing	776
evil, wicked, unpleasant	778
faith	780
faithful, faithfulness, trustworthy	781
glory, glorious, glorify	783
god, false god, goddess, idol, idolater, idolatrous, idolatry	785
Holy Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit	787
inherit, inheritance, heir	789
judge, judgment	791
law, law of Moses, law of Yahweh, law of God	793
oppress, oppressed, oppression, oppressor, dominate	795
prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess	796
righteous, righteousness, unrighteous, unrighteousness, upright,	798
sin, sinful, sinner, sinning	800
test, tested, testing, testing in the fire	802
vow	803
Contributors	804
unfoldingWord® Translation Notes Contributors	804
unfoldingWord® Literal Text Contributors	810
unfoldingWord® Translation Academy Contributors	811
unfoldingWord® Translation Words Contributors	812
unfoldingWord® Translation Words Links Contributors	812



unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Judges

Introduction to Judges

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of Judges

History of the judges of Israel (1:1–16:31)
Introduction (1:1–3:6)
Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar (3:7–31)
Deborah and Barak (4:1–5:31)
Gideon (6:1–8:35)
Abimelech, Tola, and Jair (9:1–10:5)
Jephthah (10:6–12:7)
Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (12:8–15)
Samson (13:1–16:31)
The account of Micah and his idols (17:1–18:31)
The account of Gibeah; the other Israelites take revenge (19:1–21:25)

What is the Book of Judges about?

The Book of Judges tells of events that occurred after the Israelites settled in the Promised Land. The events in this book happened over a period of about 150 years.

This book describes how the Israelites repeatedly sinned against Yahweh during this time. They worshiped false gods and did the same wicked things as the peoples who lived around them. Therefore, God would allow enemies to defeat and oppress the Israelites. Eventually, the Israelites would call to Yahweh for help. Yahweh would then cause someone to help the Israelites defeat their enemies. This person was called a “judge.” The Israelites would live in peace until the judge died.

After that judge died, the Israelites would start sinning again. So this pattern of events would repeat.

How should the title of this book be translated?

This book traditionally has the title “Judges” because it gives accounts of some of the main leaders or judges in Israel before there were any kings over the people. Unless there are good reasons for following the title in other Bible versions, the translator should probably use the title “Judges” or a title such as “The Book about the Leaders in Israel.” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

What kind of leaders were the judges?

These were men and women whom God chose to help the Israelites defeat their enemies. After defeating their enemies, these leaders usually continued to help the people by deciding disputes among them. They also helped them make important decisions. Many of these leaders served all the people of Israel, but some of these leaders may have served only certain tribes.

What kind of society was Israel during the time of the judges?

During this time, the twelve tribes of Israel were independent of one another. They were not a unified nation with one ruler. The tribes would sometimes help each other when enemies were threatening them.

These tribes were descended from the same ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They shared in the same covenant with Yahweh.

What spiritual struggles did Israel experience during the time of the judges?

During this time, Israel struggled to remain faithful to Yahweh. The best judges encouraged Israel to be faithful to him, but some of the judges failed to do so. (See: [faithful](#), [faithfulness](#), [trustworthy](#))

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

What is the meaning of the phrase “in those days there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes”?

This phrase occurs twice in the book of Judges. Shorter versions of the phrase occur two other times. These phrases imply that the writer or editor of this book was alive at a later time when there was a king in Israel. They also seem to imply that the writer thought that things were not good in Israel because there was no king.

The translation of these phrases should imply to the reader that the book’s writer is looking back into the past.

What is the meaning of the phrase “to this day”?

The narrator used this phrase to refer to the time when he was writing. The translator should be aware that “to this day” refers to a time already passed. The translator must avoid giving the impression that the present day of the translation’s readers is meant. The translator might decide to say, “to this day, at the time when this is being written,” or, “to this day, at the time of writing.” This Hebrew phrase occurs in Judges 1:21, 26; 6:24; 10:4; 15:19; 18:12.

Judges 1

Judges 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

“After the death of Joshua”

This statement creates a seamless transition from the book of Joshua.

Special concepts in this chapter

Finishing the conquest of the Promised Land

Israel fought to clear the land of the Canaanites, but they also made treaties with other peoples and made some of them do hard labor. This was against God’s instruction to completely remove the Canaanite people from the land.

Judges 1:1

Connecting Statement:

The book of Judges continues the story about Joshua and is also the beginning of a new part of the story.

Yahweh

This is the name of God that he revealed to his people in the Old Testament. See the translationWord page about Yahweh concerning how to translate this.

ULT

¹ Now it happened that after the death of Joshua, the sons of Israel asked Yahweh, saying, "Who will go up for us first against the Canaanite, to fight him?"

will attack the Canaanites for us

The word "us" refers to the people of Israel, but not to Yahweh. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

Judges 1:2

Judah will attack

Here “Judah” represents the men of the tribe of Judah. Yahweh is commanding these men to attack first. Alternate translation: “The men of Judah must attack first” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

See

“Look” or “Listen” or “Pay attention to what I am about to tell you”

this land

This refers to the land where the Canaanites lived. Alternate translation: “the land of the Canaanites” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

² Yahweh answered, “Judah will go up, Behold, I have given the land into his hand.”

Judges 1:3

their brothers

“their fellow Israelites” or “their relatives”

Come up with us

The people of the tribes of Judah and Simeon were camped with the rest of the Israelite people in the valley of the Jordan River. The land given to Judah was in the hills above the valley. Some languages do not usually indicate whether people were going up or down. Alternate translation: “Come with us” or “Go with us”

ULT

³ Then Judah said to Simeon, his brother, “Go up with me into my allotted territory, and let us fight together against the Canaanite. I will fight likewise myself, with you in your allotted territory.” So Simeon went with him.

that was assigned to us ... that was assigned to you

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “that Yahweh assigned to us ... that Yahweh assigned to you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

We will likewise go with you

“We will also go with you” or “In the same way, we will go with you”

Judges 1:4

The men of Judah attacked

It is implied that the men of Simeon attacked with the men of Judah.
(See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

They killed ten thousand

“They killed about 10,000” or “They killed a large number” (See: [Numbers](#))

of them

“soldiers of the Canaanites and Perizzites” or “enemies”

Bezek

This is an area in the mountains of Canaan. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁴ Judah went up, and Yahweh gave the Canaanite and the Perizzite into their hand. They smote ten thousand men at Bezek.

Judges 1:5

Adoni-Bezek

This man was the leader of the army of the Canaanites and the Perizzites. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

they fought against him

Here “him” actually refers to Adoni-Bezek and his army. Alternate translation: “they fought against him and his army” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁵ They found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and they fought against him. They smote the Canaanite and the Perizzite.

Judges 1:6

pursued him

“chased him”

ULT

⁶ Then Adoni-Bezek fled, but they pursued after him. They seized him, and they chopped off the thumbs of his hands and the big toes of his feet.

Judges 1:7

Seventy kings

"70 kings" (See: [Numbers](#))

who had their thumbs and their big toes cut off

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "whose thumbs and big toes I told my men to cut off" or "whose thumbs and big toes we cut off" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

gathered their food from under my table

Forcing these kings to eat scraps of food represents all the ways that Adoni-Bezek humiliated these kings. Here "gathering" food represents eating it. Alternate translation: "ate scraps of food from under my table" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings with the thumbs of their hands and the big toes of their feet chopped off were gathering scraps of food beneath my table. Just as I have done, so God has repaid to me." Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there.

Judges 1:8

the city of Jerusalem and took it

Here “city” represents the people. Alternate translation: “the people who lived in Jerusalem and defeated them” (See: [Metonymy](#))

They attacked it

Here “it” refers to the city which represents the people of the city. Alternate translation: “They attacked the people of the city” (See: [Metonymy](#))

with the edge of the sword

“with the point of the sword.” Here “sword” represents the swords and other weapons that the soldiers used in battle. Alternate translation: “with their swords” or “with their weapons” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁸ The sons of Judah fought against Jerusalem and they took it. They smote it with the mouth of the sword and they sent the city into fire.

Judges 1:9

the men of Judah went down to fight

It was common to use the word “down” when it refers to traveling from Jerusalem. Alternate translation: “the men of Judah went to fight”

in the Negev

“in the southern Judean wilderness”

foothills

hills at the base of a mountain or mountain range

ULT

⁹ Afterwards, the sons of Judah went down to fight them, against the Canaanites living in the hill country region, the southern wilderness, and the western lowland.

Judges 1:10

the name of Hebron was previously Kiriath Arba

This is background information. Some people who first read this book had probably heard of Kiriath Arba but did not know that it was the same as the city that they called Hebron. (See: [Background Information](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Then Judah went down to the Canaanite that lived in Hebron (the name of Hebron before was Kiriath Arba), and they smote Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai

These are the names of three Canaanite leaders of Hebron. Each leader represents his army. Alternate translation: “Sheshai, Ahiman, Talmai, and their armies” (See: [How to Translate Names](#) and [Metonymy](#))

Judges 1:11

the name of Debir was previously Kiriath Sepher

The author probably wrote this because his readers knew the city as Debir. But at the time Israel attacked it, it was called Kiriath Sepher. Alternate translation: “which used to be called Kiriath Sepher” (See: [Background Information](#))

was previously

“was in times past” or “was at an earlier time”

ULT

¹¹ He went from there to those living in Debir; the name of Debir before was Kiriath Sepher.

Judges 1:12

Whoever attacks Kiriath Sepher and takes it

Here “Kiriath Sepher” represents the people. Alternate translation: “Whoever attacks and defeats the people of Kiriath Sepher and takes their city” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Aksah

This is the name of Caleb’s daughter. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

12 Then Caleb said, “Whoever will smite Kiriath Sepher and capture it, I will give him Aksah, my daughter, for a wife.”

Judges 1:13

Othniel, son of Kenaz

These are names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹³ Othniel, the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb younger than him, captured it, so he gave him Aksah his daughter for a wife.

Judges 1:14

she urged him

“Aksah urged Othniel”

ULT

14 Now it happened that at her coming she incited him to ask for a field from her father. She descended from atop the donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What can I do for you?”

Judges 1:15

Give me a blessing

“Do a favor for me” or “Do this for me”

Since you have given me the land of the Negev

Caleb gave Aksah in marriage to Othniel, so she lived with Othniel in the city that he had captured in the Negev. The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “Since you have given me in marriage to live in the Negev” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Since you have given me the land

This implies that Caleb did give her the field when she asked him for it (verse 14). She is now asking for springs of water in addition to that field. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

15 Then she said to him, “Give me a blessing. Although you have given me the land of the Negev, you shall also me springs of waters.” So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

Judges 1:16

of Moses' father-in-law

"of the father of Moses' wife"

father-in-law the Kenite went up

"father-in-law, who was one of the Ken people, went up"

went up from the City of Palms ... into the wilderness

"left the City of Palms ... and went into the wilderness"

City of Palms

This is another name for the city of Jericho. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Arad

This is the name of a city in Canaan. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

16 The sons of the Kenite, the father-in-law of Moses, went up from the city of palm trees with the sons of Judah, to the wilderness of Judah, which is in the south country of Arad. So he went and he dwelt with the people.

Judges 1:17

the men of Simeon their brothers

Here “brothers” means relatives who were in another tribe of Israel.

Zephath

This is the name of a city in Canaan. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

The name of the city was called Hormah

After the Israelites destroyed Zephath, they changed its name to “Hormah.” The name “Hormah” means “complete destruction.” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

17 Then Judah went with Simeon his brother and they smote the Canaanite dwelling in Zephath. So they devoted it to destruction and they called the name of the city Hormah.

Judges 1:18

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

18 Judah also captured Gaza and the territory of it, Ashkelon and the territory of it, and Ekron and the territory of it.

Judges 1:19

Yahweh was with the people of Judah

Here “was with” means that Yahweh helped the people of Judah.
(See: [Idiom](#))

plains

a very large area of level, treeless ground

ULT

19 Now it happened that Yahweh was with Judah and he took possession of the hill country, but he did not dispossess those dwelling in the valley because of their chariotry of iron.

Judges 1:20

Hebron was given to Caleb (like Moses had said)

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Moses had given Hebron to Caleb” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

three sons of Anak

The leaders of the people groups are used to refer to the entire group. Alternate translation: “three sons of Anak and their people” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Anak

This is the name of a man. Anak and his descendants were famous for being very tall. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

²⁰ They gave Hebron to Caleb just as Moses had directed, and he dispossessed from there the three sons of the Anak.

Judges 1:21

to this day

“until now.” This refers to the time the book of Judges was written.

ULT

21 But the Jebusite dwelling in Jerusalem, the sons of Benjamin did not dispossess. So the Jebusite have dwelt with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem until this day.

Judges 1:22

The house of Joseph

Here “house” represents descendants. Manasseh and Ephraim were sons of Joseph, and the “house of Joseph” can refer to the descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim. Alternate translation: “The descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim” or “The men of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²² Likewise, the house of Joseph went up against Bethel, even they, and Yahweh was with them.

to attack Bethel

Here “Bethel” represents the people who live in Bethel. (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 1:23

spy

to get information secretly

the city that was formerly called Luz

This is background information. Some people who first read this book had probably heard of Luz but did not know that it was the same as the city that they called Bethel. (See: [Background Information](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

²³ The house of Joseph sent out spies to assess Bethel; the name of the city before was Luz.

Judges 1:24

spies

people who get information secretly

ULT

²⁴ The observers saw a man going out from the city, and they said to him, "Show us, please, the entrance of the city, and we will extend kindness to you."

Judges 1:25

they attacked the city

Here “city” represents the people. Alternate translation: “they attacked the people of the city” (See: [Metonymy](#))

with the edge of the sword

“with the point of the sword.” Here “sword” represents the swords and other weapons that the soldiers used in battle. Alternate translation: “with their swords” or “with their weapons” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

get away

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “escape” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁵ So he showed them the entrance of the city, and then they smote the city with the mouth of the sword, but they let the man and all his family go free.

Judges 1:26

Luz

This new town started in the land of the Hittites was named after the town of Luz, near Bethel, that the man had left.

which is its name to this day

“which is still its name.” Here “to this day” refers to the time when the book of Judges was written.

ULT

26 Then the man went to the land of the Hittites and he built a city. He called its name Luz, which is its name until this day.

Judges 1:27

Beth Shan ... Taanach ... Dor ... Ibleam ... Megiddo

These are names of cities. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

because the Canaanites were determined to live in that land

To “determine” is to firmly decide something. Alternate translation:
“because the Canaanites firmly decided not to leave that land”

ULT

²⁷ But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth Shan and its daughters, or Taanach and its daughters, or the one dwelling in Dor and its daughters, or those dwelling in Ibleam and its daughters, or those dwelling in Megiddo and its daughters, because the Canaanite had resolved to dwell in that land.

Judges 1:28

When Israel became strong

Here “Israel” represents the people. Alternate translation: “When the people of Israel became stronger” (See: [Metonymy](#))

they forced the Canaanites to serve them with hard labor

“they forced the Canaanites to do hard work for them”

ULT

28 Now it happened that when Israel became strong, he imposed tribute upon the Canaanite, but he did not take possession of him.

Judges 1:29

Ephraim did not

Here “Ephraim” the men or the soldiers of the tribe of Ephraim. (See: [Metonymy](#))

Gezer

The name of one of the cities in the Ephraim area. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

29 Neither did Ephraim dispossess the Canaanite who dwelled in Gezer, so the Canaanite dwelled in Gezer in the midst of him.

Judges 1:30

Zebulun did not drive out

Here “Zebulun” represents the men or the soldiers of the tribe of Zebulun. (See: [Metonymy](#))

Kitron ... Nahalol

These are names of cities in the land of Canaan. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

but Zebulun forced

Here “Zebulun” represents the people of the tribe of Zebulun. (See: [Metonymy](#))

hard labor

“difficult labor”

ULT

³⁰ Zebulun did not dispossess those dwelling in Kitron, or those dwelling in Nahalol, so the Canaanite dwelled in his midst. But they were subject to tribute.

Judges 1:31

Asher did not drive

Here “Asher” represents the men or the soldiers of the tribe of Asher. (See: [Metonymy](#))

Akko ... Sidon ... Ahlab, Akzib, Helbah, Aphek ... Rehob

These are names of cities in the land of Canaan. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

³¹ Asher did not dispossess those dwelling in Akko, or those dwelling in Sidon, or Ahlab, or Akzib, or Helbah, or Aphek, or Rehob.

Judges 1:32

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³² So the Asherite dwelled in the midst of the Canaanite who dwelled in the land, because he did not dispossess him.

Judges 1:33

Beth Shemesh ... Beth Anath

These are names of cities. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were forced into hard labor for Naphthali

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “the people of Naphtali forced the people of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath to work for them as slaves” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³³ Naphtali did not dispossess those dwelling in Beth Shemesh, or those dwelling in Beth Anath. So he dwelled in the midst of the Canaanite who dwelled in the land. However, those dwelling in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were subject to tribute to them.

Judges 1:34

not allowing them to come down

“stopping them from coming down”

plain

a very large area of flat land without trees

ULT

³⁴ The Amorite pressed the sons of Dan to the hill country, for he did not permit him to go down into the valley.

Judges 1:35

Mount Heres

This is the name of a large hill on which the city of Aijalon was built.
(See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Aijalon ... Shaalbim

These are names of cities. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

³⁵ The Amorite resolved to dwell at Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim, but the hand of the house of Joseph became heavy and they were subject to tribute.

the military might of the house of Joseph conquered them

“the tribes of people who descended from Joseph were able to conquer them because of their powerful army”

house of Joseph

Here “house” represents descendants. Manasseh and Ephraim were sons of Joseph, and the “house of Joseph” can refer to the descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim. Alternate translation: “the descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim” or “the men of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 1:36

the hill of Akrabbim

This was a pass southwest of the Dead Sea. It is also called the "Scorpion Pass." (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Sela

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

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³⁶ The border of the Amorite was from the ascent of Akrabbim, from the cliff and upward.

Judges 2

Judges 2 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Yahweh tests Israel

Yahweh said, "Because this nation has broken the terms of my covenant." Completely removing the Canaanites from the land was a test from Yahweh. While Yahweh displayed covenant faithfulness, Israel did not. (See: [test, tested, testing, testing in the fire](#) and [covenant faithfulness, covenant loyalty, covenant love](#))

Judges 2:1

angel of Yahweh

This could mean: (1) “angel who represents Yahweh” or (2) “messenger who serves Yahweh” or (3) it may refer to Yahweh himself, who looked like an angel as he talked to a person. Either one of these meanings would explain the angel’s use of “I” as if Yahweh himself were talking.

went up from Gilgal to Bokim

“left Gilgal and went to Bokim”

Bokim

This is what the Israelites named this place in 2:5 after the angel rebukes the people. “Bokim” means “crying.” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

and said

It is understood that the angel of Yahweh is speaking to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “and said to the people of Israel” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

brought you up from Egypt

“led you from Egypt”

your fathers

“your ancestors” or “your forefathers”

break my covenant with you

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “fail to do what I said I would do for you” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹ The messenger of Yahweh went up from the region of Gilgal to the region of Bokim, and said, “I am leading you up from Egypt, and I have brought you to the land that I have sworn to your fathers. I have said, ‘I will not break my covenant with you for eternity.’

Judges 2:2

you have not listened to my voice

Here “voice” represents what Yahweh said. Alternate translation: “you have not obeyed my commands” (See: [Metonymy](#))

What is this that you have done?

This question is asked to cause the people of Israel to realize they have disobeyed Yahweh and will suffer because of it. Alternate translation: “You have done a terrible thing.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

² You must not cut a covenant with those dwelling in this land. Their altars you must surely tear down.’ But you have not heeded my voice. What is this you have done?

Judges 2:3

General Information:

The angel of Yahweh continues to speak to the people of Israel.

So now I say, 'I will not ... trap for you.'

This has a quotation within a quotation. This direct quotation can be stated as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "So now I tell you that I will not ... trap for you.'" (See: [Quotes within Quotes](#) and [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

ULT

³ Furthermore, I have said, 'I will not drive them out from before you, but they will be against you as adversaries, and their gods will be against you as a snare'."

become thorns in your sides

The Canaanites troubling the Israelites is spoken of as if the Canaanites would be thorns in the side of the Israelites. Alternate translation: "cause you trouble" (See: [Metaphor](#))

thorns

sharp pieces of wood up to 7 centimeters long that stick out from some plants

their gods will become a trap for you

The Israelites worshiping the Canaanite gods is spoken of as if the false gods were a hunter's trap that catches an animal and causes it harm. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Judges 2:4

shouted and wept

“cried many tears”

ULT

⁴ Now it happened that when the messenger of Yahweh spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people lifted up their voice and wept.

Judges 2:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ So they called the name of that place Bokim, and they offered a sacrifice there to Yahweh.

Judges 2:6

Now when Joshua

Here “Now” is used here to mark a break in the main story line. Here the narrator begins a summary that explains how the generations of Israelites after Joshua sinned and worshiped false gods so that Yahweh punished them, but then he would send judges to rescue them. This summary ends in 2:23.

ULT

6 Then Joshua dismissed the people, and the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.

when Joshua ... of their land

The events of 1:1-2:5 happened after Joshua died. This is recounting events that happened at the end of the book of Joshua. (See: [Background Information](#))

to the place assigned

You may want to help your readers by stating who assigned this place to them. Alternate translation: “to the place Yahweh gave them” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 2:7

The background information that begins with the words “Now when Joshua” in verse 6 continues. (See: [Background Information](#))

during the lifetime

This means the time that someone lived. Alternate translation: “during the life”

the elders

Here this means the men who helped lead Israel, participating in matters of social justice and in religious matters such as maintaining the law of Moses.

outlived him

This means to live longer than someone else. Alternate translation: “lived longer than he did”

ULT

⁷ The people served Yahweh all the days of Joshua and all of the days of the elders who had prolonged their days after Joshua, who had seen all of the great deeds of Yahweh that he had done for Israel.

Judges 2:8

The background information that begins with the words “Now when Joshua” in verse 6 continues. (See: [Background Information](#))

Joshua son of Nun ... died at the age of 110 years old

The background information that begins with the words “Now when Joshua” in verse 6 ends. The events of 1:1-2:5 happened after Joshua died. (See: [Background Information](#))

ULT

⁸ Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died a son of one hundred ten years.

Nun

This is the name of a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

110 years old

“one hundred and ten years old” (See: [Numbers](#))

Judges 2:9

he was assigned

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “that God gave him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Timnath Heres

This is the name of an area of land. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Mount Gaash

This is the name of a mountain. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁹ Then they buried him within the border of his inheritance in Timnath Heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, to the north of Mount Gaash.

Judges 2:10

All that generation was also gathered to their fathers

The phrase “was also gathered to their fathers” means that as the people of that generation died, their souls went to the same place as their ancestors who died before them. It is a polite way of saying they died. (See: [Euphemism](#))

fathers

Here this means the ancestors of a certain person or people group.

grew up

“grew older” or “became older”

who did not know Yahweh

Here “did not know” means they had not experienced Yahweh or his power the way the previous generation had.

ULT

¹⁰ When all of that generation had also been gathered to his fathers, another generation rose up after them who did not know Yahweh or even the deed that he had done for Israel.

Judges 2:11

what was evil in the sight of Yahweh

The sight of Yahweh represents Yahweh's judgment or evaluation.
Alternate translation: "what was evil in Yahweh's judgment" or "what Yahweh considered to be evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 The sons of Israel did the wickedness in the sight of Yahweh and they served the Baals.

Baals

This is the plural of Baal. While "Baal" was generally the name of one false god, the word was also used for various other gods that were often worshiped along with Baal. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Judges 2:12

They broke away from Yahweh

The Israelites no longer obeying Yahweh is spoken of as if they physically broke away from him and left him. (See: [Metaphor](#))

their fathers

“their ancestors” or “their forefathers”

They went after other gods

The Israelites starting to worship false gods is spoken of as if the Israelites walked and went after the false gods. (See: [Metaphor](#))

bowed down to them

This is an act of worship and giving honor to someone. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

They provoked Yahweh to anger

“They caused Yahweh to become angry”

ULT

12 Thus they forsook Yahweh, the God of their fathers, the One Who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods from the gods of the people groups who were around them, and they bowed down to them. They provoked Yahweh to anger.

Judges 2:13

Ashtoreths

This is the plural of Ashtoroth, who was worshiped as a goddess in many different forms. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

13 They forsook Yahweh and they served the Baal and the Ashtoreths.

Judges 2:14

The anger of Yahweh burned against Israel

The anger of Yahweh is described as burning like a fire. Alternate translation: "Yahweh became very angry with the people of Israel" (See: [Metaphor](#))

he gave them to the raiders who stole their possessions from them

"he let raiders steal their possessions"

He sold them as slaves who were held by the strength of their enemies around them, so they could no longer defend themselves against their enemies

Yahweh allowing the enemies to take the Israelites as slaves is spoken of as if he sold them into slavery. The phrase "who were held by" can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "He allowed their enemies to conquer them and take them as slaves, and they could no longer resist their powerful enemies" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

14 Then the anger of Yahweh burned against Israel, so he gave them into the hand of plunderers, and they plundered them. He surrendered them into the hand of their enemies from all around, so that they were not able any longer to stand before their enemies.

Judges 2:15

Yahweh's hand was against them to defeat them

Here "hand" represents Yahweh's power. Alternate translation: "Yahweh helped their enemies defeat them" (See: [Metonymy](#))

they were in terrible distress

"they were suffering terribly"

ULT

¹⁵ In every way, whenever they went out the hand of Yahweh was against them for calamity, just as Yahweh had spoken and just as Yahweh had sworn to them. Thus he pressed them exceedingly.

Judges 2:16

Then Yahweh raised up judges

Yahweh appointing persons to be judges is spoken of as if he were raising or lifting the persons up. (See: [Metaphor](#))

out of the hand of those

Here “hand” refers to power. Alternate translation: “from the power of the enemies” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

16 Then Yahweh raised up judges, and they saved them from the hand of their plunderers.

Judges 2:17

they would not listen to their judges

“they would not obey their judges”

gave themselves like prostitutes to other gods and worshiped them

The people betraying Yahweh and worshiping other gods is spoken of as if the people were prostitutes. Alternate translation: “betrayed him by worshiping false gods” (See: [Simile](#))

their fathers

“their ancestors” or “their forefathers”

ULT

17 Even to their judges they would not listen. For they pursued adulterously after other gods and they bowed down to them. They turned away quickly from the way that their fathers had walked. They did not do likewise to heed the commands of Yahweh.

Judges 2:18

When Yahweh raised up judges

Yahweh appointing persons to be judges is spoken of as if he raised or lifted up the persons. (See: [Metaphor](#))

judges for them ... rescued them

The word “them” refers to the Israelites.

the hand of their enemies

Here “hand” refers to power of the enemies to hurt Israel. Alternate translation: “the power of their enemies” (See: [Metonymy](#))

all the days the judge lived

“as long as the judge lived”

pity

to have compassion for someone or something

as they groaned

The sound made by a person who suffers is used to describe the pain of the Israelites as they suffer. Alternate translation: “as they suffered” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

18 When Yahweh raised up judges for them, Yahweh would be with the judges and he would save them from the hand of their enemies all of the days of the judges. For Yahweh would become remorseful on account of their groaning from the presence of those tormenting them and oppressing them.

Judges 2:19

they would turn away

The people no longer obeying Yahweh is spoken of as if they would physically turn away from Yahweh. (See: [Metaphor](#))

their fathers

“their ancestors” or “their forefathers”

They would go after other gods to serve them and worship them

The Israelites worshiping other gods is spoken of as if they were walking and going after other gods. Alternate translation: “They would serve and worship other gods” (See: [Metaphor](#))

They refused to give up any of their evil practices or their stubborn ways

“They refused to stop doing evil things and being stubborn.” This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: “They continued doing evil things and being stubborn” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

19 Now it would happen that at the death of the judge, they would turn back and behave corruptly more than their fathers, walking after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them. They did not drop any of their evil deeds or their shameless behavior.

Judges 2:20

The anger of Yahweh burned against Israel

The anger of Yahweh is described as burning like a fire. See how you translated this phrase in [Judges 2:14](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

this nation has broken

Here “nation” represents the people. Alternate translation: “these people have broken” or “the Israelites have broken” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

20 As a result the anger of Yahweh burned against Israel, and he said, “In that this nation transgressed my covenant that I had commanded their fathers, but they have not heeded my voice,

Judges 2:21

any of the nations

Here “nations” represents the people groups that lived in Canaan before the Israelites. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

21 I also will not continue to drive out anyone out of their presence from the nations that Joshua left when he died.

Judges 2:22

they will keep the way of Yahweh and walk in it

How Yahweh wants people to live or behave is spoken of as if it were a way or road. A person obeying Yahweh is spoken of as if they were walking in his way. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²² in order to test Israel by them, whether they are observing the way of Yahweh, walking in them just as their fathers observed, or not."

Judges 2:23

did not drive them out quickly and give them into the hand of Joshua

These two phrases mean the same thing and can be combined.
Alternate translation: "he did not let Joshua quickly conquer them and drive them out" (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

²³ So Yahweh allowed those nations to stay, not dispossessing them hastily and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

into the hand of Joshua

Here "hand" is a metonym for power, and "Joshua" represents himself and his army. Alternate translation: "into the power of Joshua and his army" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

Judges 3

Judges 3 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

The people worship false gods

Israel worshiped idols and false gods. Because of this, Yahweh allowed Aram and Moab to rule over them. In the period of Judges, when Israel sinned, they were often placed under the rule of a foreign power. (See: [god](#), [false god](#), [goddess](#), [idol](#), [idolater](#), [idolatrous](#), [idolatry](#) and [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“Blew a trumpet”

When Ehud “blew a trumpet,” he was calling all of the men to come help him fight. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 3:1

Now Yahweh

Here “Now” begins a new section of the story.

these nations

This refers to the people groups that the narrator will list in 3:3.

who had not experienced any of the wars fought in Canaan

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “who had not fought in any of the wars in Canaan” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹ Now those nations which Yahweh allowed to remain in order to test Israel by them, all who had not known any of the wars of Canaan,

Judges 3:2

He did this to teach warfare to the new generation of the Israelites who had not known it before

This breaks from the main story line. The narrator gives background information about why Yahweh left some of the people groups in Canaan. Alternate translation: “Yahweh left nations among the

Israelites to teach the young men who had not fought in battle before how to fight” (See: [Background Information](#))

ULT

² only for the sake of the generations of the sons of Israel knowing, to teach them warfare, only who formerly had not experienced them,

Judges 3:3

the five kings

These five kings represent themselves and their people. Alternate translation: “the five kings and their people” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Mount Baal Hermon

This is the highest mountain in Israel. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Hamath Pass

This is the name of an area at the northern boundary of Canaan. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

³ the five governors of the Philistines, and all of the Canaanite, the Sidonian, and the Hivite dwelling in the mountain of Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon as far as Lebo Hamath.

Judges 3:4

These nations were left

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Yahweh left these nations in Canaan” or “Yahweh allowed these nations to continue to live in Canaan” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

as a means

“as a way”

whether they would ... gave their ancestors

The words “they” and “their” refer to the people of Israel.

the commands he gave

“the commands Yahweh gave”

ULT

⁴ They were to test Israel by them, to know whether they would heed the commandments of Yahweh, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

Judges 3:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ So the sons of Israel settled in the midst of the Canaanite, the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Judges 3:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁶ Then their daughters they took for themselves as wives, and their daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods.

Judges 3:7

what was evil in the sight of Yahweh

The sight of Yahweh represents Yahweh's judgment or evaluation. See how you translated this in [Judges 2:11](#). Alternate translation: "what was evil in Yahweh's judgment" or "what Yahweh considered to be evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

forgot Yahweh their God

Here "forgot" is an idiom that means "they stopped obeying." (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁷ So the sons of Israel did this evil in the eyes of Yahweh and they forgot Yahweh their God. They served the baals and the asherahs.

Judges 3:8

the anger of Yahweh was set on fire

Yahweh becoming very angry is spoken of as if his anger were something that could be set on fire. Alternate translation: “Yahweh became very angry” (See: [Metaphor](#))

sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim

Allowing the people of Israel to be conquered is spoken of as if Yahweh sold them to Cushan-Rishathaim. Alternate translation: “allowed Cushan-Rishathaim and his army to defeat them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim

Here “hand” is a metonym that represents power or control. Also, “Cushan-Rishathaim” is a synecdoche that represents himself and his army. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

Cushan-Rishathaim

This is the name of a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Aram Naharaim

This is the name of a country. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁸ Therefore, the anger of Yahweh blazed against Israel, so he sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram Naharaim. The sons of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years.

Judges 3:9

Yahweh raised up someone

Yahweh appointing someone to do a special work for him is spoken of as if Yahweh raised or lifted up the person. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Othniel ... Kenaz

See how you translated these men's names in [Judges 1:13](#).

ULT

⁹ When the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel, and he delivered them: Othniel, the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb younger than him.

Judges 3:10

empowered him

This phrase means that Yahweh helped Othniel to have and develop the qualities he needed to be a great leader.

he judged Israel

Here “judged” means he led the people of Israel.

he went out to war

Here “he” refers to Othniel who represents himself and the army of Israel. Alternate translation: “Othniel and the Israelite soldiers went to fight against the army of Cushan-Rishathaim” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Yahweh gave him victory over Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram

Here “Cushan-Rishathaim” represents his army. Alternate translation: “Yahweh helped the Israelite army defeat the army of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

The hand of Othniel

Here “hand” is a metonym for army. Alternate translation: “The army of Othniel” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

10 The spirit of Yahweh came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went forth to battle and Yahweh gave Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram, into his hand. Thus his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim.

Judges 3:11

The land had peace

“The land” is used to refer to the people who lived in the land.
Alternate translation: “The people lived peacefully” (See: [Metonymy](#))

forty years

“40 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

11 So the land had tranquility forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Judges 3:12

what was evil in the sight of Yahweh

The sight of Yahweh represents Yahweh's judgment or evaluation. See how you translated this in [Judges 2:11](#). Alternate translation: "what was evil in Yahweh's judgment" or "what Yahweh considered to be evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Yahweh gave strength to Eglon king of Moab

The abstract noun "strength" can be stated as an adjective. Alternate translation: "Yahweh made Eglon king of Moab strong" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

to Eglon king of Moab to overpower the Israelites

Here "Eglon king of Moab" represents himself and his army. Alternate translation: "to Eglon king of Moab and his soldiers as they attacked the Israelite army" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Eglon

This is the name of a king. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

12 Then the sons of Israel started again to do this evil in the eyes of Yahweh. So Yahweh strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab against Israel, because they did this evil in the eyes of Yahweh.

Judges 3:13

the City of Palms

This is another name for the city of Jericho. See how you translated this in [Judges 1:16](#).

ULT

13 Then he mobilized to himself the sons of Ammon and Amalek and he went and attacked Israel, and they took possession of the city of the palm trees.

Judges 3:14

eighteen years

“18 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

¹⁴ So the sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

Judges 3:15

called out to Yahweh

Here this means to shout or speak loudly to someone far away. It can also mean to ask someone for help, especially God.

raised up someone

Yahweh appointing someone to do a special service for him is spoken of as if he raised or lifted up the person. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ehud ... Gera

These are names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

left-handed

Ehud was better able to hold a sword with his left hand.

ULT

15 When the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a man impeded in his right hand. The sons of Israel sent tribute by his hand to Eglon, the king of Moab.

Judges 3:16

one cubit

If it is necessary to use a modern measurement of length, here are two ways of doing it. Alternate translation: “46 centimeters” or “about one half meter” (See: [Biblical Distance](#))

he strapped it on under his clothing on his right thigh

“he tied it to his right thigh under his clothing”

thigh

the part of the leg between the knee and the hip

ULT

16 Then Ehud made for himself a sword and it had two edges, a span was its length. He bound it on from beneath his clothing on his right thigh.

Judges 3:17

Now Eglon was a very fat man

Here “Now” is used here to mark a break in the main story line. Here the narrator tells background information about Eglon. (See: [Background Information](#))

ULT

17 Then he bought the tribute near to Eglon, the king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.

Judges 3:18

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

18 Now it happened that when he had completed bringing over the tribute, he sent away the people, the bearers of the tribute.

Judges 3:19

when he reached the place where the carved images were made near Gilgal

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “when he arrived at the place near Gilgal where people made carved images” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁹ But he himself turned back from the quarries which were near the Gilgal, and he said, “I have a private message for you, O king.” He said, “Silence!” So all those who were standing around him went out from around him.

Judges 3:20

in the coolness of the upper room

This is a room above the lower level that was used for rest and to remain cool during the hot part of the day.

The king got up out of his seat

Standing up was a sign of honoring God will listening to his message. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

20 So Ehud came to him. Now he was sitting in the roof chamber in the coolness, which was for him alone. Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you," and he rose up from upon the seat.

Judges 3:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ Then Ehud stretched out his left hand and took the sword from upon his right thigh, and he thrust it into his belly.

Judges 3:22

The tip of the sword came out of his back

“The sharp end of the sword came out of his back”

ULT

²² Also the handle went in following the blade, and the fat closed up over the handle because he did not pull the sword out of his belly. Then he proceeded to the vestibule,

Judges 3:23

porch

an outside room with low walls and a roof covering

ULT

²³ and Ehud went out to the porch and he closed the doors of the roof chamber behind him and locked them.

Judges 3:24

Surely he is relieving himself

This is a polite way to speak about a person having a bowel movement (defecating) or urinating. (See: [Euphemism](#))

ULT

²⁴ After he had gone out, his servants came. They inspected and behold, the doors of the roof chamber were locked. So they said, "Surely he is covering his feet in the chamber in the coolness."

Judges 3:25

until they felt they were neglecting their duty

They waited until they became worried that something was wrong and it was their duty to open the doors to their king's private room.

took the key and opened them

"took the key and opened the doors"

ULT

²⁵ They waited until it was inappropriate, but behold, he was not opening the doors of the roof chamber. So they took the key and they opened them, and behold, their majestic lord had fallen to the floor, dead.

Judges 3:26

While the servants were waiting ... Ehud escaped

This tells what happened before the servants opened the doors to the upper room and found the king dead. Alternate translation: “Meanwhile, as the servants were still waiting outside of the upper room ... Ehud escaped” (See: [Order of Events](#))

Seirah

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

²⁶ Meanwhile Ehud had escaped during their tarrying and he passed beyond the quarries, then he fled to Seirah.

Judges 3:27

When he arrived

You may want to help your readers by stating where he arrived.
Alternate translation: "When he arrived in Seirah" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

27 Now it happened that at his coming in, he blew on the shofar in the hill country of Ephraim. Then the sons of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was before them.

Judges 3:28

General Information:

Ehud speaks to the people of Israel in Ephraim.

for Yahweh is about to defeat your enemies

Yahweh helping the Israelites to defeat their enemies is spoken of as if Yahweh were a warrior who would fight and defeat their enemies. (See: [Metaphor](#))

captured the fords

“gained control of the fords”

fords

the areas of a river where it is shallow and easy to walk across to the other side

did not allow anyone to cross

“did not let anyone cross”

ULT

28 Then he said to them, “Follow after me, for Yahweh has given your enemies, Moab, into your hand.” So they went down after him and they captured the fords of the Jordan opposite Moab. Thus they did not allow anyone to cross over.

Judges 3:29

ten thousand men

“10,000 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

capable men

“able men” or “men able to fight well”

ULT

²⁹ So they routed Moab at that time, about ten thousand men. All were robust and all were men of strength, but not anyone escaped.

Judges 3:30

Moab was subdued by the strength of Israel

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “the Israelite army defeated the Moabites” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the strength of Israel

Here “strength” represents the Israelite army. (See: [Metonymy](#))

the land had rest

Here “land” represents the people. Alternate translation: “the Israelites lived peacefully” (See: [Metonymy](#))

eighty years

“80 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

³⁰ Moab was subdued on that day under the hand of Israel, and the land was tranquil eighty years.

Judges 3:31

judge

God appointed judges to lead the people of Israel in times of trouble after they entered the Promised Land and before they had kings. Often judges rescued the Israelites from their enemies.

Shamgar

The name of a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Anath

The name of a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

600 men

“six hundred men” (See: [Numbers](#))

a stick used to goad cattle

Cattle farmers would poke their cattle with a sharp stick to make them move. AT “a stick used to urge cattle to move” or “a stick used to direct cattle”

He also delivered Israel from danger

The word “danger” refers to enemies that tried to harm the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “He also delivered the people of Israel from their enemies” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

31 After him was Shamgar, the son of Anath, and he smote Philistines, 600 men with a cattle prod. Thus he also delivered Israel.

Judges 4

Judges 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapters 4 and 5 form one section about Barak and Deborah.

Special concepts in this chapter

Barak's leadership

At this time, it was very unusual for a woman to be a leader, especially a military leader. Barak lacked the strength to go into battle without Deborah. This indicates that Barak was a poor leader. If a woman won the battle for him, it would have brought Barak shame. It also indicates that Deborah was very well respected. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 4:1

Ehud

See how you translated this man's name in [Judges 3:15](#).

what was evil in the sight of Yahweh

The sight of Yahweh represents Yahweh's judgment or evaluation. See how you translated this in [Judges 2:11](#).
Alternate translation: "what was evil in Yahweh's judgment" or "what Yahweh considered to be evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ Then the sons of Israel resumed once again to do this evil in the eyes of Yahweh, after Ehud died.

Judges 4:2

Yahweh sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan

Here “hand” refers to Jabin’s power over Israel. Yahweh’s decision to give Jabin power over them is spoken of as if Yahweh had sold them to Jabin. Alternate translation: “Yahweh allowed them to be defeated by the power of Jabin king of Canaan” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² So Yahweh handed them over into the hand of Jabin, the king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Now the commander of his army was Sisera, and he was residing in Harosheth Haggoyim.

Jabin ... Sisera

These are the names of men (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Hazor ... Harosheth Haggoyim

These are the names of cities or places (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Judges 4:3

nine hundred iron chariots

“900 iron chariots” (See: [Numbers](#))

twenty years

“20 years”

ULT

³ Then the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh, because he had nine hundred chariots of iron and he oppressed the sons of Israel with severe might twenty years.

Judges 4:4

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the main story line. Here the narrator tells background information about Deborah. (See: [Background Information](#))

Deborah

This is the name of a woman (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Lappidoth

This is the name of a man (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

judge

God appointed judges to lead the Israelites in times of trouble. Often the judges rescued them from their enemies.

ULT

⁴ Now Deborah was a woman, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth. She was judging Israel at that time.

Judges 4:5

palm of Deborah

This tree was named after Deborah.

ULT

⁵ She would sit beneath the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the sons of Israel came up to her for justice.

Judges 4:6

General Information:

The writer of Judges refers to men, a city, a mountain, and a river by their names. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Barak ... Abinoam

These are the names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Mount Tabor

This is the name of a mountain. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ten thousand men

“10,000 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁶ She sent and called for Barak, the son of Abinoam, from Kedesh Naphtali. She said to him, “Has Yahweh, the God of Israel, not commanded: ‘Go and draft at Mount Tabor, and you shall take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun’?”

Judges 4:7

I will draw out

Here “I” refers to God.

draw out Sisera

Here “Sisera” represents himself and his army. Alternate translation: “draw out Sisera and his army” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

draw out

to cause people to come away from a safe location

Sisera ... Jabin

See how you translated these men’s names in [Judges 4:2](#).

Kishon

This is the name of a river. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁷ ‘I will draw out Sisera, the commander of the army of Jabin, to you along the Kishon River, and his chariot and his multitude, and I will give him into your hand’.”

Judges 4:8

General Information:

Barak has a discussion with Deborah.

Barak

See how you translated this man's name in [Judges 4:6](#).

ULT

⁸ Barak replied to her, "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go."

Judges 4:9

the road on which you are going will not lead to your honor

The choice Barak makes is spoken of as if Barak were choosing a road on which to travel. And, “honor” is spoken of as if it were a destination to which one travels. Alternate translation: “no one will honor you for what you do” (See: [Metaphor](#))

for Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman

Here “hand” refers to her power to kill him. Alternate translation: “for Yahweh will cause a woman to defeat Sisera” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Sisera

See how you translated this man’s name in [Judges 4:2](#).

Deborah

See how you translated this woman’s name in [Judges 4:4](#).

ULT

⁹ She declared, “I will indeed go with you, for naught, since it will not be your honor on the way which you are going, but with a hand of a woman Yahweh will give over Sisera.” Then Deborah rose up and she went with Barak to Kedesh.

Judges 4:10

Ten thousand men

“10,000 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

10 Then Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. He went up, ten thousand men were at his feet, and Deborah went up with him.

Judges 4:11

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the main story line. Here the narrator tells background information about Heber the Kenite. (See: [Background Information](#))

Heber ... Hobab

These are the names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Kenite

See how you translated this in [Judges 1:16](#)

Moses' father-in-law

“the father of Moses' wife”

Zaananim

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from Cain, from the sons of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. He pitched his tent as far as an oak tree in Zaananim, which is near Kedesh.

Judges 4:12

When they told Sisera

Here “they” does not identify anyone specifically. Alternate translation: “When someone told Sisera”

Sisera

See how you translated this man’s name in [Judges 4:2](#).

Barak ... Abinoam ... Mount Tabor

See how you translated these names in [Judges 4:6](#).

ULT

¹² When they reported to Sisera that Barak, the son of Abinoam, had gone up to Mount Tabor,

Judges 4:13

Sisera called out all his chariots

Here “chariots” represents the soldiers who drove the chariots. (See: [Metonymy](#))

nine hundred iron chariots

“900 iron chariots” (See: [Numbers](#))

Harosheth Haggoyim

See how you translated the name of this city in [Judges 4:2](#).

Kishon River

See how you translated this in [Judges 4:7](#).

ULT

13 Sisera summoned all of his chariotry, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all of the people who were with him, from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River.

Judges 4:14

Yahweh has given you victory

Because Deborah is certain of victory, she speaks as if Barak had already won the battle. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will give you victory" (See: [Predictive Past](#))

Is not Yahweh leading you?

Deborah asks this question to remind Barak that they fight on the side of Yahweh. Alternate translation: "Remember, Yahweh is leading you." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

with ten thousand

"with 10,000" (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

14 Then Deborah directed to Barak, "Arise! For this day when Yahweh has given Sisera into your hand, has not Yahweh gone forth before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor along with ten thousand men beside him.

Judges 4:15

Yahweh confused Sisera and all his chariots and all his army

“Yahweh made Sisera and all his chariots and all his army unable to think clearly” or “Yahweh made Sisera and all his chariots and all his army panic”

all his chariots

Here the word “chariots” is a metonym for the soldiers driving the chariots. Alternate translation: “all the men driving chariots” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Yahweh dismayed Sisera and all of the chariotry and all of the army with an edge of a sword before Barak. So Sisera dismounted from atop the chariot and fled away on his feet.

Judges 4:16

Barak pursued

Here “Barak” represents himself and his army. Alternate translation: “Barak and his soldiers chased” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Harosheth

Translate this the same way you did in [Judges 4:2](#).

ULT

16 But Barak pursued after the chariotry and after the army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and the entire army of Sisera fell by an edge of a sword, not even one remained.

the whole army of Sisera was killed by the edge of the sword

Here “sword” represents the swords and other weapons that the soldiers used in battle. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Barak and his soldiers killed Sisera’s whole army with their swords” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

Judges 4:17

Sisera ... Jabin ... Hazor

See how you translated these names in [Judges 4:2](#).

ran away on foot

This is an idiom that means he was walking rather than riding a horse or in a chariot. (See: [Idiom](#))

Jael

This is the name of a woman. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Heber

See how you translated this man's name in [Judges 4:11](#).

Kenite

See how you translated this in [Judges 1:16](#).

ULT

17 However Sisera had fled on his feet to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

Judges 4:18

Turn aside

This means to change course during a journey in order to rest.
Alternate translation: "Come here" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

blanket

a large covering for the body to sleep under for warmth, made of wool or animal skins

ULT

18 Jael went out to meet Sisera and she said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me. Do not fear." So he turned to her, into the tent, and she concealed him with the coverlet.

Judges 4:19

He said to her

“Sisera said to Jael”

ULT

¹⁹ He requested of her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened the leather bag of milk and gave him drink, and then she covered him.

Judges 4:20

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁰ Then he directed her, "Stand at the entrance of the tent. It shall be if anyone should come and ask you and say, 'Is there anyone here?', then you shall say 'There is not'."

Judges 4:21

tent peg

a pointed piece of wood or metal, like a large nail, that is hammered into the ground to hold down a corner of a tent

hammer

a heavy tool made of wood used to hit a tent peg into the ground

a deep sleep

Like a person in a deep hole cannot easily climb out, a person in a deep sleep cannot easily wake up. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

21 Then Jael, the wife of Heber, took the peg of the tent and she put the hammer in her hand. She came to him in the silence, and she drove the peg into his temple and pounded down to the ground. For he had been soundly sleeping and weary, instead he died.

Judges 4:22

Barak was pursuing

“Barak was chasing” or “Barak was following after”

ULT

²² Then, behold, Barak was pursuing Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him and she said to him, “Come, and let me show you the man whom you are seeking.” So he came to her, and behold, Sisera had fallen dead, and the peg was in his temple.

Judges 4:23

God defeated Jabin, the king of Canaan, before the people of Israel

God causing the Israelites to defeat Jabin and his army is spoken of as is God himself defeated Jabin as the people of Israel watched.
(See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²³ So on that day God vanquished Jabin,
the king of Canaan, before the sons of
Israel.

Judges 4:24

The might

“The military power”

they destroyed him

Here “him” refers to Jabin who represents himself and his army.
Alternate translation: “they destroyed Jabin and his army” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁴ Thus the hand of the sons of Israel had gone on becoming increasingly severe against Jabin, the king of Canaan, up to the point that they had destroyed Jabin, the king of Caanan.

Judges 5

Judges 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The account of Deborah and Barak continues in this chapter.

Some translations prefer to set apart quotations, prayers, and songs. The ULT and many other English translations set the lines of Chapter 5, which is a song, farther to the right on the page than the rest of the text.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

The flood

God caused rain and flooding to bog down Jaban's chariots making them vulnerable to soldiers on foot, even though it is not said. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 5:1

On that day

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "On the day the Israelites defeated the army of King Jabin" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹ So Deborah sang with Barak, the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying:

Deborah

See how you translated this name in [Judges 4:4](#).

Barak ... Abinoam

See how you translated these names in [Judges 4:6](#).

Judges 5:2

when the people gladly volunteer for war

“when the men agree to fight in battle”

ULT

² “When long hair flowed freely in Israel, as people enlisted themselves willingly, everyone bless Yahweh!”

Judges 5:3

General Information:

Deborah and Barak's song continues using poetry. (See: [Poetry](#))

Listen, you kings! Pay attention, you leaders

Deborah and Barak speak to the kings and leaders as if they were there listening to the song. (See: [Apostrophe](#))

you kings ... you leaders

This refers to kings and leaders in general, not to specific kings or leaders.

ULT

³ Hear, O kings! Give ear, O rulers! I, unto Yahweh, even I, I will sing, I will make music unto Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Judges 5:4

when you went out from Seir, when you marched from Edom

This refers to the time when the Israelites left Edom to start conquering the people in Canaan. Yahweh empowering his people to defeat the people of Canaan is spoken of as if he were a warrior leading the Israelite army. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Yahweh, because of your going forth out of Seir, because of your marching out of the open land of Edom, the earth quaked, the heavens also dripped, also the dark clouds dripped down water.

Seir

Seir is a mountain on the border of the land of Israel and Edom. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

the earth shook, and the skies also trembled; also the clouds poured down water

This could mean: (1) this is poetic language that emphasizes Yahweh's power by describing it as causing earthquakes and storms or (2) the people of Canaan being terrified as the Israelites were about to attack them is spoken of as if the earth and sky were shaking. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Judges 5:5

General Information:

Deborah and Barak's song continues using poetry. (See: [Poetry](#))

The mountains quaked

This probably refers to earthquakes and gives the impression that the mountains quaked because they were very afraid of Yahweh. Alternate translation: "The mountains trembled in fear" (See: [Personification](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁵ Mountains flowed because of the presence of Yahweh, this Sinai, because of the presence of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

before the face of Yahweh

Here "face" refers Yahweh's presence. Alternate translation: "in the presence of Yahweh" (See: [Metonymy](#))

even Mount Sinai quaked

When Moses and Israel were at Mount Sinai, it quaked. Alternate translation: "long ago, even Mount Sinai quaked" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 5:6

In the days of

“During the lifetime of”

Shamgar ... Anath ... Jael

These are the names of people. See how you translated Shamgar and Anath in [Judges 3:31](#) and Jael in [Judges 4:18](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁶ In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, main roads were abandoned, and walkers of footpaths would walk crooked paths.

son of Anath

Shamgar's father is mentioned to help identify Shamgar and when he lived. (See: [Background Information](#))

the main roads were abandoned

This can be stated in active form and you can make explicit why the roads were abandoned Alternate translation: “people stopped using the main roads; because they were afraid of Israel's enemies” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the winding paths

This refers to smaller roads that fewer people traveled on.

Judges 5:7

I, Deborah, arose—arose as a mother in Israel

Deborah speaks of becoming a leader in Israel as if she were a mother taking care of young children. Alternate translation: “I, Deborah, began to lead—I took care of the Israelites as a mother takes care of her children” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ Rural people ceased to be in Israel,
they ceased to be until when I arose,
Deborah, when I arose, a mother in
Israel!

Judges 5:8

they chose new gods

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “the people of Israel worshiped new gods” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

there was fighting at the city gates

Here “gates” represents the entire city. The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “enemies attacked the people within the Israelite cities” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

there were no shields or spears seen among forty thousand in Israel

This statement is probably an exaggeration about how few weapons the Israelites had. Alternate translation: “few weapons for battle remained in Israel” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

forty thousand in Israel

“40,000 in Israel” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁸ When he chose new gods, then there was fighting at the city gates, neither shield nor spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.

Judges 5:9

My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel

The word “heart” represents a person’s emotions. The phrase “My heart goes out to” is a way of saying that Deborah feels gratitude or appreciation. Alternate translation: “I appreciate the commanders of Israel” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁹ My heart is alongside those pledging order in Israel, those freely enlisting themselves among the people.
Everyone bless Yahweh!

Judges 5:10

you who ride on white donkeys ... you who walk along the road

This contrast probably refers to rich people and poor people.
Alternate translation: "you rich people who ride on white donkeys ... you poor people who walk along the road" (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Riding on white donkeys, sitting on carpets, or walking along a road, sing of this,

sitting on rugs for saddles

These rugs were probably used as saddles on the donkey's back to make the rider more comfortable.

Judges 5:11

General Information:

The song of Deborah and Barak continues.

Hear the voices of those

Here “voices” represents the people singing. Alternate translation: “Listen to those” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

went down to the city gates

Here “gates” represents the whole city. Alternate translation: “returned to their cities” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

11 louder than the sound of those distributing water from watering places. There they continuously celebrate the righteous deeds of Yahweh, the righteous actions of his rural people in Israel. Then the people of Yahweh went down to the gates.

Judges 5:12

General Information:

Deborah and Barak's song continues using poetry. (See: [Poetry](#))

Awake, awake

Possible speakers are: (1) the people of Israel or (2) Deborah who is speaking to herself or (3) the poet who wrote the song.

Deborah

See how you translated this name in [Judges 4:4](#).

Barak ... Abinoam

See how you translated these names in [Judges 4:6](#).

ULT

12 Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song! Arise, Barak, and lead away captive your prisoner, the son of Abinoam.

Judges 5:13

to me with the warriors

The word “me” refers to Deborah.

ULT

13 Then a survivor prevails over nobles,
the people of Yahweh prevail at my side
against the warriors.

Judges 5:14

from Ephraim, whose root is in Amalek

The people of Ephraim living in the land where the descendants of Amalek originally lived is spoken of as if the people of Ephraim were planted and their roots grew into the land. Alternate translation: “from Ephraim, that land where the descendants of Amalek once lived” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 From Ephraim, their root was against Amalek; after you, Benjamin, among your peoples. From Machir those with resolve came down, and from Zebulun those who wield the scepter of a scribe.

followed you

Here “you” refers to the people of Ephraim. It can be stated in third person. Alternate translation: “followed them” (See: [Forms of You](#) and [First, Second or Third Person](#))

Machir

This is the place where the descendants of Machir live. Machir was the son of Manasseh and the grandson of Joseph. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

from Zebulun those who carry an officer’s staff

Military leaders are described by the staff, a symbol of their authority. Alternate translation: “military leaders from Zebulun” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 5:15

My princes in Issachar were with Deborah

Here “My” refers to Deborah. This whole statement can be translated in first person. Alternate translation: “My princes in Issachar were with me” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

Deborah

See how you translated this name in [Judges 4:4](#).

Issachar was with Barak

Here “Issachar” refers to the tribe of Issachar. Alternate translation: “the tribe of Issachar was with Barak” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Barak

See how you translated this name in [Judges 4:6](#).

rushing after him into the valley under his command

“obeying his command and rushing after him into the valley”

rushing after

“following after” or “hurrying after”

there were great searchings of heart

Here “heart” represents thoughts. The people discussing with each other but being unable to decide what they should do is spoken of as if they were searching their heart. Alternate translation: “there was a lot of discussing about what they should do” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁵ My princes in Issachar were with Deborah; and Issachar was also with Barak into a plain he was sent out on his feet. Among the divisions of Reuben there were great resolutions of heart.

Judges 5:16

Why did you sit between the fireplaces, listening to the shepherds playing their pipes for their flocks?

This question is asked to criticize the people of Reuben because they did not decide to come fight in the battle. This can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: “You should have helped us fight, instead of staying at home and listening to the shepherds playing their pipes for their flocks” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹⁶ Why did you sit among the campfires, in order to hear signaling for flocks? As for the divisions of Reuben there were great resolutions of heart.

the fireplaces

Some versions of the Bible have the translation “the sheepfolds” or “the sheep pens.”

there were great searchings of heart

Here “heart” represents thoughts. The people discussing with each other but being unable to decide what they should do is spoken of as if they were searching their heart. See how you translated this in [Judges 5:15](#). (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Judges 5:17

Gilead stayed

Here “Gilead” the men from Gilead who should have gone to fight in battle. Alternate translation: “The men of Gilead stayed” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the other side of the Jordan

This refers to the east side of the Jordan. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Dan, why did he wander about on ships?

This question is asked to express anger because the people of the tribe of Dan would not fight for Israel. Alternate translation: “the men of Dan should not have remained on their ships!” or “the people of the tribe of Dan did not help us in the battle. Instead they were wandering around on the sea in ships!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Dan, why did he

Here “Dan” represents the men from Dan who should have gone to fight in battle. Alternate translation: “the men of Dan, why did they” (See: [Metonymy](#))

wander about on ships

The tribe of Dan was located near the Mediterranean sea. They sailed on the sea to make money through trade and fishing. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Asher remained on the coast and lived close to his harbors

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “The people of the tribe of Asher also failed to help us, they just remained on the coast near their harbors” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Asher remained

Here “Asher” represents the men who should have gone to fight in battle. Alternate translation: “The men of Asher remained” (See: [Metonymy](#))

harbors

places at the seacoast with deeper water where ships were kept

ULT

17 Gilead settled in the region beyond the Jordan; but Dan, why does he sojourn on ships? Asher dwelt at the coast of the seas and he resides along his harbors.

Judges 5:18

Naphtali, also

You can make clear the understood information. Alternate translation: "Naphtali was a tribe who would also risk their lives to the point of death" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

18 Zebulun was a people willfully scorning its soul even to death, also Naphtali on the elevated places of the battlefield.

Judges 5:19

The kings came, they fought ... the kings of Canaan fought

The king of a people group is used to refer to himself and the army he commands. Alternate translation: "The kings and their armies came and fought ... the kings of Canaan and their armies fought" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹⁹ Kings came, they did battle; at that time the kings of Canaan did battle at Taanach along the waters of Megiddo. Plunder of silver they did not take.

they fought ... fought

The word "us" is understood. Alternate translation: "they fought us ... fought us" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

Taanach ... Megiddo

Translate the names of these places as you did in [Judges 1:27](#).

no silver as plunder

Here "silver" represents any treasure in general. Alternate translation: "no silver or other treasures as plunder" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

plunder

things taken by force, usually in battle or by thieves

Judges 5:20

From heaven the stars fought, from their paths across the heavens they fought against Sisera

Yahweh helping the Israelite to defeat Sisera and his army is spoken of as if the stars themselves fought against Sisera and his army. This may refer to Yahweh using natural elements, specifically rain storms, to defeat Sisera. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

²⁰ From the heavens the stars did battle, from their courses they did battle against Sisera.

against Sisera

Here “Sisera” represents himself and his whole army. Alternate translation: “Sisera and his army” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Sisera

See how you translated this name in [Judges 4:2](#).

Judges 5:21

The Kishon River swept them away

Because of the heavy rain the river flooded quickly causing the chariots to be stuck in the mud and drowning many soldiers. Alternate translation: “The Kishon River flooded and swept away Sisera’s soldiers” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

21 The Kishon River swept them away,
the ancient river, the Kishon River.
Tread on, O my soul, in strength!

Kishon

See how you translated this in [Judges 4:6](#).

March on my soul, be strong

Here “soul” refers to the whole person. The word “my” refers to Deborah. Alternate translation: “I tell myself to march on and to be strong” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Judges 5:22

Then came the sound of horses' hooves— galloping, the galloping of his mighty ones

This describes the sound of many horses running away from the battle. Alternate translation: “Then I heard the sound of horses running away. Sisera’s mighty horses were running away” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

galloping

running quickly

ULT

²² Then hooves of a horse beat down,
from rushing, the rushing of his valiant
ones.

Judges 5:23

Curse Meroz

Here “Meroz” represents the people who lived there. Alternate translation: “Curse the people of Meroz” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Meroz

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

23 ‘Curse Meroz!’ said the messenger of Yahweh. ‘You shall surely curse those dwelling in it, because they did not come to the aid of Yahweh— to the aid of Yahweh against the mighty men.’

Judges 5:24

Jael

See how you translated this name in [Judges 4:18](#).

Heber

See how you translated this name in [Judges 4:11](#).

Kenite

Translate the name of this people group as you did in [Judges 1:16](#).

ULT

²⁴ Jael is most blessed of women, the wife of Heber, the Kenite, out of women in the tent she is blessed.

Judges 5:25

brought him butter

Here “butter” refers to curdled milk. This was the best milk and a favorite drink among Jael’s people. Alternate translation: “brought him yogurt” or “brought him curds”

a dish fit for princes

This phrase means the dish was of the best quality because princes were given the best things. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁵ Water he requested, milk she gave, in a bowl suitable for nobles, she brought curdled milk.

Judges 5:26

She put her hand to the tent peg

“Jael grabbed the tent peg with her left hand”

tent peg

This is a pointed piece of wood or metal, like a large nail, that is hammered into the ground to hold down a corner of a tent. See how you translated this in [Judges 4:21](#).

her right hand to the workman's hammer

This can be stated as a complete sentence. Alternate translation: “she grabbed a hammer with her right hand” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

hammer

This is a heavy tool made of wood used to hit a tent peg into the ground. See how you translated this in [Judges 4:21](#).

Sisera

See how you translated this man's name in [Judges 4:2](#).

ULT

²⁶ They reached out, her hand to the tent peg, and her right hand to a hammer of workmen; she struck Sisera, she shattered his head. She struck through and she pierced his temple.

Judges 5:27

limp

without strength or movement

he was violently killed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “she killed him” or “he died” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁷ Between her feet, he bowed, he fell, he lay down. Between her feet he bowed, he fell; at the place where he bowed, there he fell violently destroyed.

Judges 5:28

the lattice

This is a frame in the window made of crossed wood.

**Why has it taken his chariot so long to come?
Why have the hoofbeats of the horses that
pull his chariots been delayed?**

ULT

²⁸ Through the window she had looked down and lamented, the mother of Sisera through the lattice window. 'Why has his chariot delayed in coming? Why are the hoofbeats of his chariots late?'

Both of these questions mean the same thing. These two statements can be combined. Alternate translation: "Why is it taking Sisera so long to arrive home" (See: [Parallelism](#))

**taken his chariot ... Why have the hoofbeats of the horses that pull his
chariots**

Both of these represent Sisera. Alternate translation: "taken Sisera ... Why has he" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 5:29

wisest princesses

A “princess” is the daughter of a king, but a “princess” can also mean female advisers to the king’s family. Alternate translation: “wisest ladies”

she gave herself the same answer

“she said to herself the same thing”

ULT

²⁹ The wisest of her princesses answered, yet she continued her utterance to herself:

Judges 5:30

Have they not found and divided up the plunder—a womb ... plunder?

The women use a question to emphasize that they believe this is what certainly happened. Alternate translation: “They must have so much plunder that it is taking a long time to divide it. They have ... plunder.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

a womb, two wombs for every man ... of those who plunder?

The women use a question to emphasize that they believe this is what certainly happened. Alternate translation: “There must be a womb, two wombs for every man ... of those who plunder.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

a womb, two wombs for every man

Here “womb” represents a woman. Sisera’s mother believes Sisera’s men have captured many women. Alternate translation: “Each soldier will receive a woman or two” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

dyed fabric

“colored cloth” or “colored clothes”

embroidered

having designs made of colored threads

for the necks of those who plunder

Here “necks” represents Sisera’s soldiers. Alternate translation: “for the soldiers who plunder to wear” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

³⁰ ‘Are they not finding, are they dividing up spoil, a maiden, two maidens for every warrior, spoil of dyed fabrics for Sisera, spoil of dyed fabrics, embroidered, dyed fabric embroidered on both sides for the necks as spoil?’

Judges 5:31

like the sun when it rises in its might

The people of Israel wish to be like the sun that rises because no nation's army is powerful enough to stop the sunrise. (See: [Simile](#))

the land had peace

Here "the land" represents the people of Israel. Alternate translation: "and the people of Israel lived peacefully" (See: [Metonymy](#))

for forty years

"for 40 years" (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

³¹ So may all of your enemies perish, Yahweh! But may those who love him be as the coming forth of the sun in its strength." Then the land was tranquil forty years.

Judges 6

Judges 6 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter begins a section about Gideon. (Chapters 6-8)

Special concepts in this chapter

Israel's punishment

In Judges, Israel's actions are connected to their obedience to Yahweh. When Israel does evil, they are oppressed. (See: [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [oppress](#), [oppressed](#), [oppression](#), [oppressor](#), [dominate](#))

Judges 6:1

what was evil in the sight of Yahweh

The sight of Yahweh represents Yahweh's judgment or evaluation. See how you translated this in [Judges 2:11](#). Alternate translation: "what was evil in Yahweh's judgment" or "what Yahweh considered to be evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ The sons of Israel did this evil in the eyes of Yahweh, so Yahweh gave them over into the hand of Midian seven years.

the hand of Midian

Here "Midian" represents the people of Midian. Also, "hand" represents control. Alternate translation: "the control of the people of Midian" or "the control of the Midianites" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 6:2

The power of Midian oppressed Israel

Here “the power of Midian” refers to the people of Midian. Alternate translation: “The people of Midian were more powerful than the people of Israel and they oppressed them” (See: [Metonymy](#))

dens

places in the rocky cliffs that would provide shelter

ULT

² Then the hand of Midian prevailed over Israel. On account of the presence of Midian, the sons of Israel made the dens for themselves which were in the mountains, the caves, and the strongholds.

Judges 6:3

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³ Now it would happen whenever Israel sowed, that Midian and Amalek would come up, even sons of the east would come up against him.

Judges 6:4

They would set up their army

“The army would encamp” or “The army would set up their tents”

ULT

⁴ They encamped around them and they ruined the produce of the land as far as your coming into Gaza. As a result means of sustaining life would not remain in Israel, neither sheep, nor cattle, nor donkey.

Judges 6:5

Whenever they and their livestock and tents came up

The land of Midian was south of the land of Israel, near the Red Sea. It was common to use the phrase “came up” when speaking of traveling from Midian to Israel. Alternate translation: “Whenever the Midianites brought their livestock and tents to the land of Israel”

they would come as a swarm of locusts

The Midianites are compared to a swarm of locusts because they came in with a great number of people and their livestock ate everything that grew. (See: [Simile](#))

it was impossible to count

This is an exaggeration, a hyperbole, showing the number is very great. (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

⁵ When they and their livestock would come up, along with their tents, they would come up as an abundance of a locust swarm because of the multitude. Of them and of their camels there was no counting thus they came into the land in order to destroy it.

Judges 6:6

Midian weakened

Here “Midian” represents the people of Midian. (See: [Metonymy](#))

called out to Yahweh

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “prayed to Yahweh for help” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁶ Israel was severely impoverished because of the presence of Midian, so the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh.

Judges 6:7

called out to Yahweh

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “prayed to Yahweh for help” (See: [Idiom](#))

because of Midian

Here “Midian” represents the people of Midian. Alternate translation: “because of the Midianites” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ Now it happened that when the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh on account of Midian,

Judges 6:8

I brought you up from Egypt

"I led you out of Egypt"

the house of slavery

Moses speaks of Egypt as if it were a house where people keep slaves. Alternate translation: "the place where you were slaves" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ that Yahweh sent a man, a prophet to the sons of Israel. He said to them, "Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: 'I myself, have brought you up out of Egypt, and I have brought you out of the house of slavery.'

Judges 6:9

from the hand

In this phrase “hand” represents power or control. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ I rescued you from the hand of Egypt, and from the hand of all of those oppressing you. I drove them out of your presence, and I have surely given to you their land.

Judges 6:10

obeyed my voice

- Here “my voice” represents what Yahweh commanded.
Alternate translation: “obeyed my command” or “obeyed me” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

10 I said to you, “I am Yahweh your God; you shall not revere the gods of the Amorite, when you are dwelling in their land.” But you have not heeded my voice.”

Judges 6:11

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the story line. Here the narrator starts to tell a new part of the story.

Ophrah

This is the name of a town. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Abiezrite

This is a people group named after their ancestor Abiezer. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

was separating out the wheat by beating it on the floor

This is a process called “threshing.” Gideon was beating the wheat against the floor to separate the wheat grain from the rest of the wheat plant.

ULT

11 Now the messenger of Yahweh came and sat beneath the oak which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite. Meanwhile Gideon, his son, was threshing out wheat at the winepress in order to hide from the presence of Midian.

Judges 6:12

appeared to him

“went to him”

ULT

¹² Then the messenger of Yahweh appeared to him and declared to him, “Yahweh is with you, O warrior of valor!”

Judges 6:13

my master

Gideon uses the word “master” as a polite way to greet a stranger. He does not realize he is speaking to Yahweh in the form of an angel or a man.

Where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers told us about, when they said, ‘Did not Yahweh bring us up from Egypt?’

Gideon uses a question to challenge the stranger’s statement that Yahweh was with him. Also, the direct quotation can be stated as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: “We have not seen any wonderful deeds like the ones our fathers told us about when Yahweh brought them up from Egypt.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

ULT

13 Gideon said to him, “With me, my lord? If Yahweh is with us, then why has all of this come to us? Where are all of his miraculous workings that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not Yahweh bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now Yahweh has forsaken us and given us over into the grasp of Midian.”

gave us into the hand of Midian

The phrase “gave us into” means Yahweh allowed the Israelites to be defeated. Alternate translation: “allowed the Midianites to defeat us” (See: [Idiom](#))

gave us into the hand

Here “hand” represents power or control. (See: [Metonymy](#))

of Midian

Here “Midian” represents the people of Midian. Alternate translation: “of the Midianites” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 6:14

Yahweh looked at him

“Yahweh looked at Gideon”

from the hand

Here “hand” represents power or control. (See: [Metonymy](#))

of Midian

Here “Midian” represents the people of Midian. Alternate translation: “of the Midianites” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Have I not sent you?

Yahweh uses a question to ensure Gideon that he is sending him. Here “sent” means Yahweh has appointed Gideon with a specific task. Alternate translation: “I, Yahweh, am sending you!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

14 Then Yahweh turned to him and said, “Go in this strength of yours and you shall deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian. Have I not sent you?”

Judges 6:15

Please, Lord

Gideon now calls the person “Lord” instead of “my master” as in [Judges 6:13](#). Here it seems Gideon either knows or suspects that he is speaking with Yahweh.

how can I deliver Israel?

Gideon uses a question to emphasize that he does not think he can rescue the Israelites. Alternate translation: “I cannot possibly rescue the Israelites!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

See, my family

“Look at my family and me and you will see that it”

in Manasseh

“in the tribe of Manasseh”

in my father’s house

Here “house” represents a family. Alternate translation: “in my father’s family” or “in my family” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

15 Then he replied to him, “Please, my lord! In what manner will I deliver Israel? See, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the most insignificant in the house of my father.”

Judges 6:16

I will be with you

Here “be with you” is an idiom that means Yahweh will help and bless Gideon. (See: [Idiom](#))

as one man

You can state the full meaning explicitly. Alternate translation: “as easily as if you were fighting only one man” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

16 Then Yahweh said to him, “Because I will be with you, indeed you shall destroy Midian as one man.”

Judges 6:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

17 He replied to him, "If indeed I have found favor in your eyes, then perform a sign for me that it is you speaking to me."

Judges 6:18

set it before you

“place it in front of you”

ULT

18 Please, do not depart from this place, until my coming to you then I will bring out my offering and I will set it before you.” So he said, “Myself, I will stay until your returning.”

Judges 6:19

from an ephah of flour

If it is necessary to use a modern measurement; here is one way of doing it. Alternate translation: “with 22 liters of flour” (See: [Biblical Volume](#))

broth

water that has had food, such as meat, cooked in it

them to him

“them to the angel of God”

ULT

19 Then Gideon went and he prepared a young goat and from an ephah of flour, unleavened bread. He placed the meat in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot and brought them out to him to beneath the oak tree, and he presented them.

Judges 6:20

angel of God

This is the same as the angel of Yahweh. Alternate translation: “God, who was in the form of an angel” or “God”

ULT

20 Then the messenger of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and place them on this rock, and pour out the broth,” and he did so.

Judges 6:21

angel of Yahweh

In 6:11-24 Yahweh appears to Gideon in the form of an angel. See how you translated this in [Judges 6:11](#).

went away

“disappeared”

ULT

21 Then the messenger of Yahweh stretched out the edge of the staff that was in his hand. He touched the meat and the unleavened bread; the fire went up out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the messenger of Yahweh went away out of his sight.

Judges 6:22

angel of Yahweh

In 6:11-24 Yahweh appears to Gideon in the form of an angel. See how you translated this in [Judges 6:11](#).

Ah, Lord Yahweh!

The word “Ah” here shows that Gideon was very frightened. (See: [Exclamations](#))

seen the angel of Yahweh face to face

This phrase refers to two people being close to each other. Alternate translation: “really seen the angel of Yahweh” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

22 When Gideon saw that he was the messenger of Yahweh, Gideon lamented, “Alas, O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the messenger of Yahweh face to face!”

Judges 6:23

Yahweh said to him

Apparently Yahweh spoke to Gideon from heaven. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²³ But Yahweh replied to him, "Peace be unto you! Do not be afraid, you will not die."

Judges 6:24

To this day

This means to the time when the book of Judges was written.

Ophrah

Translate the name of this town as you did in [Judges 6:11](#).

the clan of Abiezer

Translate the name of this people group as you did in [Judges 6:11](#).

ULT

²⁴ So Gideon built an altar there to Yahweh and he named it Yahweh is Peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah of the Abiezerite.

Judges 6:25

a second bull

The word “second” is the ordinal number for “two.” Alternate translation: “another bull” (See: [Ordinal Numbers](#))

that is beside it

“that is beside the altar of Baal”

ULT

²⁵ Now it happened on that night that Yahweh said to him, “Take the young bull that belongs to your father, and the second bull seven years old, break into pieces the altar of Baal that belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it.”

Judges 6:26

on the top of this place of refuge

The city of Ophrah was on top of a hill. Israelites fled there for refuge from the Midianites.

construct it the correct way

“place the stones in an orderly manner” or “and build it properly”

ULT

26 You shall build an altar to Yahweh your God on the top of this place of refuge in the usual arrangement. Then you shall take the second bull and you shall offer a whole burnt offering, on the wood pieces from the Asherah that you shall cut down.”

Judges 6:27

did as Yahweh had told him

This refers to Yahweh's command in [Judges 6:25-26](#).

ULT

²⁷ So Gideon took ten men out of his servants and did just as Yahweh had instructed to him. Now it happened that because he was afraid of the household of his father and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

Judges 6:28

got up

“got up out of bed” or “woke up”

the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull had been offered on the altar that had been built

ULT

²⁸ When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, the Asherah that was beside it had been cut down, and the second bull had been offered on the altar that had been built.

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “they noticed that someone had broken down the altar of Baal, cut down the Asherah that was beside it, and built an altar and sacrificed the second bull on it” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Judges 6:29

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁹ As a result each man said to his neighbor, "Who has done this thing?" When they inquired and searched, they said, "Gideon, the son of Joash has done this thing."

Judges 6:30

he may be put to death

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “we may kill him as punishment” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

30 Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son so that he may die, because he tore down the altar of Baal, and because he cut down the Asherah that was beside it.”

Judges 6:31

Will you plead the case for Baal?

Joash uses a question to emphasize that a human should not have to defend a god. Alternate translation: "You should not have to defend Baal." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

plead the case

"make a defense" or "give an excuse"

Will you save him?

Joash uses a question to emphasize that a human should not have to rescue a god. Alternate translation: "You should not have to save Baal." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

³¹ Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you really contend on behalf of Baal? Will you really help him? Whoever contends for him, he will be put to death while it is still the morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself when someone tears down his altar."

Judges 6:32

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. It means “let Baal defend himself.”
(See: [How to Translate Names](#))

because he said

“because Joash said”

ULT

³² Therefore on that day he called him “Jerub Baal,” saying, “May the Baal contend against him,” because he had torn down his altar.

Judges 6:33

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the story line. Here the narrator starts to tell a new part of the story.

gathered together

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “gathered together as an army” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

33 Now all of Midian, Amalek, and the sons of the east assembled themselves together, and they crossed over and they camped in the Valley of Jezreel.

Judges 6:34

came over Gideon

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “took control of Gideon” (See: [Idiom](#))

clan of Abiezer

Translate the name of this people group as you did in [Judges 6:11](#).

so they might follow him

The words “to battle” are understood. Alternate translation: “so they might follow him to battle” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

³⁴ But the Spirit of Yahweh clothed Gideon. As a result he blew the shofar, thus he summoned Abiezer after him.

Judges 6:35

and they too, were called out to follow him

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “calling them out to follow him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali

These all represent the people of each tribe. Alternate translation: “to the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

35 Then he sent messengers in all of Manasseh, and he summoned him also after him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they went up to meet them.

Judges 6:36

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁶ Then Gideon said to the true God, "If it is you delivering Israel by my hand, just as you have spoken,

Judges 6:37

woolen fleece

the woolly coat of a sheep

dew

water that forms on plants during the night

then I will know that you will

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “this will be a sign from you, and then I will know that you will” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³⁷ Look, I am putting this fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If dew shall be upon the fleece, only it, but on all of the ground it is dry, then I will know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, just as you have spoken.”

Judges 6:38

Gideon rose

"Gideon got out of bed"

wrung

twist and squeeze something to remove water

ULT

³⁸ Now it happened afterwards that he rose early on the next day, and he pressed the fleece together. He wrung out dew from the fleece, the amount that fills the basin with water.

Judges 6:39

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁹ Then Gideon said to the true God,
“Do not let your anger burn against me,
but may I speak only this time. May I
please test only this time with the
fleece? May it be, I pray, dry on the
fleece, only it, but on all of the ground
may there be dew.”

Judges 6:40

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴⁰ So God did this during that night. It was dry on the fleece, only it, but on all of the ground there was dew.

Judges 7

Judges 7 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The account of Gideon continues in this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

God gets all of the credit

God said, "There are too many soldiers for me to give you victory over the Midianites. Make sure that Israel will not boast against me, saying, 'Our own power has saved us.'" By lowering the number of fighting soldiers, it emphasizes that the victory is achieved through God's power. (See: [glory](#), [glorious](#), [glorify](#))

Judges 7:1

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. See how you translated his name in [Judges 6:32](#).

they encamped

“they set up their camp”

spring of Harod ... hill of Moreh

These are the names of places. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

The camp of Midian was to their north

Here “Midian” represents the Midianite army. Alternate translation: “The Midianite army set up their camp to the north of the Israelite army” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ Then Jerubbaal, that is, Gideon, rose up early, and all of the people who were with him, and they encamped beside the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was northward from him, toward the hill of Moreh in the valley.

Judges 7:2

for me to give you victory over the Midianites

The word “victory” is an abstract noun that can be translated as a verb or an adjective. Alternate translation: “for me to allow you to defeat the Midianites” or “for me to cause you to be victorious over the Midianites” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Our own power has saved us

Here “power” represents the people themselves. Alternate translation: “We have saved ourselves without God’s help” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² Yahweh said to Gideon, “Too many are the people who are with you for my giving Midian into their hand, lest Israel get glory themselves over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”

Judges 7:3

Now

This does not mean “at this moment,” but is used to draw attention to the important point that follows.

proclaim in the ears of the people

Here “the ears” refers to the whole person. Alternate translation: “proclaim to the people” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

³ Now therefore, announce in the ears of the people saying, ‘Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand of the people turned back, but ten thousand remained.

Whoever is afraid, whoever trembles

Both of these phrases have the same meaning. (See: [Parallelism](#))

trembles

This word describes fear that causes a person to uncontrollably shake. Alternate translation: “shakes with fear”

let him return

You can make explicit where he will go. Alternate translation: “let him return to his home” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Mount Gilead

This is the name of a mountain in the region of Gilead. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

twenty-two thousand

“22,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

ten thousand remained

The word “people” or “men” is understood. Alternate translation: “10,000 people remained” or “10,000 men remained” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ten thousand

“10,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

Judges 7:4

I will make their number smaller for you there

Here “number” represents the army. The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “there, I will show you who to send home so the army will have less men” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴ Then Yahweh said to Gideon, “Still the people are too numerous. Bring them down to the water, and I will further refine him for you there. So it will be whoever I will say to you, ‘This one will go with you,’ he will go with you. But anyone of whom I will say to you, ‘This one will not go with you,’ he will not go.”

Judges 7:5

Gideon brought

The word “brought” can be translated as “took” or “led.” (See: [Go and Come](#))

laps

to drink by licking with the tongue

ULT

⁵ So he brought the people down to the water, and Yahweh said to Gideon, “Anyone who laps up with his tongue from the water, just as would lap the dog, you shall set him apart, likewise anyone who kneels down on his knees to drink.”

Judges 7:6

Three hundred men

“300 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁶ Now it happened that the number of those who lapped with their hand to their mouth was three hundred men, but all of the rest of the people knelt down on their knees to drink water.

Judges 7:7

three hundred men

“300 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

I will rescue you and give you victory

Here “you” is plural and refers to Gideon and the Israelites. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

⁷ Then Yahweh said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men those who lapped, I will deliver you and I will give Midian over into your hand. So let the other people go back each one to his own place.”

Judges 7:8

So those who were chosen

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “So those whom Yahweh chose” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

took their supplies and their trumpets

Here “their” refers to the Israelite soldiers who were leaving the army.

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the story line. Here the narrator starts to tell a new part of the story.

ULT

⁸ Then the people took provision into their hand and their shofars but the other men of Israel he sent away, each man to his tents, except for the three hundred of the men he retained. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

Judges 7:9

Attack the camp, for I am going to give you victory over it

Here “camp” refers to the whole Midianite army. The word “victory” is an abstract noun that can be translated as a verb or an adjective. Alternate translation: “Attack the Midianites at their camp, for I am going to help you defeat them” or “Attack the Midianites at their camp, for I am going to cause you to be victorious over them” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁹ Now it happened during that night Yahweh said to him, “Arise! Go down into the camp, for I have given him over into your hand.”

Judges 7:10

afraid to go down

You can make clear the understood information. Alternate translation: "afraid to go down to attack" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

Purah

This is the name of a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

10 But if you are afraid to go down, go down, you and Purah your armor bearer to the camp,

Judges 7:11

your courage will be strengthened

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “what you hear will be encourage you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

guard posts

places around the edge of an area where soldiers stand to watch for an enemy army

ULT

11 and you shall hear what they are speaking, and afterwards your hands will be encouraged and you shall go down against the camp.” So he went down, he and Purah his armor bearer, to the edge of the fifty who were in the camp.

Judges 7:12

as thick as a cloud of locusts

Here “cloud” means a swarm. The author speaks of the army as if it were a swarm of locusts to emphasize how many soldiers there were. (See: [Simile](#))

Their camels were more ... in number than the grains of the sand on the seashore

The author uses a hyperbole, an exaggeration, to emphasize that there were very many camels. (See: [Hyperbole](#))

Their camels were more than could be counted

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Their camels were more than anyone could count” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

12 Now Midian, Amalek, and all of the sons of the east were lying down in the valley, as a locust swarm in abundance. As far as their camels they were innumerable, as the sand that is along the edge of the sea in abundance.

Judges 7:13

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

13 Gideon came, and look, a man was telling a dream to his neighbor. He said, "Look! I have dreamed a dream, and look, a round loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian. It came as far as the tent, and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down, so that the tent collapsed."

Judges 7:14

This is nothing other than the sword of Gideon

Here “the sword of Gideon” refers to Gideon’s army attacking.

Alternate translation: “The loaf of barley bread in your dream must be the army of Gideon” (See: [Metonymy](#))

God has given him victory over Midian

This future event is spoken of as if it were a past event. This emphasizes that it will certainly happen. Alternate translation: “God will certainly help the Israelites defeat the Midianites” (See: [Predictive Past](#))

ULT

¹⁴ His neighbor answered and said, “There is nothing else this can be if not the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, the man of Israel. The true God has given Midian into his hand and all of the camp.”

Judges 7:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁵ Now it happened when Gideon heard the narration of the dream and its interpretation, that he bowed down in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Rise up! For Yahweh has given the camp of Midian into your hand."

Judges 7:16

three hundred men

“300 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

16 Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put shofars into the hand of all of them as well as empty jars, with torches inside of the jars.

Judges 7:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

17 He said to them, "You shall look to me and thus you shall do. Watch! When I am coming along the edge of the camp, it shall be just as I do, thus you must do."

Judges 7:18

For Yahweh and for Gideon!

The words “we fight” are implied. Alternate translation: “We fight for Yahweh and for Gideon!” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

18 When I blow the shofar, I and everyone who is with me, then you shall blow the shofars, also you around all of the camp. Then you shall shout, ‘For Yahweh and for Gideon!’”

Judges 7:19

hundred men

“100 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

right at the beginning of the middle watch

The beginning of the middle watch would be around 10 o'clock at night.

ULT

19 So Gideon and one hundred men who were with him came to the edge of the camp, at the beginning of the middle nightwatch. They had only just stationed the guards, when they blew the shofars and they shattered the jars that were in their hand.

Judges 7:20

The sword of Yahweh and of Gideon

Here “sword” refers to their fighting. Alternate translation: “We fight for Yahweh and for Gideon” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

20 Then the three companies blew the shofars and they broke the jars. They held the torches in their left hand and the shofars in their right hand to blow. They shouted out, “A sword for Yahweh and for Gideon.”

Judges 7:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ Each man stood in his place around the camp and all of the camp ran. They shouted and fled away.

Judges 7:22

three hundred trumpets

“300 trumpets” (See: [Numbers](#))

Yahweh set every Midianite man’s sword against his comrades

Here “sword” refers to their attack with the use of the sword.
Alternate translation: “Yahweh caused every Midianite man to fight against his fellow soldiers” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²² When they blew the three hundred shofars, Yahweh set the sword of each man against his comrade and against all of the camp. As a result the army fled as far as Beth Shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel Meholah, towards Tabbath.

Beth Shittah ... Zererah ... Abel Meholah ... Tabbath

These are the names of towns and cities. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Judges 7:23

The men of Israel from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh were called out

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Gideon called out the Israelites from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and all Mannasseh” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²³ Then the men of Israel from Naphtali, and from Asher, and from all of Manasseh were summoned, and they pursued after Midian.

Judges 7:24

Beth Barah

This is the name of a town. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

took control of the waters, as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan River

“took control of the area of the Jordan River as far south as Beth Barah”

ULT

²⁴ Also Gideon sent messengers throughout all of the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Go down opposite Midian and seize before them the waters, as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.” Thus all of the men of Ephraim were summoned and they captured the waters, as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.

Judges 7:25

at the rock of Oreb ... at the winepress of Zeeb

The places were given these names after the Israelites killed Oreb and Zeeb there. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Oreb ... Zeeb

These are names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

²⁵ They captured the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued after Midian, and they brought the head of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, from across the Jordan.

Judges 8

Judges 8 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The account of Gideon concludes in this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Succoth's refusal to help Gideon

The men of Succoth feared the Midianites more than Gideon. This is why they refused to help Gideon. By allying themselves with the Midianites, they aligned themselves against Yahweh. Because of this, Gideon treated them like he treated the Midianites. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Gideon refuses to be king

Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, neither will my son rule over you. Yahweh will rule over you." Although the book of Deuteronomy anticipates a king in Israel, it was sinful for Israel to desire to have a king. He did though take a share of everyone's plunder as a king would have done through taxes. This may serve as a warning to Israel about their desire to have a king. (See: [sin, sinful, sinner, sinning](#))

Judges 8:1

What is this you have done to us?

The people of the tribe of Ephraim were rebuking Gideon with this rhetorical question for not including them in his army. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: “You have not treated us fairly.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

against Midian

Here “Midian” represents the Midianite army. (See: [Metonymy](#))

they had a violent argument with him

they argued angrily with him” or “they rebuked him severely”

ULT

¹ The men of Ephraim said to him, “What is this thing you have done to us, not summoning us when you went to fight against Midian?” Then they complained forcefully against him.

Judges 8:2

General Information:

Gideon replies to the men from Ephraim.

What have I done now compared to you?

Gideon uses this question to honor the people of Ephraim. Alternate translation: "I have done very little compared with what you have done!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

² He said to them, "What have I done now according to you? Are not the grape gleanings from Ephraim better than the grape harvest of Abiezer?"

Are not the gleanings of Ephraim's grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer?

Gideon was calming the people of Ephraim with this rhetorical question. Alternate translation: "Certainly the grapes you people of Ephraim gleaned are better than what we the descendants of Abiezer gathered from the whole harvest!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Are not the gleanings of Ephraim's grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer?

Gideon and his army defeating the Medianites is spoken of as if it were a grape harvest. The people of Ephraim killing Oreb and Zeeb at the end of the battle is spoken of as if they were gleaning grapes at the end of the harvest. Alternate translation: "What you people of Ephraim did at the end of the battle is more important than what we descendants of Abiezer did at the beginning." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Abiezer

This is the name of one of Gideon's ancestors. Gideon used his name to refer to Abiezer's descendants and their land. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

Judges 8:3

Oreb and Zeeb

See how you translated these names in [Judges 7:25](#).

What have I accomplished compared to you?

Gideon uses this question to honor the people of Ephraim. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: “What you have done is more important than what I have done.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

died down

“became less”

ULT

³ God has given over the princes of Midian into your hand, Oreb and Zeeb! So what was I able to do compared to you?” Then their spirit concerning him abated when he was speaking this word.

Judges 8:4

the three hundred men

“the 300 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

kept up the pursuit

The word “pursuit,” an abstract noun, can be expressed as a verb.

Alternate translation: “continued to chase their enemies” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁴ Then Gideon came to the Jordan, crossing over, he and the three hundred men who were with him. They were weary, yet they continued pursuing.

Judges 8:5

Zebah and Zalmunna

These are the names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁵ Then he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give round loaves of bread to the people who are at my feet, for they are weary, yet I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

Judges 8:6

Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand?

The leaders use a question to emphasize that the Israelites have not yet captured Zebah and Zalmunna. Alternate translation: "You have not captured Zebah and Zalmunna yet." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁶ The princes of Succoth replied, "Is the palm of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand that we should give bread to your army?"

Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna

Here "hands" refer to the whole body. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

now in your hand

Here "hand" represents power or control. (See: [Metonymy](#))

Why should we give bread to your army?

The leaders use a question to emphasize that they have no reason to give bread to the Israelites. Alternate translation: "We see no reason to give bread to your army." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 8:7

I will tear your skin with the desert thorns and briers

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "I will make whips out of desert thorns and briers and use them to beat you and cut you" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

thorns and briers

sharp, pointed pieces on vines or tree limbs that stick out and can cut people and animals

ULT

⁷ So Gideon declared, "Assuredly when Yahweh has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will thresh your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and briers."

Judges 8:8

He went up from there

Here “He” refers to Gideon. Gideon represents himself and the soldiers following him. Alternate translation: “They left there” or “Gideon and his 300 men left there” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Peniel

The name of a place. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

spoke to the people there in the same way

You can make clear the understood information. Alternate translation: “asked for food there in the same way” or “he also asked them for food” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

⁸ Then he went up from there to Penuel and also spoke to them in this manner, but the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.

Judges 8:9

When I come again in peace

This is a polite way of referring to the defeat of his enemies.
Alternate translation: "After I have completely defeated the Midian army" (See: [Euphemism](#))

I will pull down this tower

Here "I" refers to Gideon and represents himself and his men. Alternate translation: "My men and I will pull down this tower" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁹ So he declared also to the men of Peniel saying, "When I return in peace, I will tear down this tower."

Judges 8:10

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the story line. Here the narrator starts to tell a new part of the story.

Zebah and Zalmunna

See how you translated these names in [Judges 8:5](#).

Karkor

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

fifteen thousand men

“15,000 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

had fallen

This is a polite way of referring to people who died in battle. Alternate translation: “had been killed” or “had died in battle” (See: [Euphemism](#))

120,000 men

“one hundred thousand men” (See: [Numbers](#))

men who drew the sword

Here drawing the sword represents using the sword in battle. This could mean: (1) this phrase refers to soldiers who use swords in battle. Alternate translation: “swordsmen” or “men who fought with swords” or (2) this phrase refers to any soldiers. Alternate translation: “soldiers” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor and their troops were with them, about fifteen thousand, all the remaining out of all of the camp of the sons of the east, for the fallen were one hundred twenty thousand men drawing a sword.

Judges 8:11

Gideon went up

Here “Gideon” represents himself and all of his soldiers. Alternate translation: “Gideon and his soldiers went up” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

He defeated

Here “He” refers to Gideon and represents himself and all of his soldiers. Alternate translation: “Gideon and his soldiers defeated” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Nobah and Jogbehah

These are names of towns. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

11 Then Gideon went up the road of those dwelling in the tents, from the east to Nobah and Jogbehah. He struck the camp, when the camp was feeling secure.

Judges 8:12

Zebah and Zalmunna

See how you translated these names in [Judges 8:5](#).

panic

extreme fear or worry that makes someone unable to think or act normally

ULT

¹² Zebah and Zalmunna fled, but he pursued after them and he captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna. Thus he caused all of the camp to tremble in terror.

Judges 8:13

the pass of Heres

This is the name of a road that passes between two mountains. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

13 Then Gideon, the son of Joash, returned from the battle, going through the ascent of Heres.

Judges 8:14

questioned him

It can be stated explicitly what Gideon asked the young man.
Alternate translation: "he asked him to identify all the names of the leaders in the town" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

seventy-seven officials

"77 officials" (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

14 He captured a young man out of the men of Succoth and he interrogated him. He wrote down for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.

Judges 8:15

Zebah and Zalmunna

See how you translated these names in [Judges 8:5](#).

Have you already conquered Zebah and Zalmunna?

Gideon quotes the people of Succoth as using a question to mock him. Alternate translation: "You have not yet conquered Zebah and Zalmunna." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

15 Then he came to the men of Succoth and he said, "Look at Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me saying, 'Is the palm of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand that we should give bread to your weary men.'"

Judges 8:16

Gideon took ... he punished

Here “Gideon” represents himself and his soldiers. Alternate translation: “Gideon and his soldiers took ... they punished” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

thorns and briers

These are sharp, pointed pieces on vines or tree limbs that stick out and can cut people and animals. See how you translated this in [Judges 8:7](#).

ULT

16 He took the elders of the city and the thorns of the wilderness and the briers, and he made the men of Succoth undergo them.

Judges 8:17

he pulled

Gideon and his soldiers pulled. Alternate translation: "Gideon and his soldiers pulled" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Peniel

Translate the name of this city as you did in [Judges 8:8](#).

ULT

17 Then he tore down the tower of Peniel and he killed the men of the city.

Judges 8:18

Zebah and Zalmunna

See how you translated these names in [Judges 8:5](#).

Tabor

Translate the name of this city as you did in [Judges 4:6](#).

As you are, so were they

“They were just like you”

ULT

18 Next he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What sort were the men who you killed at Tabor?” They replied, “As you are, so were they. Each one was as the form of the sons of the king.”

Judges 8:19

As Yahweh lives

This idiom is a religious oath used for emphasis that what he is about to say is true. Alternate translation: "I promise you that" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

19 So he said, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As Yahweh lives, if only you had let them live, I would not have killed you."

Judges 8:20

Jether

This is the name of Gideon's son. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

20 Then he said to Jether his firstborn, "Arise, kill them!" But the young man did not pull out his sword because he was afraid, for he was still a youth.

Judges 8:21

For as the man is, so is his strength

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "It is a job for a man to do" (See: [Idiom](#))

crescent

This is a curved shape with two points. This shape occurs when the moon is mostly covered in shadow.

ornaments

decorations

ULT

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Arise yourself and fall upon us! Truly like a man with his own power." So Gideon rose up and he killed Zebah and Zalmunna. He also took the crescent-shaped ornaments that were on the necks of their camels.

Judges 8:22

out of the hand of Midian

Here “hand” represents the power of Midian over Israel. Alternate translation: “from the power of Midian” or “from Midian” (See: [Metonymy](#))

of Midian

Here “Midian” represents the people of Midian. Alternate translation: “of the Midianites” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, and even the son of your son, because you have delivered us out of the hand of Midian.”

Judges 8:23

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²³ But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you myself, neither will my son rule over you. Yahweh will rule over you."

Judges 8:24

Gideon said to them

"Gideon said to the men of Israel"

earrings

jewelry worn on the ear

plunder

things stolen by force or taken off of people killed in war

The Midianites had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites

Here the narrator tells background information about the Midianites. (See: [Background Information](#))

ULT

²⁴ Then Gideon said to them, "Let me ask a request of you, that each man give me the earring from his spoil." For they had earrings of gold because they were Ishmaelites.

Judges 8:25

cloak

clothing made from a large piece of fabric and worn over the shoulders as a coat

ULT

²⁵ They replied, "We will surely give them." So they spread out the garment and each man threw the earring from his spoil onto there.

Judges 8:26

1,700 shekels of gold

“one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold.” If it is necessary to use modern weight units, here are two ways of doing it. Alternate translation: “18.7 kilograms of gold” or “about 20 kilograms of gold” (See: [Numbers](#) and [Biblical Weight](#))

crescent ornaments

See how you translated this in [Judges 8:21](#).

pendants

pieces of jewelry that hang at the end of the chains or cords of necklaces

that was worn by the kings of Midian

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “that the kings of Midian wore” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁶ Now the weight of the earrings of gold that he requested was one thousand seven hundred pieces of gold, besides that of the crescent-shaped ornaments, the pendants, the dyed purple garments that were upon the kings of Midian, and besides that of the collars that were around the necks of their camels.

Judges 8:27

Gideon made an ephod out of the earrings

“Gideon used the gold from the earrings to make an ephod”

Ophrah

Translate the name of this city as you did in [Judges 6:11](#).

ULT

²⁷ Then Gideon made it into an ephod and placed it in his city, in Ophrah, and all of Israel pursued adulterously after it there. It became as a snare for Gideon and for his house.

all Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there

This speaks of worshiping a false god as if it were prostitution. Alternate translation: “the Israelites sinned against Yahweh by worshiping the ephod there” (See: [Metaphor](#))

all Israel

Here “all” is an exaggeration to emphasize that very many worshiped the garment. Alternate translation: “very many people in Israel worshiped the garment” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

It became a trap for Gideon and for those in his house

This speaks of Gideon and his family being tempted to worship the ephod as if the ephod were a hunter’s snare that would trap them. Alternate translation: “It became a temptation for Gideon and his family” or “Gideon and his family sinned by worshiping it” (See: [Metaphor](#))

for those in his house

Here “his house” represents Gideon’s family. Alternate translation: “for his family” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 8:28

So Midian was subdued before the people of Israel

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “So Yahweh subdued the Midianites before the people of Israel” or “So Yahweh helped the Israelites defeat the Midianites” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

they did not raise their heads up again

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “they did not attack Israel again” (See: [Idiom](#))

So the land had peace

Here “land” represents the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “So the Israelites lived peacefully” (See: [Metonymy](#))

forty years

“40 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

in the days of Gideon

“during the life of Gideon”

ULT

²⁸ So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel and they did not continue to raise up their heads. So the land was tranquil forty years during the days of Gideon.

Judges 8:29

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. See how you translated his name in [Judges 6:32](#).

ULT

²⁹ Jerubbaal, the son of Joash, went and lived in his house.

Judges 8:30

seventy sons

“70 sons” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

³⁰ Now Gideon had seventy sons coming forth from his loins, for he had many wives.

Judges 8:31

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³¹ His concubine, who was in Shechem, even she bore him a son, and he made his name Abimelech.

Judges 8:32

a good old age

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “when he was very old” (See: [Idiom](#))

was buried

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “they buried him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Ophrah

Translate the name of this city as you did in [Judges 6:11](#).

the clan of Abiezer

Translate the name of this people group as you did in [Judges 6:11](#).

ULT

³² Gideon, the son of Joash, died at a good old age and he was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, at Ophrah of the Abiezerite.

Judges 8:33

It came about

This phrase is used here to mark the beginning of a new part of the story. If your language has a way for doing this, you could consider using it here.

turned again

The people rejecting Yahweh is spoken of as if they physically turned away from him. Alternate translation: “they stopped worshiping Yahweh” (See: [Metaphor](#))

prostituted themselves by worshiping the Baals

This speaks of worshiping false gods as if it were prostitution. Alternate translation: “they sinned against Yahweh by worshiping the Baals” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Baal-Berith

This is the name of a false god. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

³³ Now it happened that when Gideon had died, the sons of Israel turned back again and pursued adulterously after the Baals. They made Baal-Berith for themselves as a god.

Judges 8:34

from the hand of all their enemies

Here “hand” represents power or control. Alternate translation: “from the power of all their enemies” or “from all their enemies” (See: [Metonymy](#))

on every side

“who surrounded them”

ULT

³⁴ The sons of Israel did not remember Yahweh, their God, the one who had delivered them from the hand of all of their enemies all around.

Judges 8:35

the house of Jerub Baal

Here “the house of” represents a person’s family. Alternate translation: “the family of Jerub Baal” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. See how you translated this in [Judges 6:32](#).

ULT

³⁵ They did not show lasting loyalty with the house of Jerubbaal, Gideon, in accordance with all of the good that he did within Israel.

Judges 9

Judges 9 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Jotham's curse

Gideon's son, Abimelech, killed all of his brothers except Jotham in order to become king of Shechem. Jotham cursed Abimelech for having murdered Gideon's other sons. "Let fire come out from Abimelech and burn up the men of Shechem and the house of Millo. Let fire come out from the men of Shechem and Beth Millo, to burn up Abimelech." (See: [curse](#), [cursed](#), [cursing](#))

=##### Important figures of speech in this chapter

Tree metaphor

This chapter contains an extended metaphor about trees. This metaphor functions as a parable instructing Israel about their sinful desire to have a king. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#))

Judges 9:1

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. See how you translated this in [Judges 6:32](#).

ULT

¹ Now Abimelech, the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to the brothers of his mother and he spoke to them and to all of the family of the house of the father of his mother saying,

Judges 9:2

Please say this, so that all the leaders in Shechem may hear, ‘Which is better for you, that all seventy sons of Jerub Baal rule over you, or that just one rule over you?’

This has a quotation within a quotation. A direct quotation can be stated as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: “Please ask the leaders of Shechem if they would rather have all seventy sons of Jerub Baal rule over them, or if they would rather have just one of his sons rule over them.” (See: [Quotes within Quotes](#) and [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

ULT

² “Please speak in the ears of all of the citizens of Shechem, ‘What is better for you, seventy men ruling over you, all of the sons of Jerubbaal, or one man ruling over you? Remember that I am your bone and your flesh.’”

seventy

“70” (See: [Numbers](#))

I am your bone and your flesh

Here “your bone and your flesh” represents being someone’s relative. Alternate translation: “I am a member of your family” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 9:3

His mother's relatives spoke for him to the leaders

This means that the relatives of the mother of Abimelech spoke to the leaders, suggesting that they make Abimelech their king.

they agreed to follow Abimelech

"they agreed to let Abimelech be their leader"

ULT

³ The brothers of his mother spoke all of these things on his behalf in the ears of all of the citizens of Shechem, and their heart turned aside after Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother."

Judges 9:4

the house

Here “house” represents a temple. (See: [Metonymy](#))

seventy pieces of silver

This means seventy shekels of silver. A shekel weighs 11 grams. If it is necessary to translate this with modern measurements, you can translate it like this. Alternate translation: “almost one kilo of silver” (See: [Biblical Money](#))

ULT

⁴ Then they gave him seventy pieces of silver from the house of Baal Berith, and Abimelech hired with them unprincipled and undisciplined men, so they went after him.

seventy

“70” (See: [Numbers](#))

Baal-Berith

This is the name of a false god. See how you translated it in [Judges 8:33](#).

worthless and reckless

“violent and foolish”

Judges 9:5

Ophrah

Translate the name of this city as you did in [Judges 6:11](#).

one stone

“1 stone” (See: [Numbers](#))

seventy

“70” (See: [Numbers](#))

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. See how you translated this in [Judges 6:32](#).

ULT

⁵ Then he went to the house of his father at Ophrah, and he killed his brothers, the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men upon one stone. But Jotham was left, the youngest son of Jerubbaal, for he had hidden himself.

Judges 9:6

Beth Millo

This is the name of a place. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁶ Then all of the prominent citizens of Shechem and all of Beth Millo assembled themselves and they went and installed Abimelech as king beside an oak tree near the standing pillar that was in Shechem.

Judges 9:7

General Information:

Jotham begins telling a parable in which the trees try to find someone to rule them. The trees represent the Israelites. (See: [Parables](#))

When Jotham was told about this

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “When Jotham heard that Abimelech had murdered his brothers” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Mount Gerizim

This is a mountain. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁷ When they told Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim. He lifted up his voice and cried out and said to them, “Listen to me, citizens of Shechem, so God will listen to you.”

Judges 9:8

The trees once went out to anoint a king over them. For they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.'

In this parable Jotham describes the trees doing things that humans do. (See: [Parables](#) and [Personification](#))

ULT

⁸ Once the trees went about in order to anoint a king over themselves. So they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.'

to anoint a king over them

Here, to anoint with oil is a symbolic action that represents appointing a person to be king. Alternate translation: "to appoint a king to rule over all of them" (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

Reign over us

"Be our king"

Judges 9:9

General Information:

Jotham continues telling the parable he begins in [Judges 9:7](#), where the trees represent the Israelites.

Should I give up my abundance ... over the other trees?

The olive tree is asking this question to refuse to be king. This question can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "I will not give up my abundance ... over the other trees." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁹ But the olive tree replied to them, 'Have I stopped producing my fatness, when by me they honor gods and men, that I should go to wave over the trees?'

abundance

This word for "wealth" is a metonym for the olives that come from the tree. People ate olives as food and crushed them to make oil for lamps. Alternate translation: "oil" (See: [Metonymy](#))

by which gods and men are honored

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "by which people honor both gods and other men"

gods

It is possible to translate the same Hebrew word as "god," "God," or "gods," so this could mean: (1) "gods" or (2) "God."

sway over

To sway is to move back and forth. Trees sway when the wind blows them. Here this is a metaphor for ruling over people. Jotham is also using irony, saying that the work of any ruler will be useless because the "trees," the people, will not obey anyone who rules them. Alternate translation: "rule over" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Irony](#))

Judges 9:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁰ So the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come! Reign over us.'

Judges 9:11

the fig tree said to them

Jotham continues describing the trees as doing things that humans do. (See: [Parables](#) and [Personification](#))

Should I give up my sweetness ... over the other trees?

The fig tree is asking this question to refuse to be king. This question can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "I will not give up my sweetness ... over the other trees." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

my sweetness and my good fruit

The word "sweetness" is an abstract noun. It can be stated as an adjective that describes the fruit that grows on the tree. Alternate translation: "my good sweet fruit" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

11 But the fig tree said to them, 'Have I stopped producing my sweetness and my good fruit, that I should go to wave over the trees?'

Judges 9:12

General Information:

Jotham continues telling the parable he begins in [Judges 9:7](#), where the trees represent the Israelites.

The trees said to the vine

In this parable, Jotham describes the trees and the vine as doing things that humans do. (See: [Parables](#) and [Personification](#))

ULT

12 Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come! Reign over us.'

Judges 9:13

Should I give up my new wine ... over the other trees?

The vine is asking this question to refuse to be king. This question can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "I will not give up my new wine ... over the other trees." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹³ Then the vine said to them, 'Have I stopped producing my new wine, which cheers gods and man, that I should go to wave over the trees?'

Judges 9:14

thornbush

Thorns are sharp spikes or spurs that hurt. This bush has many sharp spikes along its branches.

ULT

14 Then all of the trees said to the thornbush, 'You come, reign over us.'

Judges 9:15

General Information:

Jotham continues telling his parable, where trees represent various people groups, and makes the application.

The thornbush said to the trees

In this parable, Jotham describes the thornbush and the trees as doing things that humans do. (See: [Parables](#) and [Personification](#))

to anoint me as king over you

To anoint someone with oil is a symbolic action that appoints a person to be king. Alternate translation: “to appoint me as your king” (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

find safety

The word “safety” is an abstract noun that can be expressed as an adjective. Alternate translation: “be safe” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

fire come out of the thornbush and let it burn up the cedars of Lebanon

This means to let the thornbush burn so that it will burn the cedars.

then let fire come out of the thornbush

The thornbush refers to itself as “the thornbush.” Alternate translation: “then may fire come out from me, the thornbush” (See: [First](#), [Second](#) or [Third Person](#))

ULT

15 The thornbush said to the trees, ‘If in truth you are anointing me as king over you, come, seek refuge in my shade. But if not, may fire go forth from the thornbush and consume the cedars of Lebanon.’

Judges 9:16

Now

This does not mean “at this moment,” but is used to draw attention to the important point that follows.

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. See how you translated this in [Judges 6:32](#).

his house

Here “house” represents Gideon’s family. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

16 Therefore, now if in truth and in integrity you have acted when you installed Abimelech as king, and if you have done well concerning Jerubaal and with his household, and if according to the deed of his hands you have done to him,

Judges 9:17

General Information:

Jotham makes the application to the situation at that time and place.

to think that my father fought for you ... out of the hand of Midian

Here Jotham is expressing that he cannot believe how badly the people of Shechem have treated Gideon and his family even after Gideon fought to save the people of Shechem.

out of the hand of Midian

Here “hand” represents power or control. Alternate translation: “from the power of the Midianites” or “from the Midianites” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

17 that my father fought on your behalf, and threw aside his life even out front, when he delivered you out of the hand of Midian,

Judges 9:18

you have risen up against

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “you have opposed” or “you have rebelled against” (See: [Idiom](#))

my father’s house

Here “house” represents family. Alternate translation: “my father’s family” (See: [Metonymy](#))

seventy

“70” (See: [Numbers](#))

one stone

“1 stone” (See: [Numbers](#))

his female servant

Here “his” refers to Gideon.

ULT

18 but today you have risen up against the house of my father and have killed his sons, seventy men, upon one stone. Then you have installed Abimelech, the son of his female servant, as king over the citizens of Shechem, because he is your brother.

Judges 9:19

If you acted with honesty and integrity with Jerub Baal and his house

Jotham offered the possibility that what they did was good, but Jotham does not actually believe what they did was good. Alternate translation: "If you treated Jerub Baal and his family as they deserved to be treated" (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

ULT

¹⁹ Now if you have acted in truth and in integrity with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, rejoice about Abimelech, and he himself will also rejoice about you.

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. It means "let Baal defend himself." See how you translated this in [Judges 6:32](#).

his house

Here "house" refers to family. Alternate translation: "his family" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 9:20

But if not

Jotham offered the opposite possibility that what they did was evil and applied a curse. Jotham does believe what they did was evil. Alternate translation: "But if you treated Jerub Baal and his family as they did not deserve to be treated" (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

let fire come out from Abimelech and burn up the men of Shechem

Jotham is speaking a curse. He speaks of Abimelech destroying the people of Shechem as if he would burn them with fire. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Let fire come out from the men of Shechem and Beth Millo, to burn up Abimelech

Jotham is speaking a curse. He speaks of the people of Shechem and Beth Millo destroying Abimelech as if they would burn him with fire. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Beth Millo

This is the name of a place. See how you translated this in [Judges 9:6](#).

ULT

20 But if not, fire shall come forth from Abimelech and it shall consume the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo. Fire shall also come forth from the citizens of Shechem and from Beth Millo and it shall consume Abimelech."

Judges 9:21

Beer

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

²¹ Then Jotham fled away and escaped, and he went to Beer. He settled there away from the presence of Abimelech, his brother.

Judges 9:22

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²² Now Abimelech ruled over Israel
three years.

Judges 9:23

God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem

This means that God applied the curse Jotham made by sending an evil spirit to cause trouble and animosity between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem.

ULT

²³ Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and between the citizens of Shechem so that the citizens of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech,

Judges 9:24

God did this so the violence done ... helped him murder his brothers

The passive phrases can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God did this to avenge the seventy sons whom Abimelech their brother murdered and the men of Shechem helped murder" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

seventy

"70" (See: [Numbers](#))

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. See how you translated this in [Judges 6:32](#).

ULT

²⁴ by revisiting the violent treatment of the seventy sons of Jerubbaal and by putting their blood upon Abimelech their brother, who had killed them, and upon the citizens of Shechem who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers.

Judges 9:25

**positioned men to lie in wait on the hilltops
that they might ambush him**

“sent men to hide on the hilltops and wait to attack Abimelech”

This was reported to Abimelech

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Someone told Abimelech about the men waiting to attack him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁵ So the citizens of Shechem positioned men in ambush after him along the tops of the hills. They robbed everyone who would pass by them along the road, and it was reported to Abimelech.

Judges 9:26

Gaal ... Ebed

These are names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

had confidence in him

The word “confidence” is an abstract noun that can be stated with the verb “trust.” Alternate translation: “trusted him” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁶ Then Gaal, the son of Ebed came along with his brothers and they went over to Shechem. The citizens of Shechem trusted him.

Judges 9:27

They went out into the field

Here “They” refers to Gaal and his relatives and the men of Shechem.

they trampled on them

They did this to squeeze out the grape juice to make wine with it. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

trampled

“crushed” or “stomped”

in the house

Here “house” represents a temple. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁷ They went out into the field and they picked grapes from their vineyards, and they pressed them. They celebrated harvest festivals and they went into the house of their gods, then they ate and they drank, and they cursed Abimelech.

Judges 9:28

Gaal ... Ebed

See how you translated these names in [Judges 9:26](#).

Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him?

Gaal uses a question to emphasize that the people of Shechem should not serve Abimelech. Alternate translation: “We should not serve Abimelech!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

28 Then Gaal, the son of Ebed, said, “Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his deputy? Serve the men of Hamor, the father of Shechem. Why should we serve him, ourselves?”

Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him?

Both of these questions means the same thing. Gaal refers to Abimelech as “Shechem” because Abimelech’s mother was from Shechem. Alternate translation: “We should not serve Abimelech, that is, Shechem!” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

Is he not the son of Jerub Baal? Is Zebul not his officer?

Gaal uses a question to emphasize that the people of Shechem should not serve Abimelech. Alternate translation: “He is just the son of Jerub Baal, and Zebul is just his officer.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. See how you translated this in [Judges 6:32](#).

Zebul

This is the name of a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Serve the men of Hamor, Shechem’s father

Gaal means the people of Shechem should serve those who descended from Hamor, that is, those who are truly Canaanites, and not serve someone whose father was an Israelite.

Why should we serve Abimelech?

Gaal uses a question to emphasize that the people of Shechem should not serve Abimelech. Alternate translation: “We should not serve Abimelech!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Judges 9:29

I wish that this people were under my command

"I wish that I ruled the people of Shechem"

ULT

²⁹ Who will give this people into my hand? Then I would depose Abimelech. He said to Abimelech, 'Enlarge your army and come forth.'"

Judges 9:30

Zebul

See how you translated this name in [Judges 9:28](#).

heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed

“heard what Gaal son of Ebed said”

Gaal ... Ebed

See how you translated these names in [Judges 9:26](#).

his anger was kindled

Becoming angry is spoken of as if a fire were starting. Alternate translation: “he became very angry” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the city

Here “city” represents the people of the city. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³⁰ When Zebul, the prince of the city, heard the words of Gaal, the son of Ebed, his anger burned.

Judges 9:31

in order to deceive

Zebul is deceiving Gaal and the people of Shechem. Alternate translation: “secretly”

they are stirring up the city against you

This speaks of the people of the city becoming upset as if they were liquid in a pot moving around. Alternate translation: “they are persuading the people of the city to rebel against you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³¹ So he sent messengers to Abimelech in secret, saying, “Look, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers are coming to Shechem, and look, they are inciting the city against you.”

Judges 9:32

General Information:

Zebul's messengers continue talking to Abimelech.

Now

This does not mean "at this moment," but is used to draw attention to the important point that follows.

an ambush

"to hide and attack them suddenly"

ULT

³² Therefore, now, rise up by night, you and the people who are with you, and lie in ambush in the field.

Judges 9:33

do whatever you can to them

This means that they can do what they want to destroy the followers of Gaal.

ULT

33 Then it shall happen, in the morning, at the rising of the sun, you shall set out early and you shall spread out in an attack against the city. Watch, when he and the people who are with him are coming out to you, then you do to him just as your hand finds occasion.”

Judges 9:34

all the men who were with him

“all the men accompanying Abimelech” or “all the men fighting for Abimelech”

dividing into four units

“separating into 4 groups” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

³⁴ So Abimelech and all of the people who were with him rose up by night, and they set up an ambush against Shechem. They were four units.

Judges 9:35

Gaal ... Ebed

See how you translated these names in [Judges 9:26](#).

ULT

³⁵ Gaal, the son of Ebed, went out and he stood in the entrance of the gate of the city. Then Abimelech and the people who were with him rose up from the ambush.

Judges 9:36

Gaal

This is the name of a man. See how you translated this in [Judges 9:26](#).

Zebul

This is the name of a man. See how you translated this in [Judges 9:28](#).

ULT

³⁶ When Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, "Look, a group of people is coming down from the tops of the hills!" Zebul said to him, "You are seeing the shadow of the hills as men."

You are seeing the shadows on the hills like they are men

Zebul is trying to confuse Gaal and keep him from preparing for battle. Alternate translation: "That is not people, it is only shadows on the hills"

Judges 9:37

one unit

“1 group” or “1 troop” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

³⁷ Again, Gaal continued to speak and said, “Look, groups of people are coming down from beside the summit of the land, and one unit is coming from the way of the oak of the diviners.”

Judges 9:38

Zebul

See how you translated this name in [Judges 9:28](#).

Where are your proud words now, you

Zebul is scolding Gaal with this rhetorical question. Alternate translation: “You are not speaking proudly now, you” or “You are not proud now, you” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

³⁸ Then Zebul said to him, “Where then is your mouth, with which you said, ‘Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?’ Is this not the people who you regard it with contempt? Indeed, go out now and fight against him.”

you who said, ‘Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?’

Zebul is quoting Gaal’s boast back to Gaal. This can be translated as a statement and as an indirect quote. Alternate translation: “you who said that we should not serve Abimelech.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

Are these not the men you despised?

Zebul is challenging Gaal with this rhetorical question. This question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: “Here are the men that you despised.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

despised

strongly disliked or hated

Judges 9:39

Gaal

See how you translated this name in [Judges 9:26](#).

ULT

³⁹ So Gaal went out before the citizens of Shechem, and he fought against Abimelech.

Judges 9:40

Many fell with deadly wounds

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “And many men died of wounds” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁴⁰ Abimelech pursued him, and he fled from his presence. Many fell fatally wounded as far as the entrance of the city gate.

Judges 9:41

Arumah

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Zebul

This is the name of a man. See how you translated this in [Judges 9:28](#).

Gaal

This is the name of a man. See how you translated this in [Judges 9:26](#).

ULT

41 Then Abimelech settled in Arumah.
Zebul drove Gaal and his brothers away
from dwelling in Shechem.

Judges 9:42

this was reported to Abimelech

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “someone reported this to Abimelech” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁴² Now it happened that the next day the people went out into the field, and they reported it to Abimelech.

Judges 9:43

divided them into three units

“separated them into 3 groups” (See: [Numbers](#))

they set an ambush in the fields

“they hid in the fields to attack the people by surprise”

he attacked

Here “he” refers to Abimelech who represents himself and all of his soldiers. Alternate translation: “they attacked” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

43 So he took the people, and he split up into three units. Then he waited in ambush in the field. When he saw and look, the people were going out of the city, then he rose up against them and he killed them.

Judges 9:44

the units

“the groups of soldiers”

other two

“other 2” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁴⁴ Abimelech and the units that were with him spread out and they stood at the entrance of the gate of the city. But two units spread out against everyone who was in the field and they killed them.

Judges 9:45

Abimelech fought ... He tore down

Here “Abimelech” represents himself and his soldiers. Alternate translation: “Abimelech and his soldiers fought ... They tore down” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

against the city

Here “city” represents the people. Alternate translation: “against the people of Shechem” (See: [Metonymy](#))

tore down

“demolished”

spread salt over it

“spread salt over the land.” Spreading salt over land keeps anything from growing there. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴⁵ Abimelech fought against the city all that day. He captured the city, and he killed the people who were in it. Then he tore down the city and scattered salt on it.

Judges 9:46

the house

Here this represents a temple. (See: [Metonymy](#))

El-Berith

The word “El” means “god.” This is the same false god as “Baal-Berith” in [Judges 8:33](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁴⁶ When all the lords of the tower of Shechem heard, they went into the citadel of the house of El-Berith.

Judges 9:47

Abimelech was told

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Someone told Abimelech” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

47 Then it was reported to Abimelech that all the lords of the tower of Shechem had assembled themselves.

Judges 9:48

Mount Zalmon

This is the name of a mountain. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

48 So Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who were with him. Abimelech took the proper ax in his hand and cut off a branch from the trees. He lifted it and set it upon his shoulder and said to the people who were with him, "Whatsoever you have seen that I have done, hurry, do the same as me."

Judges 9:49

piled

This means to stack the branches into a large heap.

about a thousand men

“about 1,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁴⁹ So all the people also each cut off a branch and they went after Abimelech. Then they piled them on top of the underground chamber, thus on account of them they burned the underground chamber with fire. As a result all the distinguished people in the tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women.

Judges 9:50

Thebez

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

encamped against Thebez

“camped outside the city of Thebez”

ULT

⁵⁰ Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he set up camp around Thebez and he captured it.

Judges 9:51

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵¹ But there was a strong tower in the midst of the city, so all of the men and the women and all the prominent citizens of the city fled to there. They closed it up behind themselves and they went up on the roof of the tower.

Judges 9:52

fought against it

“attacked it”

ULT

⁵² Then Abimelech came towards the tower and he fought against it, and he approached as far as the entrance of the tower in order to burn it with fire.

Judges 9:53

upper millstone

Two large, flat, round stones were used to grind grain in a mill. An upper millstone was the top one that was rolled on the lower one to crush the grain in between them.

ULT

53 But one woman threw down an upper millstone onto the head of Abimelech and it crushed his skull.

Judges 9:54

armor-bearer

This is the man who carried the weapons of Abimelech.

pierced him through

This means the young man put the sword right through the body of Abimelech.

ULT

⁵⁴ Then he cried out hurriedly to the young man bearing his armor, and he said to him, "Draw out your sword and put me to death, lest they will say about me, 'A woman killed him.'" So his young man stabbed him so that he died.

Judges 9:55

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵⁵ When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech had died, they went each to his own place.

Judges 9:56

seventy

“70” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁵⁶ Thus God avenged the evil of Abimelech that he did to his father by killing his seventy brothers.

Judges 9:57

made all the evil of the men of Shechem turn back on their own heads

“Evil turn back on their heads” here is an idiom. Alternate translation: “punished the men of Shechem for all the evil they had done” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁵⁷ All the evil of the men of Shechem God caused to return back upon their own heads and on them came the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubbaal.

on them came the curse of Jotham son of Jerub Baal

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “the curse of Jotham son of Jerub Baal happened to them” (See: [Idiom](#))

Jerub Baal

This is another name for Gideon. See how you translated this name in [Judges 6:32](#).

Judges 10

Judges 10 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter begins the account of Jephthah ([Judges 10-12](#)).

Special concepts in this chapter

Israel's punishment

In Judges, Israel's actions are connected to their obedience to Yahweh. When Israel does evil, they are oppressed. (See: [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [oppress](#), [oppressed](#), [oppression](#), [oppressor](#), [dominate](#))

Judges 10:1

Tola ... Puah ... Dodo

These are names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Shamir

This is the name of a place. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

arose to deliver Israel

“came to deliver Israel” or “became the leader to deliver Israel”

deliver Israel

Here “Israel” represents the people of Israel. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ Now after Abimelech, Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose in order to deliver Israel. He settled in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim.

Judges 10:2

He judged Israel

Here “judged” means he led the people of Israel.

twenty-three years

“23 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

was buried

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “they buried him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

² He judged Israel twenty-three years.

He died and was buried in Shamir.

Judges 10:3

He was followed by Jair the Gileadite

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Jair the Gileadite was leader after Tola” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Jair

This is the name of a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

the Gileadite

Jair was from the tribe of Gilead.

He judged Israel

Here “judged” means he led the people of Israel.

Israel

Here “Israel” represents the people of Israel. (See: [Metonymy](#))

twenty-two years

“22 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

³ Then arose after him Jair the Gileadite.
He judged Israel twenty-two years.

Judges 10:4

thirty sons

“30 sons” (See: [Numbers](#))

Havvoth Jair

This is the name of a region, which is named after a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

to this day

This means to the time when the book of Judges was being written.

ULT

⁴ Now he had thirty sons, riding on thirty donkeys. There were thirty cities for them, they call them Havvoth Jair to this day, that are in the land of the Gilead.

Judges 10:5

was buried

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “they buried him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Kamon

This is the name of a place. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁵ Then Jair died and he was buried in Kamon.

Judges 10:6

added to the evil they had done in the sight of Yahweh

This speaks of evil as if it were an object that a person could add to and make bigger. Alternate translation: “continued doing what Yahweh said was evil” (See: [Metaphor](#))

in the sight of Yahweh

The sight of Yahweh represents Yahweh’s judgment or evaluation. Alternate translation: “according to Yahweh” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ashtoreths

This is the plural of Ashtoroth, who was worshiped as a goddess in many different forms. See how you translated this in [Judges 2:13](#).

They abandoned Yahweh and no longer worshiped him

The author basically said the same thing twice for emphasis. These can be combined. Alternate translation: “They completely stopped worshiping Yahweh” (See: [Parallelism](#))

They abandoned Yahweh

No longer obeying and worshiping Yahweh is spoken of as if the people left Yahweh and went somewhere else. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ The sons of Israel continued to do this evil in the eyes of Yahweh: they worshiped the Baals, the Ashtoreths, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines. They forsook Yahweh and did not serve him.

Judges 10:7

Yahweh burned with anger toward Israel

Yahweh becoming angry is spoken of as if anger were a burning fire.
Alternate translation: "Yahweh was very angry at Israel" (See: [Metaphor](#))

he sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the Ammonites

Yahweh allowing the Philistines and the Ammonites to defeat the Israelites is spoken of as if he sold the Israelites to them. (See: [Metaphor](#))

into the hand

Here "hand" represents power or control. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ The anger of Yahweh burned against Israel, so he gave them over into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the sons of Ammon.

Judges 10:8

crushed and oppressed

These two words basically mean the same and emphasize how much the Israelites suffered. Alternate translation: “terribly oppressed” (See: [Doublet](#))

eighteen years

“18 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

who were beyond the Jordan

This means on the east side of the Jordan River.

which is in Gilead

“this region is also called Gilead”

ULT

⁸ They shattered and oppressed the sons of Israel in that year, and for eighteen years all the sons of Israel who were on the opposite side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in the Gilead.

Judges 10:9

Judah ... Benjamin

“Judah” and “Benjamin” refer to the people belonging to those tribes. Alternate translation: “the people of the tribe of Judah ... the people of the tribe of Benjamin” (See: [Metonymy](#))

house of Ephraim

The “house” refers to the people of the tribe of Ephraim. Alternate translation: “the people of the tribe of Ephraim” (See: [Metonymy](#))

so that Israel was greatly distressed

“Israel” refers to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “so that the people of Israel suffered much” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ Then the sons of Ammon also crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, and as a result there was for Israel exceedingly great distress.

Judges 10:10

the people of Israel called out to Yahweh

This means the people of Israel desperately asked Yahweh for help.

because we abandoned our God

The people no longer obeying and worshiping Yahweh is spoken of as if they left Yahweh and went somewhere else. (See: [Metaphor](#))

abandoned our God

The people are speaking to Yahweh and refer to him as “our God.” This can be stated in second person. Alternate translation: “abandoned you, our God” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

10 Then the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh, saying, “We have sinned against you, because we have forsaken our God and we have served the Baals.”

Judges 10:11

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

11 Then Yahweh said to the sons of Israel, "Was it not from the Egyptians, from the Amorite, from the sons of Ammon, from the Philistines,

Judges 10:12

and also from the Sidonians?

God is rebuking the people of Israel for their worship of other gods. The rhetorical question that begins with the words “Did I not deliver you” in verse 11 ends here. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: “I am the one who delivered you ... and also from the Sidonians.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹² the Sidonians and Amalek and Maon, when they oppressed you that you cried out to me, and I delivered you from their hand?

Maonites

These are the people from the clan or family of Maon. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

from their power

Here “power” represents the Amalekites and the Maonites. Alternate translation: “from them” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 10:13

you abandoned me again

The people no longer obeying and worshiping Yahweh is spoken of as if they left Yahweh and went somewhere else. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I will not keep adding to the times I deliver you

The phrase “keep adding to the times” is an idiom that means to continue to do something. You can make explicit the implicit meaning of Yahweh’s saying. Alternate translation: “I will not keep on delivering you again and again” or “You can be sure that I will stop delivering you” (See: [Idiom](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

13 Yet you have abandoned me and you have served other gods. Therefore, I will not continue to deliver you.

Judges 10:14

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

14 Go and cry out to the gods that you have chosen for yourselves. They should deliver you at the time of your distress.”

Judges 10:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

15 Then the sons of Israel said to Yahweh, "We have sinned. You do to us according to all that is good in your eyes. Only rescue us please this day."

Judges 10:16

foreign gods among them

You can make explicit the implicit meaning of this statement.

Alternate translation: "foreign gods whose images they possessed"

(See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Yahweh could bear Israel's misery no longer

Here Israel refers to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: "And Yahweh did not want the people of Israel to suffer any longer" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

16 They removed the foreign gods from their midst and they worshiped Yahweh. Then His soul became dismayed with the suffering of Israel.

Judges 10:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

17 Now the sons of Ammon were summoned and they encamped in Gilead. So the sons of Israel gathered together and they encamped at Mizpah.

Judges 10:18

Who is the man who will begin to fight the Ammonites?

“Who will lead our army to fight against the Ammonites?”

ULT

¹⁸ Then the people, the princes of Gilead each said to his fellow man, “Who is the man who will begin to fight against the sons of Ammon? He will become the leader over all who are residing in Gilead.”

Judges 11

Judges 11 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The account of Jephthah continues in this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Jephthah the leader

Jephthah was half Israelite and half Canaanite by birth. While all of the judges were called by Yahweh, it is the leaders who called Jephthah to help them, but Yahweh still used Jephthah to help them.

Judges 11:1

Gileadite

This is someone who is from the region of Gilead. It is a coincidence that his father's name is also Gilead. See how you translated this in [Judges 10:3](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹ Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a warrior of strength, but he was the son of a woman committing fornication. Gilead begat Jephthah.

Judges 11:2

When his wife's sons grew up

"When the sons of Gilead's wife became adults"

ULT

² The wife of Gilead also gave birth to his sons. When the sons of the wife grew up, they drove out Jephthah and they said to him, "You will not inherit from the house of our father since a son of another woman are you."

Judges 11:3

the land of Tob

Tob is the name of a region. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

they traveled with him

“they followed him” or “they went everywhere together”

ULT

³ So Jephthah fled from the presence of his brothers and he settled in the land of Tob. Unprincipled men associated around Jephthah and they went about with him.

Judges 11:4

Some days later

“Some time later”

made war against Israel

The phrase “made war” is an idiom which means that they attacked Israel and were at war with them. Here “Israel” refers to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “attacked the people of Israel” (See: [Idiom](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ Now it happened after some days that the sons of Ammon fought with Israel.

Judges 11:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ It was when the sons of Ammon fought with Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to summon Jephthah from the land of Tob.

Judges 11:6

that we may fight with

“so that we can fight against”

ULT

⁶ Then they said to Jephthah, “Come and you will be for us as commander so we may fight against the sons of Ammon.”

Judges 11:7

my father's house

Here "house" refers to people living in the house. Alternate translation: "my family" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ But Jephthah replied to the elders of Gilead, "Do you yourselves not hate me since you drove me out of the house of my father? Why have you come to me now when you have trouble?"

Judges 11:8

That is why we are turning to you now

The word “that” refers to what Jephthah said about them being in trouble. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: “We are turning to you now because we are in trouble” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

fight with the people of Ammon

“fight against the people of Ammon”

ULT

⁸ Then the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “Rightly, now we have turned back to you; so come with us and fight against the sons of Ammon, and you will become commander for us over all residing in Gilead.”

Judges 11:9

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁹ Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead,
"If you bring me back to fight against
the sons of Ammon, and Yahweh gives
them over before me, I will actually be
your leader?"

Judges 11:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁰ Then the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "Yahweh will be a witness between us, surely according to your word, thus we will do!"

Judges 11:11

leader and commander

These two words basically have the same meaning repeated to emphasize how important Jephthah had become. You can combine the two words. Alternate translation: “commander” (See: [Doublet](#))

When he was before Yahweh in Mizpah, Jephthah repeated all the promises he made

This is an idiom. Here the phrase “before Yahweh” means that he repeated his promises as a vow before Yahweh. Alternate translation: “When Jephthah was in Mizpah he repeated all of these promises as a vow before Yahweh” (See: [Idiom](#))

all the promises he made

This refers to the promises he made to the leaders of Gilead about becoming their leader.

ULT

11 So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people set him as commander and leader over themselves. Jephthah spoke all his words before Yahweh in the Mizpah.

Judges 11:12

What is this conflict between us

“Why is there conflict between us?” Jephthah is asking the king why they are angry with Israel.

Why have you come with force to take our land

The word “you” refers to the King of Ammon and represents himself and his soldiers. Alternate translation: “Why have your soldiers come to seize our land” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

come with force to take

“come to forcefully take”

ULT

12 Then Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the sons of Ammon, saying, “What has happened with respect to me and to you, that you have come against me to fight over my land?”

Judges 11:13

Arnon ... Jabbok

These are the names of two rivers. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

over to the Jordan

“on the other side of the Jordan River”

in peace

“peacefully” or “and do not try to defend them”

ULT

13 The king of the sons of Ammon responded to the messengers of Jephthah, “Because Israel seized my land at his going up out of Egypt, from Arnon up to the Jabbok, and over to the Jordan. Now return them in peace.”

Judges 11:14

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁴ Then Jephthah continued again and sent messengers to the king of the sons of Ammon,

Judges 11:15

he said

Here the word “he” refers to the messenger who was speaking to the king. This may be written with the word “they” as in the UST, referring to the group of messengers. Alternate translation: “Jephthah told the messengers to say” or “they said” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

15 and he said to him, “Thus Jephthah said: Israel did not take the land of Moab or the land of the sons of Ammon.

Judges 11:16

they came up from Egypt

Whenever people traveled to the promised land it is referred to as going “up” to the promised land. When the Israelites left Egypt they were on their way to the promised land. Alternate translation: “they left Egypt” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

16 However in their coming up from Egypt, Israel went through the wilderness as far as the Sea of Reeds and he came to Kadesh.

Judges 11:17

General Information:

Jephthah's messengers continue to speak.

When Israel sent messengers

The messengers were sent by the leaders of Israel. Alternate translation: "When the leaders of Israel sent messengers" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

17 When Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, 'Please may I pass through your land,' the king of Edom would not listen. He likewise sent to the king of Moab, but he was not willing. So Israel stayed at Kadesh.

pass through

"go through" or "cross"

would not listen

This phrase is an idiom that means to "refuse." Alternate translation: "refused" or "denied their request" (See: [Idiom](#))

They also sent messengers to the king of Moab

The reason that Israel sent messengers to the king of Moab can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "They also send messengers to the king of Moab with the same request" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

but he refused

The king of Moab refused Israel's request to pass through Moab. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "but he also refused and would not let them pass through the land of Moab" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 11:18

Arnon

This is the name of a river. See how you translated this in [Judges 11:13](#).

ULT

18 Then he went through the wilderness and turned away from the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and he went to the place of the rising of the sun for the land of Moab. They camped on the other side of the Arnon, but they did not go within the border of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab.

Judges 11:19

General Information:

Jephthah's messengers continue to speak.

Israel sent messengers to Sihon

The messengers were sent by the leaders of Israel. Alternate translation: "When the leaders of Israel sent messengers" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Sihon

This is the name of a person. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Heshbon

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹⁹ Israel sent messengers to Sihon, the king of the Amorite, the king of Heshbon. Israel said to him, 'Please, let us pass through your land as far as my place.'

Judges 11:20

Jahaz

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory

Sihon did not trust the people of Israel to pass through his land peacefully. The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “But Sihon did not trust the people of Israel to pass through his territory peacefully” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

there he fought

The word “he” refers to Sihon and represents himself and his army. Alternate translation: “there they fought” or “there his army fought” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁰ But Sihon did not trust Israel passing through within his border. So Sihon assembled all of his people together and they camped at Jahaz, and he fought with Israel.

Judges 11:21

General Information:

Jephthah's messengers continue to speak.

Sihon

See how you translated this man's name in [Judges 11:19](#).

ULT

²¹ Then Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all of his people over into the hand of Israel and they defeated them. Thus Israel possessed all of the land of the Amorite inhabiting that region.

gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel

Here "hand" refers to power to defeat in battle. Alternate translation: "gave Israel power over Sihon and all his people" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Judges 11:22

Arnon ... Jabbok

See how you translated the names of these rivers in [Judges 11:13](#).

ULT

²² They possessed everything within the territory of the Amorite, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, and from the wilderness as far as the Jordan.

Judges 11:23

General Information:

Jephthah's messengers continue to speak.

should you now take possession of their land?

Jephthah is rebuking the king of the Ammonites with this rhetorical question. The word "their" refers to the Israel. This question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "therefore, you should not take possession of their land." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²³ Since therefore Yahweh, the God of Israel, has expelled the Amorite out of the presence of his people Israel, will you indeed possess it?

Judges 11:24

Will you not take over the land that Chemosh, your god, gives you?

Jephthah is rebuking the king of the Ammonites with a rhetorical question. This question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "You should only take over the land that Chemosh, your god, gives you." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²⁴ Will you not take possession if Chemosh, your god, allows you to possess it? So all that Yahweh our God has dispossessed before us, we will possess it.

take over

This is an idiom which means to take control of something. Alternate translation: "take control of" or "take possession of" (See: [Idiom](#))

Chemosh

This is the name of a false god. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Judges 11:25

Now are you really better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab?

Jephthah is rebuking the king of the Ammonites with a rhetorical question. This question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "You are not better than Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²⁵ Now are you really better than Balak, the son of Zippor, the king of Moab? Did he dare contend with Israel or did he ever wage war against them?

Balak ... Zippor

These are the names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Did he dare to have an argument with Israel?

Jephthah is rebuking the king of the Ammonites with a rhetorical question. This question can be translated with a statement. Alternate translation: "Yet he did not dare to have an argument with Israel." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Did he ever wage war against them?

Jephthah is rebuking the king of the Ammonites with a rhetorical question. This question can be translated with a statement. Alternate translation: "Nor did he ever wage war against them." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Judges 11:26

General Information:

Jephthah's messengers continue to speak.

three hundred years

"300 years" (See: [Numbers](#))

Heshbon

Translate the name of this city the same way that you did in [Judges 11:19](#).

Aroer

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

why then did you not take them back during that time?

Jephthah is rebuking the king of the Ammonites with a rhetorical question. This question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "you should have taken them back during that time." or "now it is too late; you should have taken them back long ago." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²⁶ While Israel resided three hundred years in Heshbon and in its villages, and in Aroer and in its villages, and in all the cities that are along the banks of the Arnon—why then did you not repossess during that time?

Judges 11:27

I have not done you wrong, but you are doing me wrong by attacking me

Jephthah is speaking to the Sihon. Here Jephthah speaks about the Israelites as though they were himself and of the Ammonites as if they were Sihon their king. Alternate translation: "The Israelites have not done wrong to your people, but your people are doing us wrong by attacking us" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁷ I have not sinned against you, but you are doing wrong in dealing with me by fighting against me. Yahweh, the judge, will decide today between the sons of Israel and between the sons of Ammon."

done you wrong ... doing me wrong

This is an idiom. To do someone wrong means to do something wrong to them. Alternate translation: "treated you wrongly ... treating me wrongly" or "treated you unfairly ... treating me unfairly" (See: [Idiom](#))

Judges 11:28

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁸ But the king of the sons of Ammon did not listen to the words of Jephthah that he had sent to him.

Judges 11:29

the Spirit of Yahweh came on Jephthah

This is an idiom which means that the Spirit influenced Jephthah's decisions. Alternate translation: "the Spirit of Yahweh took control of Jephthah" (See: [Idiom](#))

he passed through Gilead and Manasseh ... from Mizpah of Gilead

Jephthah passed through these places enlisting men for his army to go to war with the people of Ammon. The full meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: "he gathered men for his army as he passed through Gilead and Manasseh ... from Mizpah of Gilead" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

29 Then the Spirit of Yahweh came on Jephthah, and he passed through the Gilead and Manasseh, and he passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed through the sons of Ammon.

Judges 11:30

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁰ Jephthah vowed a vow to Yahweh and said, "If you truly give the sons of Ammon into my hand,

Judges 11:31

I will offer it up

This is an idiom which means to give something as an offering.
Alternate translation: "I will offer it to you" or "I will sacrifice it to you" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

31 then it shall be the one who comes out, whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, that he will belong to Yahweh, and I will offer him up as a whole burnt offering."

Judges 11:32

So Jephthah passed through ... Yahweh gave him victory

Since Jephthah was the leader of his army, he and his army are often spoken of as Jephthah himself. Alternate translation: "So Jephthah and his army passed through ... Yahweh gave them victory" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

³² So Jephthah passed through to the sons of Ammon to fight against them, and Yahweh gave them into his hand.

Judges 11:33

He attacked

Since Jephthah was the leader of his army, he and his army are often spoken of as Jephthah himself (verse 32). Alternate translation: “they attacked” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Aroer

Translate the name of this city the same way you did in [Judges 11:26](#).

Minnith ... Abel Keramim

These are the names of cities. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

twenty cities

“including 20 cities” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

33 Then he attacked them from Aroer and as far as your coming in to Minnith, twenty cities, and up to Abel Keramim, an exceedingly great slaughter. So the sons of Ammon were subdued by the presence of the sons of Israel.

Judges 11:34

tambourines

musical instruments with heads like drums that can be hit and with pieces of metal around their sides that sound when the instruments are shaken (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

³⁴ Jephthah came into the Mizpah area, to his house, and look, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. However, she was an only child; he did not have a son or daughter apart from her.

Judges 11:35

he tore his clothes

This is an act that shows mourning or great sadness. Alternate translation: "he tore his clothes from grief" (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

You have crushed me with sorrow ... you have become one who causes me pain

Jephthah said basically the same thing twice to emphasize that he was very sad" (See: [Parallelism](#))

You have crushed me with sorrow

Here Jephthah speaks of his great sorrow as something that crushes him. Alternate translation: "You have caused me great sorrow" or "You have filled me with sorrow" (See: [Metaphor](#))

you have become one who causes me pain

Here Jephthah talks about his great distress and trouble as if it were pain. Alternate translation: "you have become someone who troubles me" or "you cause me great distress" (See: [Metaphor](#))

I cannot turn back on my promise

This is an idiom. To turn back on a promise means to not do what you have promised to do. Alternate translation: "I must do what I have promised" or "I cannot break my promise" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³⁵ Now it happened when he saw her that he tore his garments and he said, "Alas, my daughter! Indeed, you have made me bow in grief, and you are among those who cause me pain! For I have opened my mouth to Yahweh and I am not able to turn back."

Judges 11:36

has taken vengeance for you against your enemies, the Ammonites

Yahweh has taken vengeance for him by defeating his enemies. The meaning of this can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “has taken vengeance for you against your enemies, the Ammonites, by defeating them” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³⁶ Then she said to him, “My father, you have opened your mouth to Yahweh. Do to me according to what came forth from your mouth, after what Yahweh has done for you: complete vengeance against your enemies, against the sons of Ammon.”

Judges 11:37

Let this promise be kept for me

This can be stated in an active form. Alternate translation: “Keep this promise for me” or “Keep this promise concerning me” (See: [Active](#) or [Passive](#))

grieve over my virginity

“weep because I am a virgin” or “cry because I will never be married”

ULT

37 She said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me. Release me for two months, so I may go away and I will fall prostrate on the hills and I will weep on account of my virginity, I and my companions.”

Judges 11:38

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁸ He replied, "Go." Then he sent her away for two months. She went, she and her companions, and she wept on account of her virginity on the hills.

Judges 11:39

had never known a man

This is a euphemism. Alternate translation: “had never had sexual relations with a man” (See: [Euphemism](#))

ULT

³⁹ Now it happened at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with respect to her that he had vowed. She did not know a man, and it became a custom in Israel.

Judges 11:40

the Gileadite

This refers to someone from Gilead. See how you translated this in [Judges 10:3](#).

ULT

40 From time to time the daughters of Israel went to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite for four days during the year.

Judges 12

Judges 12 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The account of Jephthah concludes in this chapter.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Shibboleth

This is a word in Hebrew. Its importance in this chapter is because of its sounds, not its meaning. The translator should not translate the meaning of this word, but should transliterate or transfer it into the target language by substituting letters that have the same sounds. (See: [Copy or Borrow Words](#))

Judges 12:1

A call went out to the men of Ephraim

Here the abstract noun “call” can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: “The men of Ephraim were called together” or “The men ... of Ephraim called together their soldiers” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Zaphon

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

passed through ... pass through

or “traveled through ... travel” or “journeyed through ... journey”

We will burn your house down over you

This idiom means to burn down a house with people inside it. Alternate translation: “We will burn your house down with you still in it” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹ Now the men of Ephraim were summoned and they passed northward and they said to Jephthah, “Why did you pass through in order to fight against the sons of Ammon but you did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down over you with fire.”

Judges 12:2

When I called you, you

Here the word “you” is plural and refers to the people of Ephraim.
(See: [Forms of You](#))

did not rescue me

Jephthah uses the word “me” to refer to himself and all the people of Gilead. Alternate translation: “do not rescue us” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

² Jephthah said to them, “A man in exceedingly great dispute I have been, I and my people and the sons of Ammon. When I summoned you, you did not rescue me from their hand.”

Judges 12:3

you did not rescue me

The word “you” is plural and refers to the men of Ephraim. Jephthah is referring to the people of Gilead, including himself, when he says “me.” Alternate translation: “you did not rescue us” (See: [Forms of You](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

I put my life in my own hand

This is an idiom which means to risk one’s life and to rely only on one’s own strength. Jephthah continues to refer to the people of Gilead as himself. Alternate translation: “We risked our lives, relying on our own strength” (See: [Idiom](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

Yahweh gave me victory

Jephthah is referring to Yahweh giving the men of Gilead victory over the Ammonites. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: “Yahweh gave us victory over them” or “Yahweh allowed us to defeat them in battle” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Why have you come to fight against me

The word “you” is plural and refers to the men of Ephraim. Jephthah is referring to the people of Gilead, including himself, when he says “me.” Alternate translation: “Why have you come to fight against us” (See: [Forms of You](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

passed through against the people of Ammon

This means that they fought against the Ammonites as they passed through Ammon. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: “fought against the people of Ammon as we passed through their region” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³ When I saw that you were not coming to assist, I put my life in my own hand. I passed through to the sons of Ammon, and Yahweh gave them over into my hand. Now why have you come up to me to fight against me this day?”

Judges 12:4

he fought against Ephraim

The word “he” refers to Jephthah and all the fighting men of Gilead. Alternate translation: “they fought against Ephraim” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

You Gileadites are fugitives

You can make the meaning of this insult explicit. Alternate translation: “You Gileadites do not really belong here. You are just people who came here to live” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Gileadites

people from Gilead

in Ephraim—in Ephraim and Manasseh

“in the regions of Ephraim and Manasseh” or “in the land of Ephraim and Manasseh.” Here “Ephraim” and “Manasseh” refer to regions and are named after the tribes which live there.

ULT

⁴ Then Jephthah assembled all of the men of Gilead and he fought Ephraim. The men of Gilead struck Ephraim because they had said, “Fugitives of Ephraim are you, O people of Gilead, in the midst of Ephraim, in the midst of Manasseh.”

Judges 12:5

to Ephraim

"to the land of Ephraim"

The Gileadites captured

"The Gileadites controlled" or "The Gileadites occupied"

fords

These are places where you can cross the river on foot because the water is shallow.

Ephraimite

person from the tribe of Ephraim

ULT

⁵ Gilead captured the crossing places of the Jordan along Ephraim. It happened when any of the survivors of Ephraim would say, "May I cross over," that the men of Gilead would say to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he said, "No,"

Judges 12:6

Shibboleth ... Sibboleth

These words have no meaning. Copy these words into your language, and make sure that the beginning of the words, that is the letters "Sh" and "S" are translated differently. (See: [Copy or Borrow Words](#))

pronounce the word

"make the sound of the word"

Forty-two thousand

"42,000" (See: [Numbers](#))

Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "They killed forty-two thousand Ephraimites" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁶ then they would say to him, "Please say: Shibboleth." But if he said "Sibboleth," for he was not prepared to pronounce it correctly, they would seize him and they would slaughter him at the crossing places of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand from Ephraim fell at that time.

Judges 12:7

Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Jephthah the Gileadite died and they buried him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁷ Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and he was buried among the cities of Gilead.

Judges 12:8

Ibzan of Bethlehem

This is the name of a man from Bethlehem. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁸ Then after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel.

Judges 12:9

He gave away thirty daughters in marriage

Here “give away ... in marriage” is an idiom which means that he allowed his daughters to get married. Alternate translation: “He had thirty daughters and arranged a marriage for each of them” (See: [Idiom](#))

he brought in thirty daughters of other men for his sons, from the outside

The idiom “bring them in from the outside” means that he had women from other clans marry his sons. Alternate translation: “he arranged for thirty daughters of other men from outside of his clan to marry his sons” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁹ Now he had thirty sons. He sent away thirty daughters to the outside, and he brought in thirty daughters for his sons from the outside. He judged Israel seven years.

Judges 12:10

was buried at Bethlehem

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “they buried him in Bethlehem” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

10 Then Ibzan died and he was buried in Bethlehem.

Judges 12:11

Elon

This is the name of a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Zebulunite

someone from the tribe of Zebulun

ULT

11 After him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years.

Judges 12:12

Aijalon

Translate the name of this place the same way you did in [Judges 1:35](#).

was buried in Aijalon

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “they buried him in Aijalon” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

12 Then Elon the Zebulunite died and he was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

Judges 12:13

Abdon ... Hillel

These are the names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Pirathon

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

13 After him, Abdon, the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel.

Judges 12:14

They rode on seventy donkeys

These men owned seventy donkeys, which they did ride. Here the word “rode” is used instead of “owned.” Alternate translation: “They owned seventy donkeys” (See: [Metonymy](#))

forty sons ... thirty grandsons ... seventy donkeys

“40 sons...30 grandsons...70 donkeys (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

14 Now he had forty sons and thirty sons of sons, who rode on seventy young male donkeys. He judged Israel eight years.

Judges 12:15

Pirathonite ... Pirathon

Pirathon is the name of a place, someone who is from that place is called a Pirathonite. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

15 Then Abdon, the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and he was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekite.

Judges 13

Judges 13 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter begins the account of Samson ([Judges 13-16](#)).

Special concepts in this chapter

Warning not to cut his hair

The angel of the Lord prophesied about Samson and gave instructions to Samson's mother. Samson's mother was to offer up her son under a Nazarite vow. This was a special type of vow, dedicating Samson to Yahweh. Part of this vow prohibited the cutting of the person's hair. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [vow](#))

Judges 13:1

what was evil in the sight of Yahweh

The sight of Yahweh represents Yahweh's judgment or evaluation. See how you translated this in [Judges 2:11](#). Alternate translation: "what was evil in Yahweh's judgment" or "what Yahweh considered to be evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ The sons of Israel continued to do this evil in the eyes of Yahweh, so Yahweh gave them over into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

he gave them into the hand of the Philistines

Here "hand" refers to power to gain victory in battle. Alternate translation: "he allowed the Philistines to defeat them" or "he allowed them to be oppressed by the Philistines" (See: [Metonymy](#))

forty years

"40 years" (See: [Numbers](#))

Judges 13:2

Zorah

This was the name of a town in Israel. It was in the region of Judah near the border of Dan. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Danites

people from the tribe of Dan

Manoah

This is the name of a man. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

² Now there was one man from Zorah, of the families of the Danites, and his name was Manoah. His wife was barren and she had never given birth.

Judges 13:3

give birth to a son

This refers to childbirth. Alternate translation: “bear a son” or “have a baby boy” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³ The messenger of Yahweh appeared to the wife and he said to her, “Look, please, you are barren and you have not given birth, but you will conceive and you will bear a son.”

Judges 13:4

anything unclean

Something that Yahweh has stated is unfit to eat is spoken of as if it were physically unclean. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Now take care that you surely do not drink wine or strong drink, and you do not eat anything unclean.

Judges 13:5

Look

“Pay attention” or “Listen”

No razor will be used upon his head

Here the word “head” refers to his hair. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “No one should ever cut his hair” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

razor

a sharp knife used to cut hair close to the skin

a Nazirite to God

This means that he will be devoted to God as a Nazirite. Alternate translation: “a Nazirite devoted to God” or “devoted to God as a Nazirite” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

from the womb

Here the word “womb” refers to the time before the child is born. Alternate translation: “from before he is born” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the hand of the Philistines

Here the word “hand” means control. Alternate translation: “the control of the Philistines” or “being under the Philistine’s control” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁵ For surely you are pregnant and you will bear a son. A razor will not go up upon his head, for a Nazirite to God from the womb the boy will be. He will begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.”

Judges 13:6

A man of God

This means that the man was sent by God. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "A man that God sent" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

his appearance was like that of an angel of God, very terrible

Here "terrible" means "frightening." Alternate translation: "I was very afraid of him because he looked like an angel of God" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

6 Then the woman came in and she explained to her husband saying, "The man of God came to me. His appearance was as the appearance of the messenger of God, exceedingly fearsome, so I did not ask him from where he had come. He did not reveal to me his name."

Judges 13:7

Look

“Pay attention” or “Listen”

give birth to a son

This refers to childbirth. Alternate translation: “bear a son” or “have a baby boy” (See: [Idiom](#))

any food that the law declares to be unclean

Something that Yahweh has stated is unfit to eat is spoken of as if it were physically unclean. (See: [Metaphor](#))

a Nazirite to God

This means that he will be devoted to God as a Nazirite. See how you translated this in [Judges 3:5](#). Alternate translation: “a Nazirite devoted to God” or “devoted to God as a Nazirite” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

from the time he is in your womb until the day of his death

This emphasizes that it would be for his entire life. Alternate translation: “all his life” (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

⁷ Then he said to me, ‘Surely, you are pregnant, and you will bear a son. So now, you must not drink wine or strong drink, and you must not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite to God from the womb until the day of his death.’”

Judges 13:8

Manoah

See how you translated this man's name in [Judges 13:2](#).

ULT

⁸ Then Manoah prayed to Yahweh and he said, "Oh please, my Lord, please let the man of God who you sent come again to us so that he may instruct us about what we must do for the boy who is to be born."

Judges 13:9

came to the woman

You can make explicit the implicit meaning of the author's words.
Alternate translation: "came to Manoah's wife" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁹ The true God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the messenger of God came to the woman again when she was sitting in the field. But Manoah her husband was not with her.

Judges 13:10

Look

“Listen” or “Pay attention to what I am about to tell you”

The man

This refers to the angel of God in [Judges 13:3](#). This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “the man of God” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

10 So the woman hurried and she ran and she reported to her husband, and she said to him, “Look! The man has appeared to me who came to me that day!”

Judges 13:11

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

11 So Manoah rose up and he went after his wife. When he came to the man, he said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to this woman?" He replied, "I am."

Judges 13:12

your words

“what you have said”

ULT

¹² Then Manoah said, “Now may your words come to pass. What will be the protocol for the boy, and his work?”

Judges 13:13

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

13 The messenger of Yahweh replied to Manoah, "Because of all that I have said to the woman, she must take heed herself."

Judges 13:14

anything that comes from the vines

Here the angel refers to any food that grow on a vine as “coming” from the vine. Alternate translation: “anything that grows on a vine” (See: [Metonymy](#))

unclean

Something that Yahweh has stated is unfit to eat is spoken of as if it were physically unclean. See how you translated this phrase in [Judges 13:7](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 From anything that comes forth from the vine of the wine, she must not consume. She must not drink wine or strong drink, and anything unclean she must not eat. Everything that I have commanded her, she must do.”

Judges 13:15

prepare a young goat for you

You can make explicit the implicit meaning of Manoah's statement.

Alternate translation: "cook a young goat for you to eat" (See:

[Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

15 Then Manoah said to the messenger of Yahweh, "Please let us detain you, so that we may prepare a young kid from the goats on account of your presence."

Judges 13:16

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

16 The angel of Yahweh replied to Manoah, "Even if you would detain me, I will not eat your bread. But if you would prepare a burnt offering for Yahweh, you may offer it." For Manoah did not know that he was the messenger of Yahweh.

Judges 13:17

your words come true

“what you have said comes true”

ULT

17 Then Manoah said to the messenger of Yahweh, “What is your name, that when your words come to pass we may honor you?”

Judges 13:18

Why do you ask my name?

The angel asks this question as a rebuke. This question can be written as a statement. Alternate translation: “You should not ask me what my name is.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

18 The messenger of Yahweh replied to him, “Why is this, you are asking about my name, but it is incomprehensible!”

It is wonderful

It may be helpful to explain more explicitly why they should not ask his name. Alternate translation: “It is too wonderful for you to understand” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 13:19

with the grain offering

This law requires a grain offering to be offered when a burnt offering is made. Alternate translation: “with the grain offering required with it” or “with the grain offering to accompany it” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

on the rock

“on the altar.” The altar Manoah sacrificed the offering on was a rock.

He did something

“The angel did something”

ULT

19 Manoah took the young kid from the goats and the offering and he brought up a sacrifice upon the rock to Yahweh. Meanwhile he was about to perform an act causing wonder while Manoah and his wife were watching.

Judges 13:20

the angel of Yahweh went up in the flame of the altar

“the angel of Yahweh went back up into heaven through the flames on the altar”

lay facedown on the ground

“lay with their faces to the ground.” This is a sign of respect and honor, but it also shows their fear of Yahweh. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

²⁰ Now it happened when the flame went up from upon the altar towards the heavens, that the messenger of Yahweh went up in the flame of the altar while Manoah and his wife were watching. As a result they fell on their faces to the ground.

Judges 13:21

that he was the angel of Yahweh

The word “he” refers to the man who Manoah and his wife had seen.

ULT

21 But the messenger of Yahweh did not continue to appear any longer to Manoah or to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the messenger of Yahweh.

Judges 13:22

We are sure to die, because we have seen God

It is implied that they think God will cause them to die. This can be made clear. Alternate translation: "God will cause us to die because we have seen him" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²² Manoah said to his wife, "Surely we will die, because we have seen God!"

Judges 13:23

**He would not have shown us all these things,
nor at this time would he have let us hear
such things**

Manoah's wife said basically the same thing twice for emphasis. These two statements can be combined. Alternate translation: "He would not have told us what he wanted us to do" (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

²³ But his wife replied to him, "If Yahweh had desired to kill us, he would not have taken from our hand the whole burnt offering and the offering. He would not have shown us all these things, and at this time would he have not allowed us to hear about this."

Judges 13:24

the woman

“Manoah’s wife”

gave birth to a son

This refers to childbirth. Alternate translation: “bore a son” or “had a baby boy” (See: [Idiom](#))

grew up

“became an adult” or “matured”

ULT

²⁴ The woman gave birth to a son, and she called his name Samson. The boy grew up and Yahweh blessed him.

Judges 13:25

Yahweh's Spirit began to stir him

Here the way Yahweh's Spirit influences Samson is compared to the way a spoon stirs food in a pot. Alternate translation: "Yahweh's Spirit began to influence Samson" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ Now the Spirit of Yahweh began to tap him in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and between Eshtaol.

Mahaneh Dan ... Eshtaol

Mahaneh Dan is the name of a temporary camp that the tribe of Dan lived in while they looked for a permanent home. Eshtaol is the name of a town. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Zorah

Translate the name of this town the same way you did in [Judges 13:2](#).

Judges 14

Judges 14 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The account of Samson continues in this chapter.

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 14:14, 18.

Special concepts in this chapter

Intermarriage

It was considered sinful for an Israel to marry a Canaanite or anyone from a different people group. This is why Samson's parents did not want him to marry a Philistine woman. They use rhetorical questions to convince him that he is sinning. This woman caused Samson many problems. (See: [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

Judges 14:1

Samson went down to Timnah

The phrase “went down” is used here because Timnah is lower in elevation than where his father’s house was. Timah is the name of a city in the Sorek Valley. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹ Samson went down to Timnah, and he saw a woman in Timnah, from the daughters of the Philistines.

one of the daughters of the Philistines

The word “daughter” is a polite way to refer to a young, unmarried woman. Alternate translation: “one of the unmarried women among the Philistine people” or “a Philistine girl” (See: [Euphemism](#))

Judges 14:2

Now get her for me to be my wife

This is an idiom. Samson was demanding his parents to speak to the Philistine woman's parents about marriage. Alternate translation: "Now arrange for her to become my wife" or "Make the arrangements for me to marry her" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

² Then he went back up and he reported to his father and to his mother, and he said, "I saw a woman in Timnah, among the daughters of the Philistines. So now take her for me for a wife."

Judges 14:3

Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people?

They ask this question to suggest that they could find Samson a wife among their own people. This question can be written as a statement. Alternate translation: "Surely there are women among your people whom you could marry." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

the daughters of your relatives

The word "daughter" is a polite way to refer to a young, unmarried woman. Alternate translation: "one of the unmarried women among your relatives" (See: [Euphemism](#))

ULT

³ His father and his mother replied to him, "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all of my people, that you are going to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" Samson said to his father, "Take her for me, because she is right in my eyes."

Are you going to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?

This question is asked to rebuke Samson. This question can be written as a statement. You can make explicit the reason his parents do not want him to marry a Philistine. Alternate translation: "You really should not marry a Philistine woman because the Philistine people do not worship Yahweh." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Get her for me

This is an idiom. Samson was demanding his parents to speak to the Philistine woman's parents about marriage. Alternate translation: "Now arrange for her to be my wife" (See: [Idiom](#))

she pleases me

This means that Samson thinks she is beautiful. "I am pleased by how beautiful she is" or "she is beautiful" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 14:4

this matter

This refers to Samson's request to marry the Philistine woman.

for he desired to create a conflict

The word "he" refers to Yahweh.

ULT

⁴ But his father and his mother did not know that this matter was from Yahweh, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.

Judges 14:5

Samson went down to Timnah

The phrase “went down” is used here because Timnah is lower in elevation than where his father’s house was. Timnah was a city in the Sorek Valley. Translate the name of this city the same way you did in [Judges 14:1](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

And, look, there one of the young lions came up

Here the word “look” is used to draw the readers attention to a surprising event that happens in the story. The phrase “came up” means that the lion came near him. Alternate translation: “Suddenly, a young lion came near him” (See: [Idiom](#))

was roaring at him

“threatened him.” This is the kind of noise that a lion makes when it threatens to attack something.

ULT

⁵ Then Samson went down along with his father and his mother to Timnah. They came as far as the vineyards of Timnah, and look, a young lion among the lions was roaring when encountering him.

Judges 14:6

Yahweh's Spirit suddenly came on him

The phrase "came on" means that Yahweh's Spirit influenced Samson. In this case, he made him very strong. Alternate translation: "Yahweh's Spirit made him very strong" (See: [Idiom](#))

tore ... apart

tore into two pieces

had nothing in his hand

Here it states that he had nothing in his hand to emphasize that he was not holding a weapon. Alternate translation: "did not have a weapon" (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

⁶ The Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him, and he tore it to pieces like butchering a young goat. There was not anything in his hand, but he did not disclose to his father or to his mother what he had done.

Judges 14:7

she pleased Samson

This means that he thought she was very beautiful. Alternate translation: “he was pleased by how beautiful she was” or “he thought she was very beautiful” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁷ Then he went down and he spoke to the woman, and she seemed right in the eyes of Samson.

Judges 14:8

he turned aside

This means that he left his path to do something. Alternate translation: "he left the path" (See: [Idiom](#))

carcass

dead body

And, look, there was a swarm of bees

Here the word "look" is used to draw the reader's attention to something surprising that happens in the story. Alternate translation: "He found a swarm of bees" (See: [Idiom](#))

swarm

large group of insects

ULT

⁸ Then he returned after some days to take her. He turned aside to look for the carcass of the lion, and look, there was a swarm of bees in the dead body of the lion and honey.

Judges 14:9

scraped up

“gathered up”

ULT

⁹ He scraped it into the palms of his hands and he went along, walking and eating as he went to his father and to his mother. He even gave some to them so that they ate, but he did not disclose to them that he had scooped the honey out of the dead body of the lion.

Judges 14:10

Samson's father went down to where the woman was

The phrase "went down" is used to describe Timnah which is lower in elevation than where Samson's father lives. Alternate translation: "Samson's father went to where the woman lived" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Then his father went down to the woman, and there Samson prepared a drinking feast, because so would do the young men.

the custom of the young men

It may be helpful to state that this was a marriage custom. Alternate translation: "the custom of young men who were getting married" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 14:11

thirty of their friends

“30 of their friends” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

11 Now it happened when they saw him, that they brought thirty close friends and they were with him.

Judges 14:12

riddle

a game in which the players must discover the answer to a difficult question

can find it out

This means to figure out the meaning of the riddle. Alternate translation: "can figure out its meaning" (See: [Idiom](#))

thirty linen robes and thirty sets of clothes

"30 linen robes and 30 sets of clothes" (See: [Numbers](#))

linen

a type of cloth

ULT

12 Samson said to them, "Let me propose to you a riddle. If indeed you explain it to me during the seven days of the drinking feast, and truly you have found out, then I will give to you thirty linen outer garments and thirty changes of clothes."

Judges 14:13

But if you cannot tell me

Here the word “you” is plural and refers to the guests at the feast.
(See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

13 But if you are not able to provide an explanation to me, then you must yourselves give to me thirty linen outer garments and thirty changes of clothes.” They said to him, “Set forth your riddle, so we may hear it.”

Judges 14:14

General Information:

Samson tells his riddle. Since it is supposed to be hard to understand, do not translate it in a way that people will immediately know what it means.

ULT

14 He said to them, "From the eater came forth food; and from a strong one came forth sweetness." But they were not able to explain the riddle in three days.

Out of the eater was something to eat

"Out of the eater came something to eat" or "Something to eat came out of something that eats"

the eater

The noun "eater" can be expressed as a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "the thing that eats"

out of the strong was something sweet

"out of the strong came something sweet" or "Something that is sweet came out of something that is strong"

the strong

This refers to something that is strong. Alternate translation: "the strong thing" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

his guests

"the men at his feast"

could not find the answer

Here figuring out the answer to the riddle is spoke of as if it were something hidden that the guest had to search for and find. Alternate translation: "could not figure out the answer" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Judges 14:15

the fourth day

“day 4” (See: [Ordinal Numbers](#))

Trick

mislead or fool someone into doing something they would not want to do

your father's house

This could mean: (1) this refers to the actual house. Alternate translation: “the house your father and his family live in” or (2) “house” refers to the people who live in it. Alternate translation: “your family” (See: [Metonymy](#))

will burn up

The phrase “burn up” means to burn something completely. If a person is “burnt up,” it means that person is burned to death. (See: [Idiom](#))

Did you invite us here in order to make us poor?

They ask her this question to accuse her of doing evil. This question can be written as a statement. Alternate translation: “You have brought us here to make us poor!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

to make us poor

They would become poor if they had to buy him new clothes if they could not solve the riddle. Alternate translation: “to make us poor by forcing us to buy him new clothes” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Now it happened on the seventh day that they said to the wife of Samson, “Entice your husband so he may reveal to us the riddle, lest we burn you and the house of your father with fire. Have you invited us in order to dispossess us or not?”

Judges 14:16

All you do is hate me! You do not love me

Samson's wife basically said the same thing twice for emphasis. Alternate translation: "You do not really love me at all" (See: [Parallelism](#))

riddle

a game in which the players must discover the answer to a difficult question

Look here

This is used to get someone's attention. Here "look" means to "listen." Alternate translation: "Listen to me" or "Pay attention to what I am about to say"

if I have not told my father or my mother, should I tell you?

Samson was rebuking her for demanding that he tell her the answer. This question can be written as a statement. Alternate translation: "I have not even told my father or mother. I will not tell you." or "you should not demand that I tell you, since I have not even told my parents, and they are closer to me than you are." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

16 Then the wife of Samson wept beside him and she said, "Surely you hate me! You do not love me! You have put forth a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not informed me." He said to her, "Look, I have not informed my father or my mother, should I inform you?"

Judges 14:17

during the seven days that their feast lasted

This could mean: (1) “during the seven days of their feast” or (2) “during the rest of the seven days of their feast.”

the seventh day

“day 7” (See: [Ordinal Numbers](#))

she pressured him very much

Here the word “pressured” means “urged.” Alternate translation: “she kept urging him to tell her” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

17 She continued to weep beside him during the seven days that they had the drinking feast. Now it happened on the seventh day that he informed her because she pressed him, with the result that she revealed the riddle to the sons of her people.

Judges 14:18

the men of the city

This refers to Samson's wife's relatives. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "the young men" or "her relatives" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the seventh day

"day 7" (See: [Ordinal Numbers](#))

ULT

18 Then the men of the city said to him before the sun went down on the seventh day, "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?" So he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle."

What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?

This is the answer to the riddle. It may be written as a statement instead of as questions. If necessary it could be made clear how this relates to the riddle by adding more information. Alternate translation: "Honey is sweet and a lion is strong." or "Honey is sweet and it came out of a lion." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

If you had not plowed with my heifer

Samson compares their using his wife to get the answer to someone using another person's heifer to plow his field. Alternate translation: "If you had not used my wife" (See: [Metaphor](#))

plowed

To plow is to use an animal to pull a blade through soil to prepare the soil for seeds.

Judges 14:19

came on Samson with power

The phrase “came on” means that Yahweh’s Spirit influenced Samson. In this case, he made him very strong. Alternate translation: “made Samson very strong” or “made Samson very powerful” (See: [Idiom](#))

killed thirty of their men

“killed 30 of their men” - (See: [Numbers](#))

their men

“the men who lived there”

plunder

things taken by force, usually after a fight or battle

their clothes

These were from the plunder he had taken from Ashkelon. Alternate translation: “the sets of clothing that he had taken” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Burning with anger

“Very angry”

went up to his father’s house

The phrase “went up” is used here because Samson was at Timnah which is lower in elevation than where his father’s house is located.

ULT

19 Then the Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him. He went down to Ashkelon and he struck down thirty of their men. He took their spoil, and he gave the changes of clothes from the riddle. His anger blazed, and he went up to the house of his father.

Judges 14:20

Samson's wife was given to his best friend

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "his wife's father gave her to his best friend" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

best friend

"closest friend"

ULT

²⁰ Then the wife of Samson came to be the wife of his close friend, who associated with him.

Judges 15

Judges 15 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The account of Samson continues in this chapter.

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 15:16.

Special concepts in this chapter

Samson's strength

The Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon Samson. This meant God gave Samson extraordinary strength. Samson's power is the power of Yahweh himself and he enacted the judgment of God on the Philistines. (See: [Holy Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit](#) and [judge, judgment](#))

Judges 15:1

He said to himself

This refers to thinking. Alternate translation: “He thought to himself” (See: [Idiom](#))

I will go to my wife’s room

Samson intended to sleep with his wife. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “I will go to my wife’s room, so we may sleep together” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

would not allow him to go in

The phrase “her room” is understood from what Samson said to himself. It can be repeated here. Alternate translation: “would not permit him to go into her room” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

¹ Now it happened after some days, during the days of the harvest of wheat, that Samson visited his wife with a kid from the goats. for he said, “I will go in to my wife, to the inner room.” But her father did not allow him to go in.

Judges 15:2

so I gave her to your friend

This means that he gave her to be his friend's wife. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "so I gave her to be married to your friend" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

is she not?

He asks this question to imply that Samson should agree with him. This question may be written as a statement. Alternate translation: "I hope you agree." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Take her instead

He is suggesting that Samson take her as his wife. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "Take her to be your wife instead" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

² Her father said, "Truly I said that surely you hated her, so I gave her to your close friend. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please may she be yours in her place."

Judges 15:3

I will be innocent in regard to the Philistines when I hurt them

Samson thinks that he will be innocent if he attacks the Philistines because they wronged him. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "I will be innocent if I hurt the Philistines because they have wronged me" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³ Samson said to them, "This time I am blameless concerning the Philistines when I am inflicting calamity against them."

Judges 15:4

three hundred foxes

“300 foxes” (See: [Numbers](#))

foxes

Foxes are animals like dogs that have long tails and that eat nesting birds and other small animals.

each pair

a pair is two of anything, such as two foxes, or two tails

tail to tail

“by their tails”

torches

A torch is a stick of wood with something flammable attached to one end; a torch is often used to light other things or to be carried for light.

ULT

⁴ Then Samson went and captured three hundred foxes and he made them turn tail to tail. He took torches, and he set one torch between two of the tails in the middle.

Judges 15:5

standing grain

grain that is still growing on its stalk in the field

stacked grain

the stalks of grain collected in piles after it has been harvested

orchards

An orchard is a place where fruit trees are grown.

ULT

⁵ He kindled fire in the torches, he let them loose into the standing grain of the Philistines. As a result he burned both the stack of sheaves and also the standing grain, even a vineyard, and olive orchard.

Judges 15:6

the Timnite's son-in-law

The husband of a man's daughter is a "son-in-law."

Timnite

This is a person from Timnah. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

took Samson's wife and gave her to his friend

Samson's wife's father gave her in marriage to Samson's friend. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "took Samson's wife and allowed her to marry Samson's friend" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

burned up

The phrase "burned up" means to burn something completely. If a person is "burned up," it means that person is burned to death. (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁶ So the Philistines said, "Who has done this?", and they replied "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took his wife and he gave her to his close friend." As a result the Philistines went up and they burned her and her father with fire.

Judges 15:7

said to them

“said to the Philistines”

If this is what you do

“Because you have done this.”

ULT

⁷ Samson said to them, “Since you have actually acted like this, surely I have avenged myself against you, and afterwards, I will stop.”

Judges 15:8

he cut them to pieces, hip and thigh

Here “hip and thigh” refers to the whole body. This is a graphic description of how Samson killed the Philistines. Alternate translation: “He cut their bodies to pieces” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

he went down

Here the phrase “went down” does not likely mean that he changed elevation, but rather, it is a way to describe someone going to another place. Alternate translation: “he went” (See: [Idiom](#))

cave

an opening in a hill or mountainside

cliff

a high, rocky hill or mountainside

Etam

This is the name of the rocky hill country near Jerusalem. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁸ He struck them on the lower leg as well as the thigh, a great slaughter. Then he went down and he remained in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

Judges 15:9

the Philistines came up ... in Judah

The phrase “came up” is used here because the Philistines went to Judah which is higher in elevation than where they traveled from.

prepared for battle

“organized themselves for battle”

Lehi

This is the name of a town in Judah. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁹ But the Philistines went up and they encamped in Judah and they had spread themselves out in Lehi.

Judges 15:10

do to him as he has done to us

The Philistines are comparing how they want to kill Samson to how he killed many of the Philistines. Alternate translation: “kill him like he killed many of our people” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

10 Now the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?” They replied, “We have come up in order to bind Samson, to do to him just as he has done to us.”

Judges 15:11

three thousand men of Judah

“3,000 men of Judah” (See: [Numbers](#))

cave in the cliff of Etam

See how you translated this phrase in [Judges 15:8](#).

Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this you have done to us?

The men of Judah ask Samson these questions to rebuke him. This questions may be written as a statements. Alternate translation: “You know that the Philistines are rulers over us but you act like they are not. What you have done has caused us great harm.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

They did to me, and so I have done to them

Samson is referring to how they killed his wife and how he killed them in revenge. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “They killed my wife, so I killed them” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and they said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are ruling over us? What is this you have done to us?” He replied to them, “Just as they have done to me, so I have done to them.”

Judges 15:12

the hands of the Philistines

Here “hands” refers to power. Alternate translation: “the Philistine’s control” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

12 They replied to him, “We have come down to bind you in order to give you over into the hand of the Philistines.” But Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not instead attack me yourselves.”

Judges 15:13

hand you over to them

This means to cause someone to be under someone else's control.
Alternate translation: "give you to the Philistines" (See: [Idiom](#))

up from the rock

This refers to the cave in the cliff of Etam where Samson had gone in [Judges 15:8](#). Here the words "up from" mean that they had brought him away from the cave. Alternate translation: "away from the cave in the large rock" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Idiom](#))

ULT

13 They replied to him saying, "No, however surely we will bind you and we will give you over into their hand. But truly we will not kill you." Then they bound him with two new ropes and they brought him up from the rock.

Judges 15:14

When he came

Samson was not travelling alone, he was being led by the men who had tied him with ropes. Alternate translation: “When they came” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Lehi

This is the name of a town in Judah. See how you translated this in [Judges 15:9](#).

ULT

14 He had come as far as Lehi, and then the Philistines shouted as they encountered him. Then the Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon him. The ropes which were on his arms became as flax stalks which they had burned in fire, so his bands were loosed from upon his hands.

came on him with power

The phrase “came on” means that Yahweh’s Spirit influenced Samson. In this case, he made him very strong. Alternate translation: “made Samson very strong” (See: [Idiom](#))

The ropes on his arms became like burnt flax

Samson easily broken the ropes that bound his hands. The author describes how easily he broke the ropes by saying it was as if they had become burnt flax. Alternate translation: “He snapped the ropes on his arms as easily as if they had been stalks of burned flax” (See: [Simile](#))

flax

fibers from the flax plant used for making threads and cloth

Judges 15:15

a fresh jawbone

This means that the donkey had died very recently and its bones had not yet begun to decay. A jawbone is the bone in which the lower rows of teeth are set.

a thousand men

“1,000 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

15 He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and he stretched forth his hand and he took it and he slaughtered a thousand men with it.

Judges 15:16

the jawbone of a donkey

“a donkey’s jawbone”

heaps upon heaps

This phrase describes how many people Samson killed. There were enough bodies to make large piles of bodies. Alternate translation: “I have made heaps of dead bodies” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

16 Then Samson said, “With the jawbone of the donkey, one heap, two heaps, with the jawbone of the donkey I have slaughtered a thousand men.”

Judges 15:17

Ramath Lehi

This is the name of a place. It's name means "Jawbone Hill" (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

17 Now it happened when he finished speaking that he hurled the jawbone out of his hand, and he named that place Ramath Lehi.

Judges 15:18

was very thirsty

“needed water to drink”

But now will I die of thirst and fall into ... uncircumcised?

This could mean: (1) Samson is so thirsty he could literally die.

Alternate translation: “But now I will die of thirst and my body will fall into ... uncircumcised.” or (2) Samson exaggerates how thirsty he

is by asking if he will die of thirst. Alternate translation: “But now will you allow me to become so weak from my thirst that I fall into ... uncircumcised?” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

18 Then he was very thirsty and cried out to Yahweh and he said, “You Yourself have given this great victory into the hand of Your servant. But now must I die with this thirst so that I will fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?”

die of thirst

This means to die because you have not drank enough and therefore, you do not have enough water in your body. (See: [Idiom](#))

fall into the hands of those who are uncircumcised

The phrase “fall into the hands” means to be captured. “Those who are uncircumcised” refers to the Philistines and with the word “uncircumcised” emphasizing that they do not worship Yahweh. Alternate translation: “be captured by those godless Philistines” (See: [Idiom](#))

Judges 15:19

split open the hollow place

“opened a hole in the ground” or “opened the low place.” This refers to a low area of ground where Yahweh caused a spring of water to appear.

Lehi

See how you translated this in [Judges 15:9](#)

ULT

19 So God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi and water came out of it. When he drank, his spirit returned so that he revived. Therefore he called the name of it En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day.

his strength returned and he revived

These two phrase mean basically the same thing and emphasize that Samson became strong again. These two statements can be combined. Alternate translation: “he became strong again” or “he was revived” (See: [Parallelism](#))

En Hakkore

This is the name of a spring of water. The name means “spring of him who prayed.” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

it is at Lehi to this day

This means that the spring did not dry up but that it remained. The phrase “to this day” refers to the “present” time. Alternate translation: “the spring can still be found at Lehi, even today” (See: [Idiom](#))

Judges 15:20

in the days of the Philistines

This refers to the time period that the Philistines controlled the land of Israel. Alternate translation: “during the time the Philistines controlled Israel” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

for twenty years

“for 20 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

²⁰ Thus he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Judges 16

Judges 16 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The account of Samson concludes in this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Samson's mistake

Samson mistakenly thought that he was the source of his strength. He did not realize that Yahweh had left him and without Yahweh, he had no strength. This was not Samson's only mistake. His foreign wife created most of his problems.

Judges 16:1

he went to bed with her

The phrase “went to bed with” is a polite way of referring to having sex. Alternate translation: “he had sex with her” or “he slept with her” (See: [Euphemism](#))

ULT

¹ Now Samson went to Gaza and he saw a woman there, a harlot, and he went in to her.

Judges 16:2

The Gazites were told

The word “Gazites” refers to people from Gaza. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Someone told the people of Gaza” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

The Gazites surrounded the place ... they waited for him all night at the city gate

This implies that some Gazites surrounded the place where Samson was staying and others waited at the city gate so that he could not leave.

They kept silent all night

This could mean: (1) “They did not make any noise all night” or (2) “They made no attempt to attack him all night.”

ULT

² Thus the Gazites were saying, “Samson has come here.” So they encircled and they laid in wait for him all the night at the gate of the city. They kept themselves quiet all the night, saying, “At the light of the morning, then we will kill him.”

Judges 16:3

until midnight

“until the middle of the night”

its two posts

These are supports for the city gate. These posts were probably made from tree trunks and were buried deep into the ground. The doors of the city gate were attached to these posts.

bar and all

The bar was probably a heavy rod of iron that connected the gate to the posts. The doors of the city gate were probably made of heavy wooden beams or iron bars.

shoulders

the part of the human body where the arms and the neck attach to the body

Hebron

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

³ Samson lay down until the middle of the night. Then he arose in the middle of the night and he seized the doors of the gate of the city and the two doorposts. He pulled them up along with the bolt, he hoisted them upon his shoulders, and he brought them up to the top of the hill which is in front of Hebron.

Judges 16:4

Valley of Sorek

This is the name of a valley near Samson's home. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁴ Now it happened after this that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek. Her name was Delilah.

Judges 16:5

Trick

to mislead or fool someone into doing something they would not want to do

to see

This is an idiom that means to learn something. Alternate translation: “to understand” or “to learn” (See: [Idiom](#))

where his great strength lies

This is an idiom that refers to where his strength comes from. Alternate translation: “what causes him to be very strong” (See: [Idiom](#))

by what means we may overpower him

“how we might overpower him”

1,100 pieces of silver

“one thousand one hundred pieces of silver.” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁵ The governors of the Philistines came up to her, and they said to her, “Make him open up. See by what means is his great strength, and how we can prevail over him, so that we may bind him in order to weaken him. Then we will each give you one thousand one hundred silver pieces.”

Judges 16:6

bind you, so you might be controlled

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “bind you to control you” or “bind you to restrain you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁶ So Delilah said to Samson, “Please, tell me by what means is your great strength, and how can you be bound in order to weaken you?”

Judges 16:7

fresh bowstrings

Bowstrings were often made from parts of an animal, often from the tendons. The words “fresh bowstrings” refer to those that come from a freshly slaughtered animal that have not yet dried.

that have not been dried

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “that have not yet dried” or “that are not dry yet” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁷ Samson replied to her, “If they would bind me with seven fresh cords that have not been dried, then I would become weak and I would be just as one of the other men.”

Judges 16:8

that had not been dried

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “that had not yet dried” or “that were not dry yet” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

she tied Samson up with them

“Delilah tied Samson up with the fresh bowstrings”

ULT

⁸ Then the governors of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh cords that had not been dried, and she tied him up with them.

Judges 16:9

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the main story line. Here the author tells background information about Philistine men that Delilah had waiting to capture Samson. (See: [Background Information](#))

The Philistines are upon you

The phrase “upon you” means that they are ready to capture him.

Alternate translation: “The Philistines are here to capture you” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁹ Now she had the ambush group staying in the room when she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he tore the cords to shreds just as a wick of flax fiber is torn to shreds when it draws in fire. So his strength did not become known.

he broke the bowstrings like a thread of yarn when it touches the fire

The author describes how easily he broke the bowstrings by comparing them to how yarn breaks when it is burned. Alternate translation: “he broke the bowstrings as easily as if he were breaking burned yarn” or “he broke the bowstrings as easily as if they were made of thin yarn” (See: [Simile](#))

Judges 16:10

This is how you have deceived me and told me lies.

Deceiving and lying mean the same thing and are stated to emphasize how angry Delilah felt. Alternate translation: "You have greatly deceived me!" (See: [Parallelism](#))

you can be overpowered

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "people can overpower you"

ULT

¹⁰ As a result Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have deceived me and you have spoken lies to me. Now tell me, please, by what means you can be bound."

Judges 16:11

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

11 He replied to her, "If in fact they would bind me with new cords with which work has not been done with them, I would become weak and I would be just as one of the other men."

Judges 16:12

The Philistines are upon you

The phrase “upon you” means that they are there to capture him.
Alternate translation: “The Philistines are here to capture you” (See: [Idiom](#))

lying in wait

This means that they were hiding and waiting for the right moment to attack. Alternate translation: “waiting to attack him” (See: [Idiom](#))

like they were a piece of thread

The author describes how easily Samson broke the ropes by comparing it to him breaking a piece of thread.
Alternate translation: “as easily as if they were only a piece of thread” (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

12 So Delilah took new cords and she bound him with them. She said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” with the ambush group staying in the room. But he flicked them off from upon his arms like they were thread.

Judges 16:13

you have deceived me and told me lies

Deceiving and lying mean the same thing and are stated to emphasize how angry Delilah felt. Alternate translation: “you have greatly deceived me” (See: [Parallelism](#))

you may be overpowered

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “people can overpower you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

weave

crossing pieces of material together so they hold each other in place

locks of my hair

small bunches of hair

fabric

cloth made from weaving material together

loom

a machine used for combining many threads of material into a cloth (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

then nail that to the loom

“then nail the fabric to the loom”

nail

to hammer a nail in order to hold something in one place

I will be like any other man

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “I will be as weak as any other man” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

13 Then Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. Reveal to me in what manner you may be bound.” So he said to her, “If you would only weave seven of the locks of hair from my head with the loom.”

Judges 16:14

The Philistines are upon you

The phrase “upon you” means that they are there to capture him.
Alternate translation: “The Philistines are here to capture you” (See: [Idiom](#))

he pulled out the fabric and the pin from the loom

Samson pulled out the fabric from the loom when he pulled his hair away from the loom. This can be stated clearly.
Alternate translation: “pulled away his hair, taking with it the pin of the loom and the fabric in the loom” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the pin

This is the wooden nail or peg used to fasten the fabric to the loom.

ULT

14 She fastened them together with a pin, and she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!”
However he woke from his sleep and he pulled out the pin from the weaving and the warp of the loom.

Judges 16:15

How can you say, 'I love you,' when you do not share your secrets with me?

Delilah asks this question to say that if Samson really loved her he would tell her his secrets. This question can be written as a statement. Alternate translation: "When you say 'I love you,' you are lying because you do not share your secrets with me." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' yet your heart is not with me? You have dealt deceitfully with me these three times and you have not revealed to me by what means is your great strength."

Judges 16:16

pressed him hard ... pressured him

Here the author speaks of how Delilah tries to persuade Samson as if she were putting pressure on him to convince him to tell her what she wants to know. Alternate translation: “tried hard to persuade him ... kept trying to persuade him” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

16 Now it happened that she pressured him with her speech throughout the day. She also continually pressed him so that his soul was vexed to death.

with her words

“by what she said to him”

that he wished he would die

The author used a hyperbole, an exaggeration, to emphasize how miserable Sampson felt. Alternate translation: “that he was completely miserable” or “that he was very unhappy” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

Judges 16:17

told her everything

everything about the source of his strength. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “told her the source of his strength” or “told her the truth” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

razor

a sharp blade used to cut hair close to a person’s skin

a Nazirite for God

This means that he is devoted to God as a Nazirite. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Judges 13:5](#). Alternate translation: “a Nazirite devoted to God” or “devoted to God as a Nazirite” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

from my mother’s womb

Here “from my mother’s womb” refers to when he was born. This means that he has been a Nazirite since he was born. Alternate translation: “my entire life” (See: [Metonymy](#))

If my head is shaved

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “If someone shaves my head” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

shaved

to have had the hair cut close to the skin with a razor

my strength will leave me

Samson speaks about his strength as if it were a person who could leave him. Alternate translation: “I will not be strong any more” (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

17 So he told her everything in his heart and he said to her, “A razor has never gone up upon my head, because I have been a Nazirite to God from the womb of my mother. If I would be completely shaved, then my strength would leave me, and I would become weak. I would be just as any of the other men.”

Judges 16:18

Delilah saw

Here the word “saw” is a idiom that means to realize something. Alternate translation: “Delilah realized” or “Delilah learned” (See: [Idiom](#))

the truth about everything

Here the word “everything” refers to everything about why Samson was strong. Alternate translation: “the truth about why he is strong” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Come up again

Delilah is telling the rulers to come again to where she lives. Her home is likely at a higher elevation than where the rulers would be travelling from.

bringing the silver in their hands

This means that they brought to her the silver that they had promised to give her if she helped them capture Samson. Alternate translation: “bringing the silver that they had promised to give her” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

18 When Delilah perceived that he had told her everything in his heart, she sent and she called to the governors of the Philistines, saying, “Come up one more time, for he has told me everything in his heart.” Then the rulers of the Philistines came up to her, and they brought the silver in their hand.

Judges 16:19

She had him fall asleep

“She caused him to fall asleep”

in her lap

This means that he slept with his head on her lap. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “with his head on her lap” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

19 Then she made him fall asleep on her knees and she called to the man while she shaved off the seven locks from his head. Thus she had begun to weaken him, and his strength departed from upon him.

lap

The lap is the level area of the upper legs when a person is sitting down.

the seven locks of his head

Samson had seven locks of hair on his head. Locks are small bunches of hair. Here his locks of hair are described as “belonging” to his head. Alternate translation: “the seven locks of hair on his head” (See: [Possession](#))

subdue him

“control him”

his strength had left him

Here Samson’s strength is described as if it were a person who could leave him. Alternate translation: “his strength was gone” or “he was no longer strong” (See: [Personification](#))

Judges 16:20

The Philistines are upon you

The phrase “upon you” means that they are ready to capture him.
Alternate translation: “The Philistines are here to capture you” (See: [Idiom](#))

woke up

“awakened”

get out

“escape”

But he did not know that Yahweh had left him

It is implied that if Yahweh left Samson, he would no longer be strong. Alternate translation: “But he did not know that Yahweh had left him and that he would not be strong enough to defeat the Philistines” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

20 Then she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” He woke up from his sleep and he said, “I will escape like time after time and I will shake myself loose.” But he did not know that Yahweh had departed from upon him.

Judges 16:21

put out his eyes

This means that they removed his eyes from his head. Alternate translation: “removed his eyes” (See: [Idiom](#))

down to Gaza

The phrase “down to” is used here because they brought Samson to Gaza which is lower in elevation than his home where they captured him.

bound him with bronze shackles

“chained him with bronze shackles” or “tied him up using bronze shackles”

shackles

locks on the end of chains that hold a prisoner at his feet or hands, or both

turned the millstone

“pulled the millstone around in a circle”

millstone

This is a very large, heavy, circular stone. Normally, a large animal pulls the millstone around in a circle to crush grain. Here the Philistines humiliate Samson by making him pull it.

ULT

21 The Philistines seized him and they gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and they bound him with a pair of bronze fetters. Now it happened that he was grinding at the house of the prisoners.

Judges 16:22

after it had been shaved

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “after the Philistines had shaved it” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²² However, the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

Judges 16:23

Dagon

a major false god of the Philistines (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

has conquered

“has defeated”

put him in our grasp

Here the author speak of Samson being under the rulers’ control as if he were something grasped tightly by their hands. Alternate translation: “put him under our control” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

23 The governors of the Philistines assembled themselves together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and for a celebration. They said, “Our god has given Samson into our hand, our great enemy.”

Judges 16:24

the destroyer of our country

This refers to Samson. The word “destroyer” can be expressed with the verb “destroy.” Alternate translation: “the man who has destroyed our country”

who killed many of us

Here the word “us” refers to the Philistine people. Those who are talking are not counting themselves among the people whom Samson killed. Alternate translation: “who killed many of our people” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

24 When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said, “Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the devastator of our land, who heaped up our slain ones.”

Judges 16:25

Call for Samson ... They called for Samson

Since Samson was a prisoner, he would not be called directly, but rather the people were asking for the men in charge of the prison to bring him to them. Alternate translation: "Call for them to bring out Samson ... They brought Samson" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁵ Now it happened when their heart was merry, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may make us laugh." So they called for Samson from the house of the prisoners and he caused laughter in front of them. They had made him stand between the columns.

Judges 16:26

the boy

“the young man” This was not a young child, but rather a youth.

Permit me to touch the pillars on which the building rests

“Allow me to touch the pillars which hold up the building”

ULT

26 Samson said to the young man who was holding onto his hand, “Let me rest! Let me touch the columns, those which the building is situated upon them, so that I may support myself on them.”

Judges 16:27

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the main story while the writer tells background information. (See: [Background Information](#))

three thousand men and women

“3,000 men and women” (See: [Numbers](#))

looking on

“watching”

while Samson was entertaining them

It is unclear what Samson did to entertain them. It seems the Philistines were making him do things that would humiliate him so that they could make fun of him.

ULT

27 Now the building was full of the men and the women, and situated there were all of the governors of the Philistines. On the roof there were about three thousand men and women, who were watching while Samson was entertaining.

Judges 16:28

called to Yahweh

“prayed to Yahweh”

call me to mind

This means to remember him and his situation. Alternate translation: “remember me” (See: [Idiom](#))

only this once

“one more time”

in one blow on the Philistines

This idiom means that he wants to have one more powerful act against the Philistines to get full revenge for what they did to him. Alternate translation: “with one strike against the Philistine” or “in one powerful act against the Philistines” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

28 Then Samson called out to Yahweh and he said, “My Lord Yahweh, remember me, please! Strengthen me please, just this time, O God, so that I may avenge myself by one act of vengeance on the Philistines because of my two eyes.”

Judges 16:29

on which the building rested

“which held up the building”

ULT

²⁹ Samson took hold of the two center columns on which the building was situated on them. He leaned himself against them, one in his right hand, and one in his left.

Judges 16:30

He stretched out with his strength

When Samson stretched out his arms he pushed down the pillars of the building. Alternate translation: “He used his strength to push down the pillars” or “He used his strength to push over the pillars” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the dead

This refers to people who are dead. Alternate translation: “the dead people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

were more

“were a greater amount”

ULT

30 Then Samson said, “My soul will die with the Philistines!” He stretched out with his strength and the building fell on the governors and on all of the people who were in it. So the ones who died that he killed at his death were more than those he killed during his life.

Judges 16:31

all the house of his father

Here the word “house” refers to his family. Alternate translation: “all of his father’s family” (See: [Metonymy](#))

came down

The phrase “came down” is used here because the place that Samson’s family traveled from was higher in elevation than Gaza.

ULT

31 Then his brothers and all the house of his father went down. They carried him, as they went back up. They buried him between Zorah and between Eshtaol in the burial place of Manoah, his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.

Zorah ... Eshtaol

See how you translated the names of these places in [Judges 13:2](#) and [Judges 13:25](#).

in the burial place of Manoah, his father

“where his father, Manoah, is buried”

Manoah

See how you translated this man’s name in [Judges 13:2](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Samson had judged Israel for twenty years

This same sentence is also in [Judges 15:20](#). It is repeated here to remind readers of how long he judged Israel. Alternate translation: “Samson had judged Israel for twenty years before he died” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

twenty years

“20 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

Judges 17

Judges 17 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter begins a section explaining how Israel came to have a king.

Special concepts in this chapter

Idols and figures

According to the law of Moses, the Israelites were prohibited from making wooden figures or cast metal idols. This was a form of idolatry. This practice was common in Canaan and it shows the influence the Israelites allowed these people to have on them. (See: [law](#), [law of Moses](#), [law of Yahweh](#), [law of God](#))

Judges 17:1

There was a man

This is a way to introduce a new person to the story line. (See: [Introduction of New and Old Participants](#))

Micah

This is the name of a man. It is not the same man who wrote the book of Micah. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹ Now there was a man from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Micah.

Judges 17:2

1,100 pieces

“one thousand one hundred pieces” (See: [Numbers](#))

that were taken from you

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “which someone stole from you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

I stole it

“I was the one who took it”

ULT

² He said to his mother, “The one thousand one hundred silver pieces that were taken from you, about which you swore a curse, and moreover you uttered it in my ears—look! The silver is with me. I took it myself.” His mother said, “Blessed is my son by Yahweh!”

Judges 17:3

1,100 pieces

“one thousand one hundred” (See: [Numbers](#))

set apart

This means to dedicate something to a specific purpose. Alternate translation: “dedicate” (See: [Idiom](#))

cast metal

metal that has been melted and poured into a mold to form a special shape

I restore it to you

“I give it back to you”

ULT

³ Then he brought back the one thousand one hundred silver pieces to his mother and his mother said, “I had entirely consecrated the silver to Yahweh, from my hand to my son in order to make an idol and a cast image. So now, I will return it back to you.”

Judges 17:4

two hundred pieces of silver

“200 pieces of silver” (See: [Numbers](#))

they were placed in the house of Micah

The word “they” refers to the metal figures. This may be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “Micah placed them in his house” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁴ Even so he restored the silver to his mother, his mother took two hundred silver pieces and she gave them to the refiner. He made it into an idol and a cast image, and so it was in the house of Micah.

Judges 17:5

a house of idols

This refers to a house used specifically for worshiping idols. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “a house for worshiping idols” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁵ Now the man Micah he had a house of gods. He made an ephod and family idols, and he even filled the hand of one of his sons so he was as a priest for him.

Judges 17:6

everyone did what was right in his own eyes

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. Alternate translation: “each person did what he decided was right” or “each person did what he judged to be right” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ In those days there was not a king in Israel. Each man would do whatever was right in his eyes.

Judges 17:7

of Bethlehem

“from Bethlehem”

of the clan of Judah

This means that he was living among the family of Judah, that is, the tribe of Judah. Alternate translation: “who was living among the tribe of Judah” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

He stayed there to fulfill his duties

“He lived and worked there”

ULT

⁷ Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, from the family of Judah, and he was a Levite. He was sojourning there.

Judges 17:8

find a place to live

“find a different place to live”

ULT

⁸ The man went out of the city, from Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn in whatever place he might find. He came to the hill country of Ephraim as far as the house of Micah as he made his way.

Judges 17:9

where I might live

It is implied that he is looking for a place to live and work. Alternate translation: "where I might live and have a job" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁹ Micah said to him, "Where have you come from?" He replied to him, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to sojourn in whatever place I might find."

Judges 17:10

a father and a priest

The word “father” is here used in the sense of an advisor, and not to a literal father. Alternate translation: “an advisor and a priest” (See: [Metonymy](#))

I will give you ten pieces of silver a year

“I will give you ten pieces of silver each year”

a suit of clothes

“a set of clothes”

So the Levite went into his house

It is implied that the Levite accepted Micah’s offer, and therefore, entered Micah’s house. Alternate translation: “So the Levite accepted his offer and went into his house” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

10 Micah said to him, “Stay with me, and be as a father and as a priest to me. I myself will give to you ten silver pieces for the days, and provision of garments and your sustenance.” So the Levite went in.

Judges 17:11

the young man became to Micah like one of his sons

The relationship between the Levite and Micah became like the close relationship between a father and son. Alternate translation: “the young man became close to Micah and was like one of his sons”
(See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹¹ So the Levite was willing to stay with the man, and the young man became to him as one of his sons.

Judges 17:12

Micah set apart the Levite

Here “set apart” means that Micah “dedicated” or “ordained” him.
Alternate translation: “Micah dedicated the Levite” (See: [Idiom](#))

was in Micah’s house

Here living in Micah’s house is spoken of as “being” in his house. Alternate translation: “lived in Micah’s house” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

12 Micah filled the hand of the Levite,
and the young man became as a priest
for him. So it was in the house of Micah.

Judges 17:13

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

13 Then Micah said, "Now I know that Yahweh will cause success for me, because I have this Levite as a priest."

Judges 18

Judges 18 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

The tribe of Dan

The tribe of Dan lacked faith in Yahweh and had yet to conquer its inheritance. In this chapter, they begin to conquer their land, but they also started to worship an idol. Their conquering of the land is much different than the other tribes' victories. (See: [faith](#) and [inherit](#), [inheritance](#), [heir](#))

Judges 18:1

In those days

This phrase introduces the beginning of another event in the story line. (See: [Introduction of a New Event](#))

In those days ... from among the tribes of Israel

This is background information about Israel and the people of the tribe of Dan. (See: [Background Information](#))

not received any inheritance from

This refers specifically to land inherited where they would live. Alternate translation: “not received a land inheritance from” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹ In those days there was not a king in Israel. Now in those days the tribe of the Danite was looking for a territory for itself to settle, because up to that day one had not fallen to it among the tribes of Israel for an inheritance.

Judges 18:2

from the whole number of their tribe

The phrase “the whole number” refers to all of the men in the tribe.
Alternate translation: “from among all of the men in their tribe”
(See: [Metonymy](#))

experienced warriors

“experienced fighters”

Zorah

See how you translated the name of this town in [Judges 13:2](#).

Eshtaol

See how you translated the name of this town in [Judges 13:25](#).

to scout the land on foot

The phrase “on foot” means to walk. Alternate translation: “to scout the land by walking through it” (See: [Idiom](#))

Micah

See how you translated this man’s name in [Judges 17:1](#).

ULT

² The sons of Dan sent five men from their family, from their members men, sons of valor from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to scout out the land on foot, and to examine it thoroughly. They said to them, “Go! Search out the land thoroughly.” They came to the hill country of Ephraim, as far as the house of Micah, and they spent the night there.

Judges 18:3

they recognized the speech of the young Levite

They recognized the man by the sound of his voice. Here “speech” refers to his “voice.” Alternate translation: “they heard the young Levite talking, and they recognized his voice” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³ They were among the house of Micah and they recognized the voice of the young Levite man. So they turned aside there and they said to him, “Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What do you have here?”

Judges 18:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴ He replied to them, "Like this and like this Micah has done for me; he has hired me and I am to him as a priest."

Judges 18:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ They said to him, "Inquire, please, of God, that we may know whether our journey will have success, which we are going on it."

Judges 18:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁶ The priest said to them, "Go in peace, before Yahweh is your journey which you are going on it."

Judges 18:7

Laish

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

There was no one who conquered

“There were no enemies living in their land who had conquered them”

had no dealings with anyone

“had no contact with any outsiders.” This means they lived far enough away from any other city that they lived secluded from other people.

ULT

⁷ Then the five men left and they came to Laish. They saw the people who were in the midst of it were living in safety as the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. There was no one causing them shame in any way in the land. Possessing restraint, they were far away from the Sidonians and there was no interaction for them with anyone.

Judges 18:8

Zorah

Translate the name of this city the same as you did in [Judges 13:2](#).

Eshtaol

Translate the name of this city the same as you did in [Judges 13:25](#).

ULT

⁸ Then they went to their brothers in Zorah and Eshtaol. Their brothers said to them, "How are you?"

Judges 18:9

Are you doing nothing?

This rhetorical question is asked sarcastically and means that they should be doing the opposite. This question can be written as a statement. Alternate translation: "You should be acting now!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Double Negatives](#))

Do not be slow to attack

These two negative words "not" and "slow" together emphasize the positive idea to attack quickly. Alternate translation: "Hurry! Attack" (See: [Double Negatives](#))

ULT

⁹ They responded, "Get up at once that we may go up against them! For we have seen the land and look, it is exceedingly good. Yet you are keeping still. You must not be sluggish to go to enter in to possess the land."

Judges 18:10

the land is wide

“the land is large.” This is a description of the size of the land.

that does not lack anything in the land

The men use a hyperbole, an exaggeration, to emphasize that it is a very desirable place to live. Alternate translation: “where we will have everything there that we need” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

that does not lack anything

The two negative words together emphasize a positive idea. Alternate translation: “has everything” (See: [Double Negatives](#))

ULT

10 When you go, you will come to a people living securely, and the land is spacious on both hands! For God has given it into your hands, a place where there is not a lack of any thing that is on the earth.”

Judges 18:11

Six hundred men

“600 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

11 So they journeyed away from there, six hundred men from the family of the Danite, out from Zorah and Eshtaol, girded with weapons of war.

Judges 18:12

Kiriath Jearim

This is the name of a town. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Mahaneh Dan

Translate the name of this place the same as you did in [Judges 13:25](#).

to this day

This means that something remains the same. It refers to the “present” time. Alternate translation: “and that is still its name” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹² They went up and they camped at Kiriath Jearim, in Judah. On account of this they call that place Mahaneh Dan to this day. It is back behind Kiriath Jearim.

Judges 18:13

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹³ They crossed over from there to the hill country of Ephraim, and they came up to the house of Micah.

Judges 18:14

Laish

Translate the name of this town the same as you did in [Judges 18:7](#).

in these houses there are an ephod,...metal figure? Decide ... will do

The five men asked this question to suggest and encourage the men that they should steal the idols. This can be written as a statement, and the implied information may be given in a parenthetical phrase.

Alternate translation: "these houses contain an ephod,...metal figure. (They were suggesting that the men steal these things.) Decide ... will do" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

in these houses there are

"in one of these house there is" or "among these houses is"

ULT

14 Then the five men who had gone to scout out the land of Laish on foot responded to their brothers and they said, "Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, family idols, a carved image, and a cast image? So now, consider what you will do."

Judges 18:15

they turned in there

“they turned”

they greeted him

The word “him” refers to the Levite.

ULT

¹⁵ So they turned in there and they came to the house of the young man, the Levite, at the house of Micah, and they asked about his welfare.

Judges 18:16

six hundred Danites

“600 Danites” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

16 Now six hundred men who were from the sons of Dan, the ones who were girded in their weapons of war, were stationed at the entrance of the gate.

Judges 18:17

six hundred men

“600 men” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

17 The five men who had gone to scout out the land by foot went up, they came there. They took the carved image, the ephod, the family idols, and the cast image, while the priest was standing at the entrance of the gate along with the six hundred men who were girded with the weapons of war.

Judges 18:18

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

18 When these came into the house of Micah, and they took the carved image, the ephod, the family idols, and the cast image, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?"

Judges 18:19

Is it better for you to be priest for the house of one man ... a clan in Israel?

They ask this as a rhetorical question to imply that it is true. This question can be written as a statement. Alternate translation: "It is better for you to be priest for a tribe and a clan in Israel than for just the house of one man." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁹ They said to him, "Be quiet! Put your hand over your mouth and come with us, and be for us as a father and as a priest. Is it better your being a priest for the house of one man, or your being a priest for a tribe and for a family in Israel?"

Judges 18:20

The priest's heart was glad

Here the priest is referred to by his "heart" to emphasize his emotions. Alternate translation: "The priest was glad" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁰ The heart of the priest was agreeable, so he took the ephod, the family idols, and the carved image, and he went in the midst of the people.

Judges 18:21

They put the small children in front of themselves

They traveled this way to protect the children. If Micah and his people attacked them they would reach the warriors first and not the children. Alternate translation: "They put the small children in front of themselves to protect them" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

they turned

"the Danites turned around"

ULT

²¹ Then they turned and they went away. They put the little children, the cattle, and the property of value in front of themselves.

Judges 18:22

a good distance

“some distance.” This refers a short distance but one that is long enough to be considered as measurable progress. (See: [Idiom](#))

the men who were in the houses near Micah’s house were called together

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “he called together the men who were in the houses near his house” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

they caught up with the Danites

This implies that they ran after them. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “running after the Danites, they caught up with them”

ULT

²² They had gone a great distance from the house of Micah, when the men who were in the houses which were near the house of Micah were called together, and they overtook the sons of Dan.

Judges 18:23

Why have you been called together?

This question is a rebuke. It can be translated as a statement.
Alternate translation: "You should not have called your men together to chase us." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

been called together

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "called these men together" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²³ They called to the sons of Dan. They turned their faces around and they said to Micah, "What has happened to you that you have assembled together?"

Judges 18:24

the gods that I made

Micah did not make his gods, rather the craftsman made them.
Alternate translation: "the gods which I had made for me" or "the gods which a craftsman made for me" (See: [Metonymy](#))

What else do I have left?

Micah asks this question to emphasize that he no longer has the things that are important to him. Alternate translation: "I have nothing left." or "You have taken everything that is important to me." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

How can you ask me, 'What is bothering you?'

Micah asks this question to emphasize that the Danites definitely know what is bothering him. Alternate translation: "You know that I am greatly distressed!" or "You know how much I am bothered by what you have done to me!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²⁴ He replied, "You took my gods that I made, and the priest, and you left. What do I have any longer? So how is it you can say to me, 'What has happened to you?'"

Judges 18:25

let us hear you say anything

The phrase “us hear you say” refers to the Danites hearing Micah speaking about what had happened, but it also includes if they are told by others that Micah had spoken about what had happened. Alternate translation: “let us find out that you have said anything” or “say anything about this” (See: [Metonymy](#))

hear you say anything

The word “anything” refers to any information about the Danites coming to Micah’s house and stealing his idols. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “hear you say anything about this matter” or “hear you say anything about what has happened” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

you and your family will be killed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “kill you and your family” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁵ The sons of Dan responded to him, “You should not make your voice heard among us, lest some men fierce in temperment will come with hostility against you, with the result that you would reap the destruction of your soul and the soul of your household.”

Judges 18:26

went their way

This means that they continued on their journey. Alternate translation: “continued on their journey” or “continued travelling” (See: [Idiom](#))

they were too strong for him

This refers to the Danites being too strong for Micah and his men to fight against. Alternate translation: “they were too strong for him and his men to fight” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

26 So the sons of Dan went their way since Micah perceived that they were stronger than him. He turned back and he returned to his house.

Judges 18:27

what Micah had made

Micah did not make his gods, rather a craftsman made them for him. Also, this can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “the things that had been made for Micah” or “Micah’s things” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

Laish

See how you translated this in [Judges 18:7](#).

with the edge of the sword

“with their swords.” Here “the sword” represents the swords and other weapons that the soldiers used in battle. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

27 Now they had taken what Micah had made, and the priest who was his, and they came to Laish, to a people living undisturbed and feeling secure. They slaughtered them with the mouth of the sword and they burned the city with fire.

Judges 18:28

they had no dealings with anyone

this means they lived far enough away from any other city, that they lived secluded from other people. See how you translated this phrase in [Judges 18:7](#).

Beth Rehob

This is a name of a town. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

28 There was not a deliverer because it was far from Sidon, and there was no involvement for them with any man. It was in the valley that is near Beth Rehob. They rebuilt the city and they lived in it.

Judges 18:29

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁹ They called the name of the city Dan, in honor of the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However Laish was the name of the city at the first.

Judges 18:30

Jonathan son of Gershom, son of Moses

This is the name of the young Levite who used to serve as priest for Micah. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “The young Levite’s name was Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

until the day of the land’s captivity

This refers to a time later on when the people of Dan would be captured by their enemies. Here the land being conquered is spoken of as if it were a prisoner taken captive by an enemy. Alternate translation: “until the day that their enemies conquered their land” or “until the day that their enemies took them captive” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³⁰ The sons of Dan raised up the carved image for themselves. Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manesseh, he along with his sons were priests for the tribe of the Danite until the day of the exile of the land.

Judges 18:31

that he made

Micah did not make his gods, rather the craftsman made them for him. Alternate translation: “that had been made for him” or “that his craftsman made for him” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³¹ So they set up for themselves the carved image belonging to Micah that he had made, all the days of the house of the true God being at Shiloh.

Judges 19

Judges 19 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

The sin of Benjamin

People from a village of the tribe of Benjamin raped a visitor's wife to death. This was very evil, especially in the ancient Near East. The people of Israel considered mistreatment of a guest one of the worst crimes. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [evil, wicked, unpleasant](#))

Judges 19:1

In those days

This phrase introduces the beginning of another event in the story line. (See: [Introduction of a New Event](#))

remote

far from where most people live

ULT

¹ Now it happened in those days, when there was no king over Israel, that there was a man, a Levite, sojourning in the remotest parts of the hill country of Ephraim. He took for himself a woman, a concubine, from Bethlehem in Judah.

Judges 19:2

was unfaithful to him

This means that she was unfaithful in their relationship and that she began to sleep with other men. This can be stated explicitly if necessary. Alternate translation: “began to sleep with other men” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

² However, his concubine played the harlot against him and she went away from being with him to the house of her father, to Bethlehem in Judah. She was there for a period of days, four months.

Judges 19:3

His servant was with him, and a pair of donkeys

“He took with him his servant and two donkeys”

ULT

³ Then her husband rose up and he went after her, to speak to her heart, in order to persuade to return to him. His young man was with him, and a team of donkeys. She brought him into the house of her father, and when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him.

Judges 19:4

His father-in-law, the girl's father, persuaded

"His father-in-law, that is, the girl's father, persuaded" or "The girl's father persuaded"

persuaded him to stay

"spoke to him so he decided to stay"

ULT

⁴ His father-in-law, the father of the young woman, prevailed against him so he stayed with him three days. They ate and they drank, and they spent the night there.

Judges 19:5

he prepared

the Levite prepared

Strengthen yourself with a bit of bread

Here “bread” refers to “food.” Alternate translation: “Eat some food so you will be strong enough to travel” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁵ Now it happend on the fourth day that they got up early in the morning and he rose up to go, however the father of the young woman said to his son-in-law, “Strengthen your heart with a piece of bread, then afterwards you shall go.”

Judges 19:6

Please be willing to spend the night

“Please stay another night”

ULT

⁶ So the two of them sat down and they ate together, and they drank. Then the father of the young woman said to the man, “Please be willing and spend the night and your heart will be glad.”

Judges 19:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ Then the man rose up in order to leave, however his father-in-law urged him. So he stayed and he spent the night there.

Judges 19:8

Strengthen yourself, and wait until the afternoon

The father-in-law is suggesting that he strengthen himself by eating. He is also asking him to wait until the afternoon to leave. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "Eat some food so you will be strong enough to travel, and wait until afternoon to leave" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ He got up early in the morning on the fifth day in order to leave, but the father of the young woman said, "Please strengthen your heart." So they lingered until the turning aside of the day, and the two of them ate.

Judges 19:9

now the day is advancing toward evening

“the day is almost over” or “it is almost evening”

ULT

⁹ When the man rose up to go, he and his concubine and his young man, his father-in-law, the father of the young woman said to him, “Look, please, the day has drawn toward evening. Please stay the night. See, the day is declining. Spend the night here and your heart will be glad. Then make an early start tomorrow for your journey and go to your tent.”

Judges 19:10

that is Jerusalem

“which was later called Jerusalem”

ULT

10 But the man was not willing to spend the night. So he got up and he left. He came as far as the region opposite Jebus, that is Jerusalem. Now with him was a team of donkeys equipped for riding, and also his concubine was with him.

Judges 19:11

Come, let us

This is an idiom used to make a suggestion. Alternate translation: "I suggest that we" (See: [Idiom](#))

turn aside to

This means to take a break from their journey and stop somewhere along the route. Alternate translation: "stop at" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

11 They were near Jebus, and the daylight had greatly diminished. So the young man said to his master, "Come, please, we should turn aside into this city of the Jebusite so we can spend the night in it."

Judges 19:12

turn aside into

This means to take a break from their journey and stop at a place along the route. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Judges 19:11](#). Alternate translation: “stop at” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

12 However his master said to him, “We will not turn aside into a city of a foreigner, where there are none here from the sons of Israel. Instead we will pass by until reaching Gibeah.”

Judges 19:13

Come, let us

This is an idiom used to make a suggestion. Alternate translation: "I suggest that we" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

13 Then he said to his young man,
"Come, let us draw near to one of these
places, and we will spend the night in
either Gibeah or in Ramah."

Judges 19:14

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

14 So they passed by and they went on.
But the sun went down with regard to
them in proximity to the region of
Gibeah, which belonged to Benjamin.

Judges 19:15

turned aside

This means to take a break from their journey and stop at a place along the route. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Judges 19:11](#). Alternate translation: “stopped” (See: [Idiom](#))

the city square

the marketplace where people gathered during the day

took them into his house

This phrase means for someone to invite them to spend the night in their home. Alternate translation: “invited them to stay in their house for that night” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

15 As a result they turned aside there to come in to spend the night in the Gibeah area. They came in and they sat down in the open plaza of the city, but no one was receiving them into the house to spend the night.

Judges 19:16

Benjamites

A Benjamite was a descendant of Benjamin. See how you translated the name of this people group in [Judges 3:15](#).

ULT

16 Now, look, an old man was coming from his work, from the field at the evening. The man was from the hill country of Ephraim, and he was sojourning in the Gibeah area. But the men of the place were Benjamite.

Judges 19:17

He raised his eyes

Here the man looked up and paid attention to what was around him.
Alternate translation: "He looked up" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the city square

the marketplace where people gathered during the day. See how you translated this in [Judges 19:14](#).

ULT

17 He raised his eyes and he saw the traveling man in the open plaza of the city. Then the old man said, "Where are you going and from where are you coming?"

Judges 19:18

who will take me into his house

This phrase refers to someone inviting other people into his house to spend the night there. Alternate translation: “who has invited me to stay in his house” (See: [Idiom](#))

will take me

Here the Levite says “me,” but he is actually referring to himself along with his servant and his concubine. Alternate translation: “will take us” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

18 He said to him, “We are passing through from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim. I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to the house of Yahweh. However there is no one receiving me into the house.”

Judges 19:19

there is bread and wine

Change to active voice. Alternate translation: “we have plenty of bread and wine” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

me and your female servant here, and for this young man with your servants

The Levite speaks of himself and the others as servants and in the third person to show respect. Alternate translation: “me, my concubine, and my servant” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

We lack nothing

This can be written as a positive statement. Alternate translation: “We have everything we need” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

19 Moreover, there is straw, also fodder for our donkeys. There is even bread and wine for me and for your maidservant, and for the young man with your servants. There is no lack of anything.”

Judges 19:20

Only do not

“Do not.” The word “only” is used here to emphasize what he did not want the Levite to do.

square

This refers to the city square. See how you translated this [Judges 19:17](#).

ULT

20 The old man said, “Peace to you! Surely all of your need is upon me. Only you must not spend the night in the open plaza.”

Judges 19:21

brought the Levite into his house

This means that he invited the Levite to spend the night in his house. Also, by inviting the Levite he was inviting the man's concubine and servant as well. Alternate translation: "invited the Levite and his servants to stay in his house" (See: [Idiom](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

21 So he brought him into his house and he poured out feed for the donkeys. They washed their feet and they ate and they drank.

Judges 19:22

they were making their hearts glad

The phrase “making their hearts glad” is an idiom that means to have a good time with someone else. Alternate translation: “they were have a good time together” or “they were enjoying themselves” (See: [Idiom](#))

some men of ... surrounded the house

Some men stood on all sides of the house.

ULT

²² They were making their heart glad, but look, the men of the city, men of sons of wickedness, had encircled themselves around the house, pounding repeatedly on the door. They said to the old man, the master of the house, saying, “Bring out the man who came to your house, so we will know him.”

Judges 19:23

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²³ The man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brothers, please you must not act wickedly! Seeing that this man has come into my house, you must not do this disgraceful thing!"

Judges 19:24

See

This word is used to get the peoples' attention. Alternate translation: "Listen"

ULT

24 Here is my virgin daughter and his concubine. Please let me bring them out so you can violate them and do to them what is good in your eyes. But to this man do not do this wicked thing!"

Judges 19:25

the men would not listen to him

Here the author speaks of “agreeing” as if it were “listening.”
Alternate translation: “the men would not accept his offer” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the man seized his concubine

there could be confusion as to the identity of the man. Alternate translation: “the Levite seized his concubine”

at dawn

“when the sun was coming up” or “at first light” This refers to when the sun begins to rise.

ULT

²⁵ But the men were not willing to listen to him, so the man seized his concubine and made her go forth to them who were outside. They knew her and they abused her the whole night until the morning. Then they sent her away at the rising of the dawn.

Judges 19:26

it was light

This refers to morning when it is bright outside. Alternate translation: "the sun was fully risen" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁶ The woman came at the changing of the morning and she fell down at the entrance of the house of the man where her master was there, until the daylight.

Judges 19:27

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁷ Her master rose up in the morning and he opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way. But look, the woman, his concubine had fallen at the entrance of the house, and her hands were on the threshold.

Judges 19:28

But there was no answer

The woman did not answer because she was dead. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "But she did not answer because she was dead" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁸ He said to her, "Get up and let us go!" But there was no answering, so he took her on the donkey. Thus the man rose up and he went to his place.

Judges 19:29

limb by limb

“section by section.” The author uses this graphic description of how the Levite cut up her body into specific pieces to emphasize what he did. “Limbs” refers to a person’s arms and legs. If there is not a similar phrase in your language, this description may be left out of the translation. (See: [Idiom](#))

twelve pieces

“12 pieces” (See: [Numbers](#))

sent the pieces everywhere throughout Israel

This means that he sent the different pieces to twelve different areas of Israel. Alternate translation: “sent each piece to a different place throughout Israel” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

29 When he came to his house, he took the knife, and he seized his concubine, and he cut her in pieces to her bones, into twelve pieces, and he sent her into all of the territory of Israel.

Judges 19:30

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁰ Now it would happen, everyone who saw it said, “Nothing has happened and never has been seen anything like this from the day of the coming up of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider about it for yourselves! Make a plan and speak up!”

Judges 20

Judges 20 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Benjamin destroyed

The army of Israel destroys all the tribe of Benjamin except 600 men. After this point in time, the tribe of Benjamin becomes mostly insignificant.

Judges 20:1

as one man

This simile speaks of the group as acting as a single person. It refers to a group of who people do everything together in the same way.
Alternate translation: "as if they were a single man" (See: [Simile](#))

from Dan to Beersheba

This refers to the land as a whole. Alternate translation: "from all the eleven tribes" (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

¹ Then all of the sons of Israel came forth, and the company was assembled as one man, from Dan and as far as Beersheba and the land of Gilead, before Yahweh at Mizpah.

Judges 20:2

God—400,000 men on foot

“God and also 400,000 regular soldiers came”

ready to fight

“capable of going to war.” They were not going to fight each other.

ULT

² The leaders of all of the people, of all of the tribes of Israel, stationed themselves among the company of the people of the true God, four hundred thousand, each a footsoldier wielding a sword.

Judges 20:3

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the main story line. Here the author of the book tells background information about what the people of Benjamin knew.

had gone up to Mizpah

Mizpah was located high in the mountains.

ULT

³ Now the sons of Benjamin heard that the sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah. Then the sons of Israel said, "Explain how this wicked thing has been brought about."

Judges 20:4

to spend the night

“for the night” or “to stay for a night”

ULT

⁴ So the Levite man, the husband of the woman who had been murdered, answered. He said, “I came, myself and my concubine, to the Gibeah region that belongs to Benjamin, to spend the night.

Judges 20:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ The citizens of the Gibeah region rose up against me. They surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me. Instead they assaulted my concubine so that she died.

Judges 20:6

wickedness and outrage

The word “outrage” describes the “wickedness.” Alternate translation: “outrageous wickedness” (See: [Hendiadys](#))

ULT

⁶ I took back my concubine and cut her in pieces, and I sent her out into every territory of the inheritance of Israel, because they have committed a heinous crime and a disgrace in Israel.

Judges 20:7

Now

This word is used to introduce the conclusion of the speech of the Levite.

ULT

⁷ Look, all of you sons of Israel, decide for yourselves advice and a plan here."

give your advice and counsel here

The words "advice" and "counsel" refer to the same thing and are repeated for emphasis. They can be combined. Alternate translation: "decide what we need to do about this" (See: [Doublet](#))

Judges 20:8

as one

This simile speaks of the group as acting as a single person. They all acted together in exactly the same way. Alternate translation: “as if they were a single man” (See: [Simile](#))

None of us will go to his tent ... none of us will return to his house

These two clauses say basically the same thing twice for emphasis. They can be combined. The words “none ... go” and “none ... return” emphasizes how the people will continue to stay there. They can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: “We will all stay here” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Litotes](#))

ULT

⁸ All of the people rose up as one man, saying, “We will not go back, each one to his tent, and we will not return, each one to his house!”

Judges 20:9

But now

These words introduce the main portion of what the people say after the initial exclamation.

as the lot directs

This involved tossing or rolling small marked stones to determine what God wants.

ULT

⁹ Instead now this is the thing that we should do to the Gibeah region, against it by lot.

Judges 20:10

ten men of a hundred ... one hundred of a thousand ... one thousand of ten thousand

“10 men out of 100...100 out of 1,000...1,000 out of 10,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

provisions

food and other things the people need

ULT

¹⁰ We will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and one hundred of a thousand, and one thousand of ten thousand, to get provision for the people, in order to do at their coming to Gibeah in Benjamin, according to all the disgrace that it committed in Israel.”

Judges 20:11

assembled against the city

“came together to attack the city”

ULT

11 So every man of Israel was assembled against the city, as one man, united companions.

Judges 20:12

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹² The tribes of Israel sent men into all the tribes of Benjamin, saying, "What is this wickedness that has been done among you?"

Judges 20:13

put them to death

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “kill them” or “execute them” (See: [Idiom](#))

the voice of their brothers

Here “voice” refers to the message that they spoke. Alternate translation: “what their brother said” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

13 Therefore, now, give over the men, the sons of worthlessness, who are in the region of Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and thus we may incinerate evil out of Israel.” But they were not willing, Benjamin, to heed the voice of their brothers, the sons of Israel.

Judges 20:14

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

14 Then the sons of Benjamin assembled themselves out of the cities to the region of Gibeah, coming out to the battle against the sons of Israel.

Judges 20:15

twenty-six thousand

"26,000" (See: [Numbers](#))

seven hundred

"700" (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

15 The sons of Benjamin mobilized together from the cities on that day twenty-six thousand men wielding a sword. In addition, out of the inhabitants of the Gibeah region seven hundred chosen men had been mobilized.

Judges 20:16

left-handed

A left-handed person is someone who is more skilled with their left hand than with their right hand.

could sling a stone at a hair and not miss

This show how amazingly well they could aim and hit their target. It can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: “could throw a stone at even a hair and hit it” or “could throw a stone at something as small as a hair and hit it”

ULT

16 Among all of these people were seven hundred chosen men, impeded in his right hand, each of whom could sling with a stone at a specific hair and he would not miss.

Judges 20:17

not counting

“not including”

400000

“four hundred thousand men” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

17 The men of Israel, besides Benjamin, mustered up for themselves four hundred thousand men wielding a sword, all of whom were men of war.

Judges 20:18

asked for advice from God

“asked God what to do” or “asked God how to continue”

ULT

18 Then they arose and they went up to Bethel. The sons of Israel asked God and they said, “Who should go up for us at the beginning to the battle with the sons of Benjamin?” Yahweh directed, “It shall be Judah at the beginning.”

Judges 20:19

moved their camp near Gibeah

There is some question about the meaning of the Hebrew text. Instead of meaning that they set up their camp near Gibeah, it could mean that the army went out and stood across from Gibeah ready to fight.

ULT

19 So the sons of Israel arose in the morning and they encamped near the region of Gibeah.

Judges 20:20

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁰ The men of Israel went forth to the battle against Benjamin. The men of Israel set themselves up for a battle against those in Gibeah.

Judges 20:21

twenty-two thousand

“22,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

²¹ But the sons of Benjamin came forth out of the Gibeah region, and they struck down among Israel twenty-two thousand men to the ground on that day.

Judges 20:22

strengthened themselves

Here “strengthened” is an idiom that means they encouraged each other. (See: [Idiom](#))

they formed the battle line

This probably means that the Israelites prepared their battle lines for the next day’s fighting. Alternate translation: “they got ready to fight the next day”

ULT

²² However the people, the men of Israel, strengthened themselves and they continued to set up for battle at the place where they had set up there on the first day.

Judges 20:23

they sought direction from Yahweh

The method they used is not stated. The priest may have cast lots to determine God's will.

ULT

23 Then the sons of Israel went up and they wept before Yahweh until evening. They asked Yahweh, saying, "Should I continue to attack, to the battle against the sons of Benjamin, my brother?" Yahweh replied, "Go up against him!"

Judges 20:24

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁴ So the sons of Israel drew near to the sons of Benjamin on the second day.

Judges 20:25

eighteen thousand

“18,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

²⁵ Benjamin came forth to confront them from the Gibeah region on the second day, and against the sons of Israel they struck down to the ground another eighteen thousand men. All of these were wielders of a sword.

Judges 20:26

before Yahweh

“in Yahweh’s presence” or “to Yahweh”

ULT

²⁶ Then the sons of Israel and all the people went up and they came to Bethel. They wept, and they sat there before Yahweh. They fasted on that day until the evening, then they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh.

Judges 20:27

for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days

This is background information that the author inserted to help the reader understand how the people asked Yahweh for an answer.
(See: [Background Information](#))

was there in those days

“was at Bethel in those days”

ULT

²⁷ The sons of Israel asked Yahweh, for the ark of the covenant of the true God was there in those days,

Judges 20:28

and Phinehas ... was serving before the ark in those days

This is background information that the author inserted to help the reader understand how the people asked Yahweh for an answer.

(See: [Background Information](#))

was serving before the ark

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "was serving as priest before the ark" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Attack

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "Attack the army of Benjamin" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁸ when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was serving before it in those days, saying, "Should I continue to go forth to the battle once more against the sons of Benjamin, my brother, or should I stop?" Yahweh said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will give him into your hand."

Judges 20:29

Israel set men

Here “Israel” refers to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “the Israelites” (See: [Metonymy](#))

secret places

“in ambush”

ULT

²⁹ So Israel set groups in ambush around the Gibeah region on all sides.

Judges 20:30

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁰ The sons of Israel went up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day, and they set up for battle against the Gibeah region as was time after time.

Judges 20:31

fought against the people

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “fought against the people of Israel” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

they were drawn away from the city

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “the people of Israel drew them away from the city” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

They began to kill some of the people

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “The people of Benjamin began to kill some of the men of Israel” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

31 The sons of Benjamin went forth to confront the people. They were lured away from the city, and they began to strike down some of the people. About thirty men of Israel were slain as was the other time on the roads, of which one went up to Bethel, and one went to the Gibeah region through the field.

Judges 20:32

just as at first

“just as before” or “just like the first two times”

ULT

³² Then the sons of Benjamin said, “They have been defeated before us, just as at the first.” But the sons of Israel said, “Let us flee so that we will draw him away from the city to the roads.”

Judges 20:33

Baal Tamar

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Maareh Gibeah

This is the name of a place. Other translations may read “fields of Gibeah” or “west of Gibeah” or “Maareh Geba.” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

33 Then every man of Israel rose up out of his place and they set up battle lines at Baal Tamar. The one hiding in ambush of Israel burst forth out of his place from Maareh Gibeah.

Judges 20:34

ten thousand

“10,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

chosen men

This is an idiom that means these were particularly good soldiers.
Alternate translation: “well-trained soldier” (See: [Idiom](#))

disaster was close to them

Here immanent disaster is spoken of as if it was standing very close by them. Alternate translation: “they would soon be completely defeated” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³⁴ Ten thousand men, chosen out of all Israel came out in the sight of the Gibeah region, and the battle was heavy. But they did not know that this calamity was coming near to them.

Judges 20:35

25,100 men

“twenty-five thousand one hundred men” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

³⁵ Thus Yahweh defeated Benjamin before Israel. The sons of Israel destroyed Benjamin on that day, twenty five thousand one hundred men, everyone of those were wielding a sword.

Judges 20:36

The men of Israel had given ground to Benjamin, because they were counting on the men ... outside Gibeah

From this sentence until the end of verse 41 is background information that the writer inserted to explain to the readers how the ambush defeated the Benjamites. (See: [Background Information](#))

had given ground to Benjamin

This is an idiom that means they intentionally retreated. Alternate translation: “had allowed Benjamin to move forward” (See: [Idiom](#))

they were counting on the men

This is an idiom that means they trusted their men. (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³⁶ So the sons of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. The men of Israel had given a place to Benjamin, because they were confident in the group hiding in ambush that they had placed around the Gibeah region.

Judges 20:37

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁷ Then the group hiding in ambush hurried and they spread out around the Gibeah region. The group hiding in ambush marched out and it struck all of the city with the edge of the sword.

Judges 20:38

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁸ Now there was the prearranged plan for the men of Israel on behalf of the group hiding in ambush: load up so that they would send the rising column of the smoke up out of the city,

Judges 20:39

General Information:

This verse continues to give background information that the writer inserted to explain to the readers how the ambush defeated the Benjamites. (See: [Background Information](#))

would turn from the battle

“would retreat from the fight”

they are defeated before us

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “we have defeated them” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³⁹ when the men of Israel retreated from the battle. Then Benjamin began to attack, among the men of Israel about thirty men were slain. For they said, “Surely he is absolutely defeated before us, as in the first battle.”

Judges 20:40

General Information:

This verse continues to give background information that the writer inserted to explain to the readers how the ambush defeated the Benjamites. (See: [Background Information](#))

ULT

40 But when the signal began to rise up out of the city, a pillar of smoke, then Benjamin retreated away from it. Indeed, look, the entirety of the city had gone up to the heavens.

Judges 20:41

disaster

great harm, trouble, misery

come on them

This idiom means it happened to them. Alternate translation: “happened to them” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

41 Then the men of Israel turned back. Each man of Benjamin was horrified, for he saw that the calamity had come upon them.

Judges 20:42

But the fighting overtook them

This speaks about fighting as if it were a person who could overtake someone. Alternate translation: “But the soldiers of Israel caught up to them” or “But they were not able to escape the fighting” (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

⁴² So they retreated before the men of Israel to the way of the wilderness, but the fighting overtook him. Meanwhile those coming out from the cities were destroying him in the very midst of him.

Judges 20:43

Nohah

This is the name of a place. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

trampled them down

The completed destruction of the Benjamites is spoken of as if the Israelites stomped on their bodies. Alternate translation: “they completely destroyed them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴³ They surrounded Benjamin, they put him to flight. With ease they trampled him down as far as opposite the Gibeah region, in the direction of the rising sun.

Judges 20:44

eighteen thousand

“18,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

were distinguished in battle

“had fought bravely in the battle”

ULT

⁴⁴ They fell from Benjamin, eighteen thousand men, all of these were men of valor.

Judges 20:45

They turned and fled

"The remaining Benjamites turned and fled"

five thousand ... two thousand

"5,000...2,000" (See: [Numbers](#))

Gidom

This is the name of a place. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁴⁵ Then they turned and they fled to the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon. They gleaned along the pathways five thousand men. They pursued closely after him as far as Gidom, and they struck down from him two thousand more men.

Judges 20:46

twenty-five thousand

“25,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁴⁶ So it happened that all of the fallen ones of Benjamin were twenty-five thousand men wielding a sword, on that day. All of these were men of valor.

Judges 20:47

six hundred

“600” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁴⁷ But six hundred men turned back and they fled to the wilderness, toward the rock of Rimmon. They stayed at the rock of Rimmon four months.

Judges 20:48

turned back against the people of Benjamin

These people of Benjamin are not the soldiers who fled to the rock of Rimmon, but the ones who were still in the city.

the city

Here “the city” refers to the people in that city. Alternate translation: “everyone who was in the city” (See: [Metonymy](#))

in their path

This idiom refers to everything that they found as they went toward the city. Alternate translation: “they came to” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

48 Then the men of Israel returned to the sons of Benjamin. They struck them down with the edge of the sword, even a city in entirety, including cattle as well as everything that was found. Also all of the cities that were found, they set on fire.

Judges 21

Judges 21 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter concludes the account of the previous chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Sin and immorality

At the end of Judges, there is much sin and immorality. The people are doing wrong and fixing their wrongs by doing more evil things. This period of Judges is typified by this final account and summarized by the statement, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (See: [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Judges 21:1

Now the men of Israel had made a promise ... marry a Benjamite.”

This background information tells the reader about the promise that the Israelites made before the battle with the Benjamites. (See: [Background Information](#))

ULT

¹ Now each man of Israel bound himself by an oath at Mizpah, saying, “Everyone of us shall not give his daughter to Benjamin for a wife.”

Benjamite

This is the name of the descendants of Benjamin. See how you translated this in [Judges 3:15](#).

Judges 21:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² Then the people came to Bethel and they sat there until the evening before the true God. They lifted up their voices and they wept, a loud weeping.

Judges 21:3

Why, Yahweh, God of Israel, has this happened to Israel, that one of our tribes should be missing today?

The people of Israel used this rhetorical question to express their deep sadness. This question can be translated as a statement.

Alternate translation: "Oh Yahweh, we are so sad that one of the tribes of Israel has been completely destroyed."
(See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

³ They said, "Why, O Yahweh, God of Israel, has this happened to Israel, to be missing today one tribe from Israel?"

Judges 21:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴ Now it happened the next day that the people rose up early and they built an altar there and they offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings.

Judges 21:5

The people of Israel said, “Which of all the tribes of Israel did not come up in the assembly to Yahweh?”

The people are referring back to the assembly of the Israelites at Mizpah before they attacked the Benjamites.

For they had made an important promise concerning anyone who did not come up to Yahweh at Mizpah. They said, “He would certainly be put to death.”

This is background information to explain to the reader the promise that the Israelites had made at Mizpah before they attacked the Benjamites. (See: [Background Information](#))

He would certainly be put to death

Here “He” refers to anyone who did not go to Mizpah. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “We will certainly kill that person” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ The sons of Israel said, “Who is it that did not go up with the assembly out of all the tribes of Israel to Yahweh?” For the great oath was against whoever did not go up to Yahweh at Mizpah, saying, “Surely he must be put to death.”

Judges 21:6

their brother Benjamin

This speaks of the tribe of Benjamin as if it were Israel's brother to show their closeness to the tribe. Alternate translation: "the surviving Benjamites" (See: [Metaphor](#))

one tribe has been cut off from Israel

The destruction of the tribe of Benjamin is spoken of as if it had been cut off from Israel by a knife. This was an exaggeration because 600 men were still left. However, the women of Benjamin had been killed, so the future of the tribe was in question. Alternate translation: "one tribe has been removed" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

⁶ The sons of Israel were moved to pity towards Benjamin, his brother. They said, "Today one tribe has been hewn down from Israel."

Judges 21:7

Who will provide wives for those who are left, since we have made a promise to Yahweh that we will not let any of them marry our daughters?

The Israelites wanted to provide wives for the few surviving Benjamites, but their promise at Mizpah prevented them from doing that.

ULT

⁷ What can we do for them, for the ones remaining, for a wife, since we have put ourselves under an oath to Yahweh to not give to them from our daughters for a wife?"

Judges 21:8

Jabesh Gilead

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁸ They said, "Who is anyone from the tribes of Israel who did not go up to Yahweh at Mizpah?" Now look, not anyone had gone to the camp, to the assembly, from Jabesh Gilead.

Judges 21:9

people were set out in an orderly manner

“people that were assembled at Mizpah were accounted for”

none of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead were there

ULT

⁹ When the people inspected themselves, look, not anyone was there from the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead.

This refers back to the earlier assembly at Mizpah. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: “none of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead had been present at Mizpah” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Judges 21:10

twelve thousand

“12,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children

The next verse will add an exception to this general instruction.

strike ... with the edge of the sword

“kill ... with their swords”

ULT

10 So the assembly sent twelve thousand men there, from the sons of the army, and they instructed them, saying, “Go, and you must strike down the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, even the women and the children.

Judges 21:11

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

11 "This is the thing that you must do: every male, and every woman who has known the bed of a male, you must ban for destruction."

Judges 21:12

Jabesh Gilead

This is the name of a city. See how you translated this in [Judges 21:8](#).

four hundred young women

“400 young women” (See: [Numbers](#))

who had not known a man by lying with him

This is a euphemism. Alternate translation: “who had not had sexual relations with a man” (See: [Euphemism](#))

ULT

¹² They found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young women, virgins, who had not known a man by lying with a male, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh which was in the land of Canaan.

Judges 21:13

they were offering them peace

The abstract noun “peace” can be translated with a verbal phrase.
 Alternate translation: “they wanted to stop fighting with them” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

13 The entire assembly reached out and they spoke to the sons of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon, and they proclaimed peace to them.

Judges 21:14

Jabesh Gilead

This is the name of a city. See how you translated this in [Judges 21:8](#).

there were not enough women for all of them

There were six hundred Benjamite men, and only four hundred women from Jabesh Gilead.

ULT

14 Benjamin returned at that time and they gave to them the women who were alive from the women of Jabesh Gilead. But they had not found sufficient for them.

Judges 21:15

made a division between the tribes of Israel

“had caused the tribes of Israel not to be unified”

ULT

¹⁵ Now the people were sorry for Benjamin, because Yahweh had made a breach between the tribes of Israel.

Judges 21:16

Benjamites

This refers to the descendants of Benjamin. See how you translated this in [Judges 3:15](#).

the women of Benjamin have been killed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “we killed all the Benjamite women” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

16 Then the elders of the assembly said, “How can we provide wives for the remaining ones, since women from Benjamin have been exterminated?”

Judges 21:17

There must be an inheritance ... is not destroyed from Israel

The Israelites are exaggerating. They had already given wives to four hundred of the Benjamites, so the tribe would not be completely destroyed. (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

¹⁷ They said, "There must be an inheritance for the escaped remnant of Benjamin, so that a tribe is not blotted out from Israel."

Judges 21:18

a wife to Benjamin

Here Benjamin refers to the male descendants of Benjamin.
Alternate translation: "a wife to the men of Benjamin" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

18 But we are not able to give them wives from our daughters, because the sons of Israel are bound to an oath, saying, 'Cursed is anyone who gives a wife to Benjamin.'"

Judges 21:19

which is north of Bethel, east of the road that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah

This is background information to explain to the reader where the city of Shiloh is located. (See: [Background Information](#))

Lebonah

This is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹⁹ So they said, "Look, there is a feast for Yahweh from time to time at Shiloh, which is on the north of Bethel, to the direction of the rising of the sun on the road that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah."

Judges 21:20

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁰ They instructed the sons of Benjamin, saying, "Go and wait in hiding in the vineyards.

Judges 21:21

each one of you should grab a wife ... go back to the land of Benjamin

It is understood that the Benjamites would take these women back to their own land with them. The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “each one of you should seize one of the girls of Shiloh, and then take her back with you to the land of Benjamin to become your wife” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²¹ You must watch, and look when the daughters of Shilo are coming forth to dance in the dances, then you come forth out of the vineyards. You will catch for yourselves, each one his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and then you can go back to the land of Benjamin.

Judges 21:22

Show us favor

The abstract noun “favor” can be stated as an action. Alternate translation: “Act kindly toward us” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

because we did not get wives for each man during the war

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “because we did not get wives for each of them during the war with Jabesh Gilead” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

You are innocent ... not give your daughters to them

This refers to the men of Shiloh. They did not voluntarily give their daughters to the Benjamites, and therefore did not break their promise not to do that.

ULT

²² It will happen, when their fathers or their brothers come out to argue with us, that we will say to them, ‘Give them freely to us, because we did not take for each man his wife in the battle. Since you did not give them at that time, you would be guilty.’”

Judges 21:23

the number of wives that they needed

This refers to one wife for each of the two hundred Benjamite men who did not receive wives from Jabesh Gilead ([Judges 21:14](#)).

ULT

23 The sons of Benjamin did so. They carried off wives sufficient for their number from the ones who were dancing, who they snatched away. Then they went and they returned to their inheritance. They rebuilt the cities and they lived in them.

Judges 21:24

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁴ Then the sons of Israel disbursed themselves from there at that time, each one to his tribe and to his family. Thus they went away from there each one to his inheritance.

Judges 21:25

there was no king in Israel

“Israel did not yet have a king”

what was right in his own eyes

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. Alternate translation: “what he judged to be right” or “what he considered to be right” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ In those days there was not a king in Israel. Each one would do what was right in his own eyes.



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Version 25

Abstract Nouns

Description

Abstract nouns are nouns that refer to attitudes, qualities, events, or situations. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as happiness, weight, unity, friendship, health, and reason. This is a translation issue because some languages may express a certain idea with an abstract noun, while others would need a different way to express it.

This page answers the question: *What are abstract nouns and how do I deal with them in my translation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech]]
[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences]]

Remember that nouns are words that refer to a person, place, thing, or idea. Abstract nouns are the nouns that refer to ideas. These can be attitudes, qualities, events, situations, or even relationships between those ideas. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as joy, peace, creation, goodness, contentment, justice, truth, freedom, vengeance, slowness, length, weight, and many, many more.

Some languages, such as Biblical Greek and English, use abstract nouns a lot. They provide a way of giving names to actions or qualities. With names, people who speak these languages can talk about the concepts as though they were things. For example, in languages that use abstract nouns, people can say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sin."

But some languages do not use abstract nouns very much. In these languages, speakers may not have the two abstract nouns "forgiveness" and "sin," but they would express the same meaning in other ways. For example, they would express, "I believe that God is willing to forgive people after they have sinned," by using verb phrases instead of nouns for those ideas.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible that you translate from may use abstract nouns to express certain ideas. Your language might not use abstract nouns for some of those ideas. Instead, it might use phrases to express those ideas. Those phrases will use other kinds of words such as adjectives, verbs, or adverbs to express the meaning of the abstract noun. For example, "What is its **weight**?" could be expressed as "How much does it **weigh**?" or "How **heavy** is it?"

Examples From the Bible

From **childhood** you have known the sacred writings ... (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)

The abstract noun "childhood" refers to when someone was a child.

But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)

The abstract nouns "godliness" and "contentment" refer to being godly and content. The abstract noun "gain" refers to something that benefits or helps someone.

Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)

The abstract noun "salvation" here refers to being saved.

The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)

The abstract noun "slowness" refers to the lack of speed with which something is done.

He will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)

The abstract noun “purposes” refers to the things that people want to do and the reasons they want to do them.

Translation Strategies

If an abstract noun would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun. Alternative translations are indented below the Scripture example.

... from **childhood** you have known the sacred writings ... (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)

Ever since **you were a child** you have known the sacred writings.

But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)

But **being godly** and **content** is very **beneficial**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **are godly** and **content**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **honor and obey God** and when we are **happy with what we have**.

Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)

Today the people in this house **have been saved** ... Today God **has saved** the people in this house ...

The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be. (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)

The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **moving slowly** to be.

He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)

He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal **the things that people want to do and the reasons that they want to do them**.

(Go back to: [Judges 3:12](#); [7:2](#); [7:9](#); [8:4](#); [9:11](#); [9:15](#); [9:26](#); [12:1](#); [21:13](#); [21:22](#))

Active or Passive

Some languages use both active and passive sentences. In active sentences, the subject does the action. In passive sentences, the subject is the one that receives the action. Here are some examples with their subjects bolded:

- Active: **My father** built the house in 2010.
- Passive: **The house** was built in 2010.

Translators whose languages do not use passive sentences will need to know how they can translate passive sentences that they find in the Bible. Other translators will need to decide when to use a passive sentence and when to use the active form.

This page answers the question: *What do active and passive mean, and how do I translate passive sentences?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

Description

Some languages have both active and passive forms of sentences.

- In the active form, the subject does the action and is always mentioned.
- In the passive form, the action is done to the subject, and the one who does the action is not always mentioned.

In the examples of active and passive sentences below, we have bolded the subject.

- active: **My father** built the house in 2010.
- passive: **The house** was built by my father in 2010.
- passive: **The house** was built in 2010. (This does not tell who did the action.)

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

All languages use active forms. Some languages use passive forms, and some do not. Some languages use passive forms only for certain purposes, and the passive form is not used for the same purposes in all of the languages that use it.

Purposes for the Passive

- The speaker is talking about the person or thing the action was done to, not about the person who did the action.
- The speaker does not want to tell who did the action.
- The speaker does not know who did the action.

Translation Principles Regarding the Passive

- Translators whose language does not use passive forms will need to find another way to express the idea.
- Translators whose language has passive forms will need to understand why the passive is used in a particular sentence in the Bible and decide whether or not to use a passive form for that purpose in his translation of the sentence.

Examples From the Bible

Then their shooters shot at your soldiers from off the wall, and some of the king's servants **were killed**, and your servant Uriah the Hittite **was killed** too. (2 Samuel 11:24 ULT)

This means that the enemy's shooters shot and killed some of the king's servants, including Uriah. The point is what happened to the king's servants and Uriah, not who shot them. The purpose of the passive form here is to keep the focus on the king's servants and Uriah.

When the men of the city arose early in the morning, and see, the altar of Baal **was torn down**. (Judges 6:28a ULT)

The men of the town saw what had happened to the altar of Baal, but they did not know who broke it down. The purpose of the passive form here is to communicate this event from the perspective of the men of the town.

It would be better for him if a millstone **were put** around his neck and he **were thrown** into the sea. (Luke 17:2a ULT)

This describes a situation in which a person ends up in the sea with a millstone around his neck. The purpose of the passive form here is to keep the focus on what happens to this person. Who does these things to the person is not important.

Translation Strategies

If your language would use a passive form for the same purpose as in the passage that you are translating, then use a passive form. If you decide that it is better to translate without a passive form, here are some strategies that you might consider.

- (1) Use the same verb in an active sentence and tell who or what did the action. If you do this, try to keep the focus on the person receiving the action.
- (2) Use the same verb in an active sentence, and do not tell who or what did the action. Instead, use a generic expression like "they" or "people" or "someone."
- (3) Use a different verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the same verb in an active sentence and tell who did the action. If you do this, try to keep the focus on the person receiving the action.

A loaf of bread **was given** him every day from the street of the bakers. (Jeremiah 37:21b ULT)

The king's servants gave Jeremiah a loaf of bread every day from the street of the bakers.

- (2) Use the same verb in an active sentence, and do not tell who did the action. Instead, use a generic expression like "they" or "people" or "someone."

It would be better for him if a millstone **were put** around his neck and he **were thrown** into the sea. (Luke 17:2a ULT)

It would be better for him if **they were to put** a millstone around his neck and **throw** him into the sea.

It would be better for him if **someone were to put** a heavy stone around his neck and **throw** him into the sea.

- (3) Use a different verb in an active sentence.

A loaf of bread **was given** him every day from the street of the bakers. (Jeremiah 37:21 ULT)

He **received** a loaf of bread every day from the street of the bakers.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Abstract Nouns](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-order]]

(Go back to: [Judges 1:3](#); [1:7](#); [1:20](#); [1:33](#); [2:9](#); [2:14](#); [3:1](#); [3:4](#); [3:19](#); [3:30](#); [4:16](#); [5:6](#); [5:27](#); [6:28](#); [6:30](#); [6:35](#); [7:8](#); [7:11](#); [7:12](#); [7:23](#); [8:26](#); [8:28](#); [8:32](#); [9:7](#); [9:24](#); [9:25](#); [9:42](#); [9:47](#); [10:2](#); [10:3](#); [10:5](#); [11:37](#); [12:6](#); [12:7](#); [12:10](#); [12:12](#); [13:5](#); [14:20](#); [16:6](#); [16:7](#); [16:8](#); [16:13](#); [16:17](#); [16:22](#); [17:2](#); [17:4](#); [18:22](#); [18:23](#); [18:25](#); [18:27](#); [19:19](#); [20:31](#); [20:39](#); [21:5](#); [21:16](#))

Apostrophe

Description

An apostrophe is a figure of speech in which a speaker turns his attention away from his listeners and speaks to someone or something that he knows cannot hear him. He does this to tell his listeners his message or feelings about that person or thing in a very strong way.

This page answers the question: *What is the figure of speech called an apostrophe?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use apostrophe, and readers could be confused by it. They may wonder who the speaker is talking to, or think that the speaker is crazy to talk to things or people who cannot hear.

Examples from the Bible

Mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on you. (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

King Saul was killed on Mount Gilboa, and David sang a sad song about it. By telling these mountains that he wanted them to have no dew or rain, he showed how sad he was.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to you. (Luke 13:34a ULT)

Jesus was expressing his feelings for the people of Jerusalem in front of his disciples and a group of Pharisees. By speaking directly to Jerusalem as though its people could hear him, Jesus showed how deeply he cared about them.

He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh: "**Altar, altar!** This is what Yahweh says, 'See, ... on you they will burn human bones.'" (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)

The man of God spoke as if the altar could hear him, but he really wanted the king, who was standing there, to hear him.

Translation Strategies

If apostrophe would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. But if this way of speaking would be confusing to your people, let the speaker continue speaking to the people that are listening to him as he tells **them** his message or feelings about the people or thing that cannot hear him. See the example below.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh: "**Altar, altar!** This is what Yahweh says, 'See, ... on you they will burn human bones.'" (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)

He said this about the altar: "This is what Yahweh says **about this altar**. 'See, ... they will burn people's bones on **it**.'" (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)

Mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on **you**. (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

As for these mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on **them**. (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

(Go back to: [Judges 5:3](#))

Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

Assumed knowledge is whatever a speaker assumes his audience knows before he speaks and gives them some kind of information. The speaker does not give the audience this information because he believes that they already know it.

This page answers the question: *How can I be sure that my translation communicates the assumed knowledge and implicit information along with the explicit information of the original message?*

When the speaker does give the audience information, he can do so in two ways. The speaker gives explicit information in what he states directly. Implicit Information is what the speaker does not state directly because he expects his audience to be able to learn it from other things he says.

Description

When someone speaks or writes, he has something specific that he wants people to know or do or think about. He normally states this directly. This is explicit information.

The speaker assumes that his audience already knows certain things that they will need to think about in order to understand this information. Normally he does not tell people these things, because they already know them. This is called assumed knowledge.

The speaker does not always directly state everything that he expects his audience to learn from what he says. Implicit information is information that he expects people to learn from what he says even though he does not state it directly.

Often, the audience understands this implicit information by combining what they already know (assumed knowledge) with the explicit information that the speaker tells them directly.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

All three kinds of information are part of the speaker's message. If one of these kinds of information is missing, then the audience will not understand the message. Because the target translation is in a language that is very different from the biblical languages and is made for an audience that lives in a very different time and place than the people in the Bible, many times the assumed knowledge or the implicit information is missing from the message. In other words, modern readers do not know everything that the original speakers and hearers in the Bible knew. When these things are important for understanding the message, it is helpful if you include this information in the text or in a footnote.

Examples From the Bible

Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

Jesus did not say what foxes and birds use holes and nests for, because he assumed that the scribe would have known that foxes sleep in holes in the ground and birds sleep in their nests. This is **assumed knowledge**.

Jesus did not directly say here "I am the Son of Man" but, if the scribe did not already know it, then that fact would be **implicit information** that he could learn because Jesus referred to himself that way. Also, Jesus did not state explicitly that he travelled a lot and did not have a house that he slept in every night. That is **implicit information** that the scribe could learn when Jesus said that he had nowhere to lay his head.

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the mighty deeds had been done in **Tyre and Sidon** which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But

I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the **day of judgment** than for you.
(Matthew 11:21-22 ULT)

Jesus assumed that the people he was speaking to knew that Tyre and Sidon were very wicked, and that the day of judgment is a time when God will judge every person. Jesus also knew that the people he was talking to believed that they were good and did not need to repent. Jesus did not need to tell them these things. This is all **assumed knowledge**.

An important piece of **implicit information** here is that the people he was speaking to would be judged more severely than the people of Tyre and Sidon would be judged **because** they did not repent.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands when they eat bread**. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

One of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating. People thought that in order to be righteous, they had to follow all the traditions of the elders. This was **assumed knowledge** that the Pharisees who were speaking to Jesus expected him to know. By saying this, they were accusing his disciples of not following the traditions, and thus not being righteous. This is **implicit information** that they wanted him to understand from what they said.

Translation Strategies

If readers have enough assumed knowledge to be able to understand the message, along with any important implicit information that goes with the explicit information, then it is good to leave that knowledge unstated and leave the implicit information implicit. If the readers do not understand the message because one of these is missing for them, then follow these strategies:

- (1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.
- (2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.

Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the foxes slept in their holes and birds slept in their nests.

Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes to live in**, and the birds of the sky **have nests to live in**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head and sleep."

It will be more tolerable for **Tyre and Sidon** at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the people of Tyre and Sidon were very, very wicked. This can be stated explicitly.

>

At the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for **those cities of Tyre and Sidon, whose people were very wicked**, than it will be for you. or At

the day of judgment, It will be more tolerable for those **wicked cities, Tyre and Sidon**, than for you.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands** when they eat bread. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that one of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating, which they must do to be righteous. It was not to remove germs from their hands to avoid sickness, as a modern reader might think.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not go through the ceremonial handwashing ritual of righteousness** when they eat bread.

(2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

The implicit information is that Jesus himself is the Son of Man. Other implicit information is that if the scribe wanted to follow Jesus, then, like Jesus, he would have to live without a house.

Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but **I, the Son of Man**, have **no home to rest in. If you want to follow me, you will live as I live.**"

It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22 ULT)

The implicit information is that God would not only judge the people; he would punish them. This can be made explicit.

At the day of judgment, God will **punish Tyre and Sidon**, cities whose people were very wicked, **less severely than he will punish you.**
or:

At the day of judgment, God will **punish you more severely** than Tyre and Sidon, cities whose people were very wicked.

Modern readers may not know some of the things that the people in the Bible and the people who first read it knew. This can make it hard for them to understand what a speaker or writer says, and to learn things that the speaker left implicit. Translators may need to state some things explicitly in the translation that the original speaker or writer left unstated or implicit.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-explicitinfo\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 1:2](#); [1:4](#); [1:15](#); [1:16](#); [1:17](#); [2:6](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [4:18](#); [Notes](#); [5:1](#); [5:5](#); [5:6](#); [5:8](#); [5:16](#); [5:17](#); [5:21](#); [5:22](#); [5:25](#); [6:16](#); [6:23](#); [6:33](#); [6:37](#); [7:3](#); [7:4](#); [7:18](#); [7:25](#); [Notes](#); [8:6](#); [8:7](#); [8:14](#); [9:27](#); [9:45](#); [10:13](#); [10:16](#); [11:8](#); [11:15](#); [11:17](#); [11:20](#); [11:29](#); [11:36](#); [12:3](#); [12:4](#); [13:5](#); [13:6](#); [13:7](#); [13:9](#); [13:10](#); [13:15](#); [13:18](#); [13:19](#); [13:22](#); [14:3](#); [14:7](#); [14:10](#); [14:15](#); [14:16](#); [14:18](#); [14:19](#); [15:1](#); [15:2](#); [15:3](#); [15:6](#); [15:10](#); [15:11](#); [15:13](#); [15:14](#); [15:16](#); [15:20](#); [16:13](#); [16:14](#); [16:17](#); [16:18](#); [16:19](#); [16:20](#); [16:25](#); [16:30](#); [16:31](#); [17:5](#); [17:7](#); [17:9](#); [17:10](#); [18:1](#); [18:14](#); [18:21](#); [18:25](#); [18:26](#); [18:30](#); [Notes](#); [19:2](#); [19:8](#); [19:28](#); [19:29](#); [20:28](#); [20:31](#); [21:9](#); [21:21](#); [21:22](#))

Background Information

Description

When people tell a story, they normally tell the events in the order that they happened. This sequence of events makes up the storyline. The storyline is full of action verbs that move the story along in time. But sometimes a writer may take a break from the storyline and give some information to help his listeners understand the story better. This type of information is called background information. The background information might be about things that happened before the events he has already told about, or it might explain something in the story, or it might be about something that would happen much later in the story.

This page answers the question: *What is background information, and how can I show that some information is background information?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Order of Events](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro]]

Example — The bolded phrases in the story below are all background information.

Peter and John went on a hunting trip because **their village was going to have a feast the next day. Peter was the best hunter in the village. He once killed three wild pigs in one day!** They walked for hours through low bushes until they heard a wild pig. The pig ran, but they managed to shoot the pig and kill it. Then they tied up its legs with some rope **they had brought with them** and carried it home on a pole. When they brought it to the village, Peter's cousin saw the pig and realized that it was his own pig. Peter had mistakenly killed his cousin's pig.

Background information often tells about something that had happened earlier or something that would happen much later. Examples of these are: "their village was going to have a feast the next day," "He once killed three wild pigs in one day," and "that they had brought with them."

Often background information uses "be" verbs like "was" and "were," rather than action verbs. Examples of these are "their village was going to have a feast the next day," and "Peter **was** the best hunter in the village."

Background information can also be marked with words that tell the reader that this information is not part of the event line of the story. In this story, some of these words are "because," "once," and "had."

A writer may use background information:

- to help their listeners be interested in the story
- to help their listeners understand something in the story
- to help the listeners understand why something is important in the story
- to tell the setting of a story
 - > * Setting includes:
 - > * where the story takes place
 - > * when the story takes place
 - > * who is present when the story begins
 - > * what is happening when the story begins

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Languages have different ways of marking background information and storyline information.
- You (the translator) need to know the order of the events in the Bible, which information is background information, and which is storyline information.
- You will need to translate the story in a way that marks the background information in a way that your own readers will understand the order of events, which information is background information, and which is storyline information.

Examples From the Bible

Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram **was 86 years old** when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:15-16 ULT)

The first sentence tells about two events. Hagar gave birth and Abraham named his son. The second sentence is background information about how old Abram was when those things happened.

And Jesus himself **was beginning about 30 years old**. He **was the son** (as it was assumed) of Joseph, of Heli, (Luke 3:23 ULT)

The verses before this tell about when Jesus was baptized. This sentence introduces background information about Jesus' age and ancestors. The story resumes in chapter 4 where it tells about Jesus going to the wilderness.

Then **it happened on a Sabbath** that he **was going through the grain fields**, and his disciples **were picking and eating the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands**. But some of the Pharisees said ... (Luke 6:1-2a ULT)

These verses give the setting of the story. The events took place in a grain field on the Sabbath day. Jesus, his disciples, and some Pharisees were there, and Jesus' disciples were picking heads of grain and eating them. The main action in the story starts with the phrase, "But some of the Pharisees said"

Translation Strategies

To keep translations clear and natural you will need to study how people tell stories in your language. Observe how your language marks background information. You may need to write down some stories in order to study this. Observe what kinds of verbs your language uses for background information and what kinds of words or other markers signal that something is background information. Do these same things when you translate, so that your translation is clear and natural and people can understand it easily.

- (1) Use your language's way of showing that certain information is background information.
- (2) Reorder the information so that earlier events are mentioned first. (This is not always possible when the background information is very long.)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use your language's way of showing that certain information is background information. The examples below explain how this was done in the ULT English translations.

And Jesus himself **was** beginning about 30 years old. He **was** the son (as it was assumed) of Joseph, of Heli. (Luke 3:23 ULT)

As here, English sometimes uses the word "and" to show that there is some kind of change in the story. The verb "was" shows that it is background information.

Therefore, also exhorting many other things, he preached the good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, having been rebuked by him concerning Herodias, the wife of his brother, and **concerning all the evil things that Herod had done**, added even this to them all: He locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20 ULT)

The bolded phrase happened before John rebuked Herod. In English, the helping verb "had" in "had done" shows that Herod did those things before John rebuked him.

- (2) Reorder the information so that earlier events are mentioned first.

Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.
Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:16 ULT)

"When Abram was 86 years old, Hagar gave birth to his son, and Abram named his son Ishmael."

Therefore, also exhorting many other things, he preached the good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, having been rebuked by him concerning Herodias, the wife of his brother, and **concerning all the evil things that Herod had done,** added even this to them all: He locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20 ULT)

The translation below reorders John's rebuke and Herod's actions.

"Now Herod the tetrarch married his brother's wife, Herodias, and **he did many other evil things,** so John rebuked him. But then Herod did another very evil thing. He had John locked up in prison."

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/grammar-connect-words-phrases\]\]](#)

[Introduction of a New Event](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 1:10](#); [1:11](#); [1:23](#); [2:6](#); [2:7](#); [2:8](#); [3:2](#); [3:17](#); [4:4](#); [4:11](#); [5:6](#); [8:24](#); [16:9](#); [16:27](#); [18:1](#); [20:27](#); [20:28](#); [20:36](#); [20:39](#); [20:40](#); [21:1](#); [21:5](#); [21:19](#))

Biblical Distance

Description

The following terms are the most common measures for distance or length that were originally used in the Bible. Most of these are based on the sizes of the hand and forearm.

- The **handbreadth** was the width of the palm of a man’s hand.
- The **span** or handspan was the width of a man’s hand with the fingers spread out.
- The **cubit** was the length of a man’s forearm, from the elbow to the tip of the longest finger.
- The **“long” cubit** is used only in Ezekiel 40-48. It is the length of a normal cubit plus a span.
- The **stadium** (plural, **stadia**) referred to a certain footrace that was about 185 meters in length. Some older English versions translated this word as “furlong,” which referred to the average length of a plowed field.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate the lengths and distances that are in the Bible?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-decimal]]
[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-fraction]]

The metric values in the table below are close but not exactly equal to the biblical measures. The biblical measures probably differed in exact length from time to time and place to place. The equivalents below are an attempt to give an average measurement.

Original Measure	Metric Measure
handbreadth	8 centimeters
span	23 centimeters
cubit	46 centimeters
“long” cubit	54 centimeters
stadia	185 meters

Translation Principles

The people in the Bible did not use modern measures such as meters, liters, and kilograms. Using the original measures can help readers know that the Bible really was written long ago in a time when people used those measures.

Using modern measures can help readers understand the text more easily.

Whatever measure you use, it would be good, if possible, to tell about the other kind of measure in the text or a footnote.

If you do not use the Biblical measures, try not to give the readers the idea that the measurements are exact. For example, if you translate one cubit as “.46 meters” or even as “46 centimeters,” readers might think that the measurement is exact. It would be better to say “half a meter,” “45 centimeters,” or “50 centimeters.”

Sometimes it can be helpful to use the word “about” to show that a measurement is not exact. For example, Luke 24:13 says that Emmaus was 60 stadia from Jerusalem. This can be translated as “about ten kilometers” from Jerusalem.

When God tells people how long something should be, and when people make things according to those lengths, do not use “about” in the translation. Otherwise it will give the impression that God did not care exactly how long something should be.

Translation Strategies

- (1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See [Copy or Borrow Words](#).)
- (2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.
- (3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.
- (4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note.
- (5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note.

Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Exodus 25:10 below.

They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be two and a half cubits; its width will be one cubit and a half; and its height will be one cubit and a half. (Exodus 25:10 ULT)

- (1) Use the measurements given in the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See [Copy or Borrow Words](#).)

“They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **two and a half kubits**; its width will be **one kubit and a half**; and its height will be **one kubit and a half**.”

- (2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.

“They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **one meter**; its width will be **two thirds of a meter**; and its height will be **two thirds of a meter**.”

- (3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement. For example, if you measure things using the standard meter length, you could translate it as below.

“They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **one meter**; its width will be **two thirds of a meter**; and its height will be **two thirds of a meter**.”

- (4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note. The following shows both measurements in the text.

“They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **two and a half cubits (one meter)**; its width will be **one cubit and a half (two thirds of a meter)**; and its height will be **one cubit and a half (two thirds of a meter)**.”

- (5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note. The following shows the ULT measurements in notes.

“They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **one meter**; ¹ its width will be **two thirds of a meter**; ² and its height will be **two thirds of a meter**.”

The footnotes would look like:

“They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **one meter**; ¹ its width will be **two thirds of a meter**; ² and its height will be **two thirds of a meter**.”

The footnotes would look like:

^[1] two and a half cubits
^[2] one cubit and a half

(Go back to: [Judges 3:16](#))

Biblical Money

Description

This page answers the question: *How can I translate the values of money in the Bible?*

In early Old Testament times, people weighed their metals, such as silver and gold, and would pay a certain weight of that metal in order to buy things. Later, people started to make coins that each contained a standard amount of a certain metal. The daric is one such coin. In New Testament times, people used silver and copper coins.

The two tables below show some of the most well-known units of money found in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT). The table for Old Testament units shows what kind of metal was used and how much it weighed. The table for New Testament units shows what kind of metal was used and how much it was worth in terms of a day's wage.

Unit in OT	Metal	Weight
daric	gold coin	8.4 grams
shekel	various metals	11 grams
talent	various metals	33 kilograms

Unit in NT	Metal	Day's Wage
denarius/denarii	silver coin	1 day
drachma	silver coin	1 day
mite	copper coin	1/64 day
shekel	silver coin	4 days
talent	silver	6,000 days

Translation Principle

Do not use modern money values since these change from year to year. Using them will cause the Bible translation to become outdated and inaccurate.

Translation Strategies

The value of most money in the Old Testament was based on its weight. So when translating these weights in the Old Testament, see [Biblical Weight](#). The strategies below are for translating the value of money in the New Testament.

- (1) Use the Bible term and spell it in a way that is similar to the way it sounds. (See [Copy or Borrow Words](#).)
- (2) Describe the value of the money in terms of what kind of metal it was made of and how many coins were used.
- (3) Describe the value of the money in terms of what people in Bible times could earn in one day of work.
- (4) Use the biblical term and give the equivalent amount in the text or a footnote.

(5) Use the biblical term and explain it in a footnote.

Translation Strategies Applied

The translations strategies are all applied to Luke 7:41 below.

█ The one owed 500 denarii, and the other, 50. (Luke 7:41b ULT)

Use the Bible term and spell it in a way that is similar to the way it sounds. (See [Copy or Borrow Words](#).)

█ "The one owed **500 denali**, and the other, **50**."

Describe the value of the money in terms of what kind of metal it was made of and how many pieces or coins were used.

█ "The one owed **500 silver coins**, and the other, **50**."

(3) Describe the value of the money in terms of what people in Bible times could earn in one day of work.

█ "The one owed **500 days' wages**, and the other, **50**."

(4) Use the Bible term and give the equivalent amount in the text or a footnote.

█ "The one owed **500 denarii** 1, and the other owed **50 denarii**. 2"

The footnotes would look like:

█ [1] 500 days' wages [2] 50 days' wages

(5) Use the Bible term and explain it in a footnote.

█ "The one owed **500 denarii**,¹ and the other, **50**." (Luke 7:41 ULT)

█ ^[1] A denarius was the amount of silver that people could earn in one day of work.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Copy or Borrow Words](#)

[Translate Unknowns](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 9:4](#))

Biblical Volume

Description

The following terms are the most common units of volume used in the Bible to state how much a certain container could hold. The containers and measurements are given for both liquids (such as wine) and dry solids (such as grain). The metric values are not exactly equal to the biblical measures. The biblical measures probably differed in exact amount from time to time and place to place. The equivalents below are an attempt to give an average measurement.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate the measures of volume that are in the Bible?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-decimal\]\]](#)

Type	Original Measure	Liters
Dry	omer	2 liters
Dry	ephah	22 liters
Dry	homer	220 liters
Dry	cor	220 liters
Dry	seah	7.7 liters
Dry	lethek	114.8 liters
Liquid	metrete	40 liters
Liquid	bath	22 liters
Liquid	hin	3.7 liters
Liquid	kab	1.23 liters
Liquid	log	0.31 liters

Translation Principles

- The people in the Bible did not use modern measures such as meters, liters, and kilograms. Using the original measures can help readers know that the Bible really was written long ago in a time when people used those measures.
- Using modern measures can help readers understand the text more easily.
- Whatever measures you use, it would be good, if possible, to tell about the other kinds of measures in the text or a footnote.
- If you do not use the biblical measures, try not to give the readers the idea that the measurements are exact. For example, if you translate one hin as “3.7 liters,” readers might think that the measurement is exactly 3.7 liters, not 3.6 or 3.8. It would be better to use a more approximate measure such as “three and a half liters” or “four liters.”
- When God tells people how much of something to use, and when people use those amounts in obedience to him, do not say “about” in the translation. Otherwise it will give the impression that God did not care exactly how much they used.

When the unit of measure is stated

Translation Strategies

- (1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See [Copy or Borrow Words](#).)
- (2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.
- (3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.
- (4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note.
- (5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note.

Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Isaiah 5:10 below.

For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only one bath, and one homer of seed will yield only an ephah. (Isaiah 5:10 ULT)

- (1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See [Copy or Borrow Words](#).)

“For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only one **bat**, and one **homer** of seed will yield only an **efa**.”

- (2) Use the measurements given in the UST. Usually they are metric measurements. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.

“For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **22 liters** and **220 liters** of seed will yield only **22 liters**.”

“For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **22**, and **ten baskets** of seed will yield only **one basket**.”

- (3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.

“For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **six gallons**, and **six and a half bushels** of seed will yield only **20 quarts**.”

- (4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note. The following shows both measurements in the text.

“For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **one bath (six gallons)**, and **one homer (six and a half bushels)** of seed will yield only **an ephah (20 quarts)**.”

- (5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note. The following shows the ULT measurements in footnotes.

"For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only 22 liters¹, and 220 liters² of seed will yield only 22 liters³."

The footnotes would look like:

- [1] one bath
- [2] one homer
- [3] one ephah

When the unit of measure is implied

Sometimes the Hebrew does not specify a particular unit of volume but only uses a number. In these cases, many English versions, including the ULT and UST, add the word "measure."

When you came to a heap of **20 measures** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50 measures** of wine, there were only 20. (Haggai 2:16 ULT)

Translation Strategies

- (1) Translate literally by using the number without a unit.
- (2) Use a generic word like "measure" or "quantity" or "amount."
- (3) Use the name of an appropriate container, such as "basket" for grain or "jar" for wine.
- (4) Use a unit of measure that you are already using in your translation.

Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Haggai 2:16 below.

When you came to a heap of **20 measures** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **fifty measures** of wine, there were only **20**. (Haggai 2:16 ULT)

- (1) Translate literally by using the number without a unit.

When you came to a heap of **20** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50** of wine, there were only **20**.

- (2) Use a generic word like "measure" or "quantity" or "amount."

When you came to a heap of **20 amounts** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **fifty amounts** of wine, there were only **20**.

- (3) Use the name of an appropriate container, such as "basket" for grain or "jar" for wine.

When you came to a heap of **20 baskets** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50 jars** of wine, there were only **20**.

- (4) Use a unit of measure that you are already using in your translation.

When you came to a heap for **20 liters** of grain, there were only **ten liters**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50 liters** of wine, there were only **20 liters**.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-fraction]]

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-explicitinfo]]

(Go back to: [Judges 6:19](#))

Biblical Weight

Description

This page answers the question: *How can I translate the values of weight in the Bible?*

The following terms are the most common units of weight in the Bible. The term “shekel” means “weight,” and many other weights are described in terms of the shekel. Some of these weights were used for money. The metric values in the table below are not exactly equal to the biblical measures. The biblical measures differed in exact amount from time to time and place to place. The equivalents below are only an attempt to give an average measurement.

Original Measure	Shekels	Grams	Kilograms
shekel	1 shekel	11 grams	-
bekah	1/2 shekel	5.7 grams	-
pim	2/3 shekel	7.6 grams	-
gerah	1/20 shekel	0.57 grams	-
mina	50 shekels	550 grams	1/2 kilogram
talent	3,000 shekels	-	34 kilograms

Translation Principles

The people in the Bible did not use modern measures such as meters, liters, and kilograms. Using the original measures can help readers know that the Bible really was written long ago in a time when people used those measures.

Using modern measures can help readers understand the text more easily.

Whatever measure you use, it would be good, if possible, to tell about the other kind of measure in the text or a footnote.

If you do not use the biblical measures, try not to give the readers the idea that the measurements are exact. For example, if you translate one gerah as “.57 grams,” readers might think that the measurement is exact. It would be better to say “half a gram.”

Sometimes it can be helpful to use the word “about” to show that a measurement is not exact. For example, 2 Samuel 21:16 says that Goliath’s spear weighed 300 shekels. Instead of translating this as “3300 grams” or “3.3 kilograms,” it can be translated as “about three and one half kilograms.”

When God tells people how much something should weigh, and when people use those weights, do not say “about” in the translation. Otherwise, it will give the impression that God did not care exactly how much the thing should weigh.

Translation Strategies

(1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See [Copy or Borrow Words](#).)

(2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.

(3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this, you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.

- (4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note.
- (5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note.

Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Exodus 38:29 below.

█ The bronze from the wave offering weighed **70 talents and 2,400 shekels**. (Exodus 38:29 ULT)

- (1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See [Copy or Borrow Words](#).)

█ "The bronze from the wave offering weighed **70 talentes and 2,400 sekeles**."

- (2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.

█ "The bronze from the wave offering weighed **2,400 kilograms**."

- (3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.

█ "The bronze from the wave offering weighed **5,300 pounds**."

- (4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a footnote. The following shows both measurements in the text.

█ "The bronze from the wave offering weighed **70 talents (2,380 kilograms) and 2,400 shekels (26.4 kilograms)**."

- (5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a footnote. The following shows the ULT measurements in notes.

█ "The bronze from the offering weighed **70 talents and 2,400 shekels**. 1"

The footnote would look like:

█ [1] This was a total of about 2,400 kilograms.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-fraction\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 8:26](#))

Copy or Borrow Words

Description

Sometimes the Bible includes things that are not part of your culture and for which your language may not have a word. The Bible also includes people and places for which you may not have names.

When that happens you can “borrow” the word from the Bible in a familiar language and use it in your translation in your own language. This means that you basically copy it from the other language. This page tells how to “borrow” words. (There are also other ways to translate words for things that are not in your language. See [Translate Unknowns](#).)

This page answers the question: *What does it mean to borrow words from another language and how can I do it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Translate Unknowns](#)

Examples From the Bible

Seeing one fig tree along the roadside, he went to it. (Matthew 21:19a ULT)

If there are no fig trees where your language is spoken, there might not be a name for this kind of tree in your language.

Above him were the **seraphim**; each one had six wings; with two each covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. (Isaiah 6:2 ULT)

Your language might not have a name for this kind of creature.

The declaration of the word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of **Malachi**. (Malachi 1:1 ULT)

Malachi might not be a name that people who speak your language use.

Translation Strategies

There are several things to be aware of when borrowing words from another language.

- Different languages use different scripts, such as the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Cyrillic, Devanagari, and Korean scripts. These scripts use different shapes to represent the letters in their alphabets.
- Languages that use the same script might pronounce the letters in that script differently. For example, when speaking German, people pronounce the letter “j” the same way that people pronounce the letter “y” when speaking English.
- Languages do not all have the same sounds or combinations of sounds. For example, many languages do not have the soft “th” sound in the English word “think,” and some languages cannot start a word with a combination of sounds like “st” as in “stop.”

There are several ways to borrow a word.

- (1) If your language uses a different script from the language you are translating from, you can simply substitute each letter shape with the corresponding letter shape of the script of your language.
- (2) You can spell the word as the Other Language spells it, and pronounce it the way your language normally pronounces those letters.
- (3) You can pronounce the word similarly to the way the Other Language does, and adjust the spelling to fit the rules of your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If your language uses a different script from the language you are translating from, you can simply substitute each letter shape with the corresponding letter shape of the script of your language.

.A man's name in Hebrew letters — זְפַנְיָה
"Zephaniah" — The same name in Roman letters

(2) You can spell the word as the Other Language spells it, and pronounce it the way your language normally pronounces those letters.

Zephaniah — This is a man's name.
"Zephaniah" — The name as it is spelled in English, but you can pronounce it according to the rules of your language.

(3) You can pronounce the word similarly to the way the Other Language does, and adjust the spelling to fit the rules of your language.

Zephaniah — If your language does not have the "z," you could use "s." If your writing system does not use "ph" you could use "f." Depending on how you pronounce the "i" you could spell it with "i" or "ai" or "ay."
"Sefania"
"Sefanaia"
"Sefanaya"

(Go back to: [Judges 12 General Notes; 12:6](#))

Direct and Indirect Quotations

Description

There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotations and indirect quotations.

A direct quotation occurs when someone reports what another person said from the viewpoint of that original speaker. People usually expect that this kind of quotation will represent the original speaker's exact words. In the example below, John would have said "I" when referring to himself, so the narrator, who is reporting John's words, uses the word "I" in the quotation to refer to John. To show that these are John's exact words, many languages put the words between quotation marks: "".

- John said, "I do not know at what time I will arrive."

An indirect quotation occurs when a speaker reports what someone else said, but in this case, the speaker is reporting it from his own point of view instead and not from the original person's point of view. This kind of quotation usually contains changes in pronouns, and it often includes changes in time, in word choices, and in length. In the example below, the narrator refers to John as "he" in the quotation and uses the word "would" to replace the future tense, indicated by "will."

- John said that **he** did not know at what time **he** would arrive.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In some languages, reported speech can be expressed by either direct or indirect quotations. In other languages, it is more natural to use one than the other. There may be a certain meaning implied by using one rather than the other. So for each quotation, translators need to decide whether it is best to translate it as a direct quotation or as an indirect quotation.

Examples From the Bible

The verses in the examples below contain both direct and indirect quotations. In the explanation below the verse, we have marked in bold the words that are quoted.

And he commanded him to tell no one, but, "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."
(Luke 5:14 ULT)

- Indirect quote: He commanded him **to tell no one**,
- Direct quote: but told him, "**Go, show yourself to the priest ...**"

And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you." (Luke 17:20-21 ULT)

- Indirect quote: Being asked by the Pharisees **when the kingdom of God was coming**,
- Direct quote: he answered them and said, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you.**"
- Direct quotes: Neither will they say, '**Look, here it is!**' or, '**There it is!**'

This page answers the question: *What are direct and indirect quotations?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-pronouns\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-quotations\]\]](#)

Translation Strategies

If the kind of quote used in the source text would work well in your language, consider using it. If the kind of quote used in that context is not natural for your language, follow these strategies.

- (1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.
- (2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.

And he commanded him to tell no one, but, **“Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”** (Luke 5:14 ULT)

He commanded him to tell no one, but **to go and show himself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for his cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.**

- (2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

And he commanded him **to tell no one**, but, “Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.” (Luke 5:14 ULT)

He commanded him, **“Tell no one.** But go and show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_quotations.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Quotes within Quotes](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 2:3](#); [6:13](#); [9:2](#); [9:38](#))

Double Negatives

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each express the meaning of “not.” Double negatives mean very different things in different languages. To translate sentences that have double negatives accurately and clearly, you need to know what a double negative means in the Bible and how to express this idea in your language.

This page answers the question: *What are double negatives?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences\]\]](#)

Description

Negative words are words that have in them the meaning “not.” Examples in English are “no,” “not,” “none,” “no one,” “nothing,” “nowhere,” “never,” “nor,” “neither,” and “without.” Also, some words have prefixes or suffixes that mean “not,” such as the bolded parts of these words: “**un**happy,” “**im**possible,” and “**useless**.” Some other kinds of words also have a negative meaning, such as “lack” or “reject,” or even “fight” or “evil.”

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each have a negative meaning.

We did this **not** because we have **no** authority ... (2 Thessalonians 3:9a ULT)

And this was **not** done **without** an oath! (Hebrews 7:20a ULT)

Be sure of this—the wicked person will **not** go **un**punished. (Proverbs 11:21a ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

- In some languages, such as Spanish, a double negative emphasizes the negative. The Spanish sentence, “No vi a nadie,” literally says “I did not see no one.” It has both the word ‘no’ next to the verb and ‘nadie,’ which means “no one.” The two negatives are seen as in agreement with each other, and the sentence means, “I did not see anyone.”
- In some languages, a second negative cancels the first one, creating a positive sentence. So, “He is not unintelligent” means “He is intelligent.”
- In some languages the double negative creates a positive sentence, but it is a weak statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” means, “He is somewhat intelligent.”
- In some languages, such as the languages of the Bible, the double negative can create a positive sentence, and often strengthens the statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” can mean “He is intelligent” or “He is very intelligent.”

To translate sentences with double negatives accurately and clearly in your language, you need to know what a double negative means in the Bible and how to express the same idea in your language.

Examples From the Bible

... in order **not** to be **un**fruitful. (Titus 3:14b ULT)

This means “so that they will be fruitful.”

All things were made through him and **without** him there was **not** one thing made that has been made. (John 1:3 ULT)

By using a double negative, John emphasized that the Son of God created absolutely everything. The double negative makes a stronger statement than the simple positive.

Translation Strategies

If double negatives are natural and are used to express the positive in your language, consider using them. Otherwise, you could consider these strategies:

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is simply to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.
- (2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a strong positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives and put in a strengthening word or phrase such as “very” or “surely” or “absolutely.”

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is simply to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.

For we do **not** have a high priest who **cannot** feel sympathy for our weaknesses. (Hebrews 4:15a ULT)

“For we have a high priest who can feel sympathy for our weaknesses.”

... in order **not** to be **unfruitful**. (Titus 3:14b ULT)

“... so that they may be fruitful.”

- (2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a strong positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives and put in a strengthening word or phrase such as “very” or “surely” or “absolutely.”

Be sure of this—the wicked person will **not** go **unpunished**. (Proverbs 11:21a ULT)

“Be sure of this—wicked people will **certainly** be punished.”

All things were made through him and **without** him there was **not** one thing made that has been made. (John 1:3 ULT)

“All things were made through him. He made **absolutely** everything that has been made.”

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 18:9](#); [18:10](#))

Doublet

Description

We are using the word “doublet” to refer to two words or phrases that are used together and either mean the same thing or mean very close to the same thing. Often they are joined with the word “and.” Unlike [Hendiadys](#), in which one of the words modifies the other, in a doublet the two words or phrases are equal and are used to emphasize or intensify the one idea that is expressed by the two words or phrases.

This page answers the question: *What are doublets and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

A very similar issue is the repetition of the same word or phrase for emphasis, usually with no other words between them. Because these figures of speech are so similar and have the same effect, we will treat them here together.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In some languages people do not use doublets. Or they may use doublets, but only in certain situations, so a doublet might not make sense in their language in some verses. People might think that the verse is describing two ideas or actions, when it is only describing one. In this case, translators may need to find some other way to express the meaning expressed by the doublet.

Examples From the Bible

He has one people **scattered** and **dispersed** among the peoples (Esther 3:8 ULT)

The bolded words mean the same thing. Together they mean the people were spread out.

He attacked two men **more righteous** and **better** than himself. (1 Kings 2:32b ULT)

This means that they were “much more righteous” than he was.

You have decided to prepare **false** and **deceptive** words. (Daniel 2:9b ULT)

This means that they had decided to lie, which is another way of saying that they intended to deceive people.

... like of a lamb **without blemish** and **without spot**. (1 Peter 1:19b ULT)

This means that he was like a lamb that did not have any defect—not even one.

Then they approached {and} woke him up, saying, “**Master! Master!** We are perishing!” (Luke 8:24 ULT)

The repetition of “Master” means that the disciples called to Jesus urgently and continually.

Translation Strategies

If a doublet would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, consider these strategies.

(1) Translate only one of the words or phrases.

(2) If the doublet is used to intensify the meaning, translate one of the words or phrases and add a word that intensifies it such as “very” or “great” or “many.”

(3) If the doublet is used to intensify or emphasize the meaning, use one of your language's ways of doing that.

Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate only one of the words.

You have decided to prepare **false** and **deceptive** words. (Daniel 2:9b ULT)

"You have decided to prepare **false** things to say."

(2) If the doublet is used to intensify the meaning, translate one of the words and add a word that intensifies it such as "very" or "great" or "many."

He has one people **scattered** and **dispersed** among the peoples (Esther 3:8 ULT)

"He has one people **very spread out**."

(3) If the doublet is used to intensify or emphasize the meaning, use one of your language's ways of doing that.

... like a lamb **without blemish** and **without spot**. (1 Peter 1:19b ULT)

- English can emphasize this with "any" and "at all."

"... like a lamb **without any blemish at all**."

Then they approached {and} woke him up, saying, "**Master! Master!** We are perishing!" (Luke 8:24 ULT)

Then they approached {and} woke him up, **urgently shouting, "Master!**
We are perishing!"

(Go back to: [Judges 2:23](#); [10:8](#); [11:11](#); [20:7](#))

Ellipsis

Description

An ellipsis¹ occurs when a speaker or writer leaves out one or more words that normally should be in the sentence. The speaker or writer does this because he knows that the hearer or reader will understand the meaning of the sentence and supply the words in his mind when he hears or reads the words that are there. For example:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, **nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**
(Psalm 1:5 ULT)

There is ellipsis in the second part because “nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous” is not a complete sentence. The speaker assumes that the hearer will understand what it is that sinners will not do in the assembly of the righteous by filling in the action from the previous clause. With the action filled in, the complete sentence would read:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **will** sinners **stand** in the assembly of the righteous.

[¹] English has a punctuation symbol which is also called an ellipsis. It is a series of three dots (...) used to indicate an intentional omission of a word, phrase, sentence or more from text without altering its original meaning. This translationAcademy article is not about the punctuation mark, but about the concept of omission of words that normally should be in the sentence.

Two Types of Ellipsis

A Relative Ellipsis happens when the reader has to supply the omitted word or words from the context. Usually the word is in the previous sentence, as in the example above.

An Absolute Ellipsis happens when the omitted word or words are not in the context, but the phrases are common enough in the language that the reader is expected to supply what is missing from this common usage or from the nature of the situation.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers who see incomplete sentences or phrases may not know that there is information missing that the writer expects them to fill in. Or readers may understand that there is information missing, but they may not know what information is missing because they do not know the original biblical language, culture, or situation as the original readers did. In this case, they may fill in the wrong information. Or readers may misunderstand the ellipsis if they do not use ellipsis in the same way in their language.

Examples From the Bible

Relative Ellipsis

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox.** (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

The writer wants his words to be few and to make good poetry. The full sentence with the information filled in would be:

This page answers the question: *What is ellipsis ?* ([^1])

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences]]

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**not as unwise but as wise**. (Ephesians 5:15b ULT)

The information that the reader must understand in the second parts of these sentences can be filled in from the first parts:

Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**walk** not as unwise but **walk** as wise,

Absolute Ellipsis

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

It seems that the man answered in an incomplete sentence because he wanted to be polite and not directly ask Jesus for healing. He knew that Jesus would understand that the only way he could receive his sight would be for Jesus to heal him. The complete sentence would be:

“Lord, **I want you to heal me so** that I might receive my sight.”

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. (Titus 1:4 ULT)

The writer assumes that the reader will recognize this common form of a blessing or wish, so he does not need to include the full sentence, which would be:

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. **May you receive** grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Translation Strategies

If ellipsis would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **sinner in the assembly** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, and **sinner will not stand in the assembly** of the righteous.

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

Then when the man was near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, **I want you to heal me** that I might receive my sight.”

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox**. (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

(Go back to: [Judges 2:1](#); [3:27](#); [5:18](#); [5:19](#); [5:26](#); [6:34](#); [7:3](#); [7:10](#); [8:8](#); [15:1](#))

Euphemism

Description

A euphemism is a mild or polite way of referring to something that is unpleasant, embarrassing, or socially unacceptable, such as death or activities usually done in private.

This page answers the question: *What is a euphemism?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

... they found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa.
(1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

This means that Saul and his sons “were dead.” It is a euphemism because the important thing was not that Saul and his sons had fallen but that they were dead. Sometimes people do not like to speak directly about death because it is unpleasant.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages use different euphemisms. If the target language does not use the same euphemism as in the source language, readers may not understand what it means and they may think that the writer means only what the words literally say.

Examples From the Bible

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT)

The original hearers would have understood that Saul went into the cave to use it as a toilet, but the writer wanted to avoid offending or distracting them, so **he did not say specifically** what Saul did or what he left in the cave.

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man**?” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

In order **to be polite**, Mary uses a euphemism to say that she has never had sexual intercourse with a man.

Translation Strategies

If euphemism would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.
- (2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT) — Some languages might use euphemisms like these:

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **dig a hole**”

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **have some time alone**”

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man**?” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **slept with a man?**”

(2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

They found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa. (1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

“They found Saul and his sons **dead** on Mount Gilboa.”

(Go back to: [Judges 2:10](#); [3:24](#); [8:9](#); [8:10](#); [11:39](#); [14:1](#); [14:3](#); [16:1](#); [21:12](#))

Exclamations

Description

Exclamations are words or sentences that show strong feeling such as surprise, joy, fear, or anger. In the ULT and UST, they usually have an exclamation mark (!) at the end. The mark shows that it is an exclamation. The situation and the meaning of what the people said helps us understand what feelings they were expressing. In the example below from Matthew 8, the speakers were terribly afraid. In the example from Matthew 9, the speakers were amazed, because something happened that they had never seen before.

This page answers the question: *What are ways of translating exclamations?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentencetypes\]\]](#)

Save us, Lord; we are about to die! (Matthew 8:25b ULT)

When the demon had been driven out, the mute man spoke. The crowds were astonished and said, "This has never been seen before in Israel!" (Matthew 9:33 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages have different ways of showing that a sentence communicates strong emotion.

Examples From the Bible

Some exclamations have a word that shows feeling. The sentences below have "Oh" and "Ah." The word "oh" here shows the speaker's amazement.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! (Romans 11:33 ULT)

The word "Alas" below shows that Gideon was very frightened.

When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, Gideon lamented, "**Alas**, O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" (Judges 6:22 ULT)

Some exclamations start with a question word such as "how" or "why," even though they are not questions. The sentence below shows that the speaker is amazed at how unsearchable God's judgments are.

How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond discovering! (Romans 11:33b ULT)

Some exclamations in the Bible do not have a main verb. The exclamation below shows that the speaker is disgusted with the person he is speaking to.

You worthless person! (Matthew 5:22b ULT)

Translation Strategies

- (1) If an exclamation in your language needs a verb, add one. Often a good verb is "is" or "are."
- (2) Use an exclamation word from your language that shows the strong feeling.
- (3) Translate the exclamation word with a sentence that shows the feeling.
- (4) Use a word that emphasizes the part of the sentence that brings about the strong feeling.

(5) If the strong feeling is not clear in the target language, then tell how the person felt.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If an exclamation in your language needs a verb, add one. Often a good verb is “is” or “are.”

You worthless person! (Matthew 5:22b ULT)

“You **are** such a worthless person!”

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! (Romans 11:33b ULT)

“Oh, the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God **are** so deep!”

(2) Use an exclamation word from your language that shows the strong feeling. In the first suggested translation below, the word “wow” shows that they were astonished. In the second suggested translation, the expression “Oh no” shows that something terrible or frightening has happened.

They were extremely astonished, saying, “He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” (Mark 7:37 ULT)

“They were extremely astonished, saying, ‘**Wow!** He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’”

Alas, oh my Lord Yahweh! For because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face! (Judges 6:22b ULT)

“**Oh no**, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

(3) Translate the exclamation word with a sentence that shows the feeling.

“**Alas**, O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!” (Judges 6:22 ULT)

“Lord Yahweh, **what will happen to me?** For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

“**Help**, Lord Yahweh! For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

(4) Use a word that emphasizes the part of the sentence that brings about the strong feeling.

How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond discovering! (Romans 11:33b ULT)

“His judgments are **so** unsearchable and his ways are **far** beyond discovering!”

(5) If the strong feeling is not clear in the target language, then tell how the person felt.

When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, Gideon lamented, “**Alas**, O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!” (Judges 6:22 ULT)

Gideon understood that this was the angel of Yahweh. **He was terrified** and said, “**Alas**, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

(Go back to: [Judges 6:22](#))

Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

Description

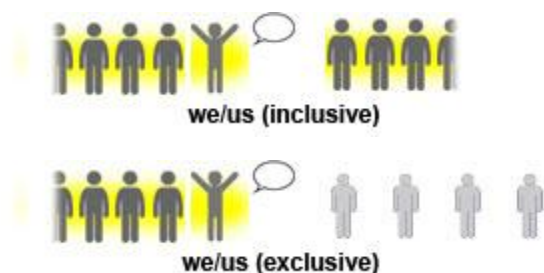
Some languages have more than one form of "we": an inclusive form that means "I and you" and an exclusive form that means "I and someone else but not you." The exclusive form excludes the person being spoken to. The inclusive form includes the person being spoken to and possibly others. This is also true for "us," "our," "ours," and "ourselves." Some languages have inclusive forms and exclusive forms for each of these. Translators whose language has separate exclusive and inclusive forms for these words will need to understand what the speaker meant so that they can decide which form to use.

This page answers the question: *What are the exclusive and inclusive forms of "we"?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-pronouns\]\]](#)

See the pictures. The people on the right are the people that the speaker is talking to. The yellow highlight shows who the inclusive "we" and the exclusive "we" refer to.



Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. Like English, these languages do not have separate exclusive and inclusive forms for "we." If your language has separate exclusive and inclusive forms of "we," then you will need to understand what the speaker meant so that you can decide which form of "we" to use.

Examples From the Bible

Exclusive

They said, "There are not more than five loaves of bread and two fish with **us**—unless **we** go and buy food for all these people." (Luke 9:13 ULT)

In the second clause, the disciples are talking about some of them going to buy food. They were speaking to Jesus, but Jesus was not going to buy food. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" would use the **exclusive** form there.

We have seen it, and **we** bear witness to it. **We** are announcing to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and which has been made known to **us**. (1 John 1:2 ULT)

John is telling people who have not seen Jesus what he and the other apostles have seen. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" and "us" would use the **exclusive** forms in this verse.

Inclusive

The shepherds said one to each other, "Let **us** now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to **us**." (Luke 2:15b ULT)

The shepherds were speaking to one another. When they said "us," they were including the people they were speaking to, so languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" and "us" would use the **inclusive** form in this verse.

Now it happened that on one of those days, he indeed got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let **us** go over to the other side of the lake." So they set sail. (Luke 8:22 ULT)

When Jesus said "us," he was referring to himself and to the disciples he was speaking to, so languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" and "us" would use the **inclusive** form in this verse.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-gendernotations]]

(Go back to: [Judges 1:1](#))

First, Second or Third Person

Normally a speaker refers to himself as “I” and the person he is speaking to as “you.” Sometimes in the Bible a speaker refers to himself or to the person he is speaking to with terms other than “I” or “you.”

Description

- First person — This is how a speaker normally refers to himself. English uses the pronouns “I” and “we.” (Also: me, my, mine; us, our, ours)
- Second person — This is how a speaker normally refers to the person or people he is speaking to. English uses the pronoun “you.” (Also: your, yours)
- Third person — This is how a speaker refers to someone else. English uses the pronouns “he,” “she,” “it,” and “they.” (Also: him, his, her, hers, its; them, their, theirs) Noun phrases like “the man” or “the woman” are also third person.

This page answers the question: *What are first, second, and third person, and how do I translate when a third person form does not refer to the third person?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-explicitinfo\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-pronouns\]\]](#)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses the third person to refer to himself or to the people he is speaking to. Readers might think that the speaker was referring to someone else. They might not understand that he meant “I” or “you.”

Examples From the Bible

Sometimes people used the third person instead of “I” or “me” to refer to themselves.

But David said to Saul, “**Your servant** used to keep **his** father’s sheep.” (1 Samuel 17:34 ULT)

David referred to himself in the third person as “your servant” and used “his.” He was calling himself Saul’s servant in order to show his humility before Saul.

Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said,
“... Do you have an arm like **God’s**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?” (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)

God referred to himself in the third person with the words “God’s” and “his.” He did this to emphasize that he is God, and he is powerful.

Sometimes people use the third person instead of “you” or “your” to refer to the person or people they are speaking to.

Abraham answered and said, “Look, I have undertaken to speak to my Lord, even though I am only dust and ashes!” (Genesis 18:27 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to the Lord, and referred to the Lord as “My Lord” rather than as “you.” He did this to show his humility before God.

So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)

After saying “each of you,” Jesus used the third person “his” instead of “your.”

Translation Strategies

If using the third person to mean “I” or “you” would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun “I” or “you.”
- (2) Simply use the first person (“I”) or second person (“you”) instead of the third person.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun “I” or “you.”

But David said to Saul, “**Your servant** used to keep **his** father’s sheep.” (1 Samuel 17:34)

But David said to Saul, “**I, your servant**, used to keep **my** father’s sheep.”

- (2) Simply use the first person (“I”) or second person (“you”) instead of the third person.

Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, “... Do you have an arm like **God’s**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?” (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)

Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, “... Do you have an arm like **mine**? Can you thunder with a voice like **mine**?”

So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)

So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **your** brother from your heart.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Forms of You](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 5:14](#); [5:15](#); [9:15](#); [10:10](#); [19:19](#))

Forms of You

Singular, Dual, and Plural

Some languages have more than one word for “you” based on how many people the word “you” refers to. The **singular** form refers to one person, and the **plural** form refers to more than one person. Some languages also have a **dual** form which refers to two people, and some languages have other forms that refer to three or four people.

This page answers the question: *What are the different forms of you?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-yousingular]]
[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-youdual]]

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_younum.

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses a singular form of “you” even though he is speaking to a crowd.

- Singular Pronouns that Refer to Groups

Formal and Informal

Some languages have more than one form of “you” based on the relationship between the speaker and the person he is talking to. People use the **formal** form of “you” when speaking to someone who is older, or has higher authority, or is someone they do not know very well. People use the **informal** form when speaking to someone who is not older, or does not have higher authority, or is a family member or close friend.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_youform.

For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

- Forms of “You” — Formal or Informal

(Go back to: [Judges 5:14](#); [7:7](#); [12:2](#); [12:3](#); [14:13](#))

Go and Come

Description

This page answers the question: *What do I do if the word "go" or "come" is confusing in a certain sentence?*

Different languages have different ways of determining whether to use the words "go" or "come" and whether to use the words "take" or "bring" when talking about motion. For example, when saying that they are approaching a person who has called them, English speakers say "I'm coming," while Spanish speakers say "I'm going." You will need to study the context in order to understand what is meant by the words "go" and "come" (and also "take" and "bring"), and then translate those words in a way that your readers will understand which direction people are moving in.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of talking about motion. The biblical languages or your source language may use the words "go" and "come" or "take" and "bring" differently than your language uses them. If these words are not translated in the way that is natural in your language, your readers may be confused about which direction people are moving.

Examples From the Bible

Yahweh said to Noah, "**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark." (Genesis 7:1 ULT)

In some languages, this would lead people to think that Yahweh was in the ark.

But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you.
Then you will be free from my oath. (Genesis 24:41 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to his servant. Abraham's relatives lived far away from where he and his servant were standing and he wanted his servant to **go** to them, not **come** toward Abraham.

When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ... (Deuteronomy 17:14a ULT)

Moses is speaking to the people in the wilderness. They had not yet gone into the land that God was giving them. In some languages, it would make more sense to say, "When you have **gone** into the land ..."

They **brought** him up to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (Luke 2:22b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to say that they**took** or **carried** Jesus to the temple.

Then see, there was a man whose name was Jairus, and he was a leader of the synagogue. And falling at the feet of Jesus, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

The man was not at his house when he spoke to Jesus. He wanted Jesus to **go** with him to his house.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to ask what did you come out to see.

Translation Strategies

If the word used in the ULT would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other strategies.

- (1) Use the word “go,” “come,” “take,” or “bring” that would be natural in your language.
- (2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the word “go,” “come,” “take,” or “bring” that would be natural in your language.

But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you. (Genesis 24:41 ULT)

But you will be free from my oath if you **go** to my relatives and they will not give her to you.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

What did you come out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

- (2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ... (Deuteronomy 17:14 ULT)

“When you have **arrived** in the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ...”

Yahweh said to Noah, “**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark ...” (Genesis 7:1 ULT)

Yahweh said to Noah, “**Enter**, you and all your household, into the ark ...”

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

What did you travel out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

(Go back to: [Judges 7:5](#))

Hendiadys

Description

When a speaker expresses a single idea by using two words that are connected with “and,” it is called a hendiadys. In a hendiadys, the two words work together. Usually one of the words is the primary idea and the other word further describes the primary one.

This page answers the question: *What is hendiadys and how can I translate phrases that have it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech\]\]](#)

... his own **kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

Though “kingdom” and “glory” are both nouns, “glory” actually tells what kind of kingdom it is: it is a **kingdom of glory** or **a glorious kingdom**.

Two phrases connected by “and” can also be a hendiadys when they refer to a single person, thing, or event.

while we look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

Titus 2:13 contains two hendiadyses. “The blessed hope” and “appearing of the glory” refer to the same thing and serve to strengthen the idea that the return of Jesus Christ is greatly anticipated and wonderful. Also, “our great God” and “Savior Jesus Christ” refer to one person, not two.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Often a hendiadys contains an abstract noun. Some languages may not have a noun with the same meaning.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that the second word is further describing the first one.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that only one person or thing is meant, not two.

Examples From the Bible

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

“A mouth” and “wisdom” are nouns, but in this figure of speech “wisdom” describes what comes from the mouth.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

“Willing” and “obedient” are adjectives, but “willing” describes “obedient.”

Translation Strategies

If the hendiadys would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

- (1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.
- (2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.
- (3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.

(4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the other.

(5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

For I will give you **wise words** ...

Walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own glorious kingdom**.

(2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

for I will give you **words of wisdom**.

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own kingdom of glory**.

(3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

If you are **willingly obedient** ...

(4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the other.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

The adjective “obedient” can be substituted with the verb “obey.”

if you **obey willingly** ...

(4) and (5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

We look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

The noun “glory” can be changed to the adjective “glorious” to make it clear that Jesus’ appearing is what we hope for. Also, “Jesus Christ” can be moved to the front of the phrase and “great God and Savior” put into a relative clause that describes the one person, Jesus Christ.

We look forward to receiving **what we are longing for, the blessed and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, who is our great God and Savior**.

(Go back to: [Judges 20:6](#))

How to Translate Names

Description

The Bible contains the names of many people, groups of people, and places. Some of these names may sound strange and be hard to say. Sometimes readers may not know what a name refers to, and sometimes they may need to understand what a name means. This page will help you see how you can translate these names and how you can help people understand what they need to know about them.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate names that are new to my culture?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Translate Unknowns](#)

Meaning of names

Most names in the Bible have meaning. Most of the time, names in the Bible are used simply to identify the people and places they refer to, but sometimes the meaning of a name is especially important.

For this **Melchizedek**, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, was the one who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him. (Hebrews 7:1 ULT)

Here the writer uses the name “Melchizedek” primarily to refer to a man who had that name, and the title “king of Salem” tells us that he ruled over a certain city.

His name first indeed means “king of righteousness,” and then also “king of Salem,” that is, “king of peace.” (Hebrews 7:2b ULT)

Here the writer explains the meanings of Melchizedek’s name and title because those things tell us more about the person. Other times, the writer does not explain the meaning of a name because he expects the reader to already know the meaning. If the meaning of the name is important to understand the passage, you can include the meaning in the text or in a footnote.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the names in the Bible. They may not know whether a name refers to a person or place or something else.
- Readers may need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand the passage.
- Some names may have different sounds or combinations of sounds that are not used in your language or are unpleasant to say in your language. For strategies to address this problem, see [Borrow Words](#).
- Some people and places in the Bible have two names. Readers may not realize that two names refer to the same person or place.

Examples From the Bible

Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** ... fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

Readers might not know that “Jordan” is the name of a river, “Jericho” is the name of a city, and “Amorites” is the name of a group of people.

She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?” Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

Readers may not understand the second sentence if they do not know that “Beer Lahai Roi” means “Well of the Living One who sees me.”

And she called his name **Moses** and she said, “For out of the water I drew him.” (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

Readers may not understand why she said this if they do not know that the name Moses sounds like the Hebrew words “pull out.”

Saul was in agreement with his execution. (Acts 8:1a ULT)

But when the apostles, Barnabas and **Paul**, heard of it, they tore their clothing. (Acts 14:14a ULT)

Readers may not know that the names Saul and Paul refer to the same person.

Translation Strategies

- (1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.
- (2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.
- (3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.
- (4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently.
- (5) Or if a person or place has two different names, then use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.

Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** ... fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

You went over the **Jordan River** and came to the **city of Jericho**. The men of Jericho fought against you, along with **the tribe of the Amorites**.

At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, “Leave and go away from here, because **Herod** wants to kill you.” (Luke 13:31 ULT)

At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, “Go and leave here, because **King Herod** wants to kill you.”

- (2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.

And she called his name **Moses** and she said, "For out of the water I drew him." (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

She called his name **Moses (which sounds like 'drawn out')**, and she said, "For out of the water I drew him."

(3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.

She said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?" Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

She said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?"
Therefore, the well was called **Well of the Living One who sees me**.

(4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently. For example, Paul is called "Saul" before Acts 13 and "Paul" after Acts 13. You could translate his name as "Paul" all of the time, except in Acts 13:9 where it talks about him having both names.

... a young man named **Saul**. (Acts 7:58b ULT)

... a young man named **Paul** ¹

The footnote would look like:

^[1] Most versions say "Saul" here, but most of the time in the Bible he is called "Paul."

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

(5) Or if a person or place has two names, use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name. For example, you could write "Saul" where the source text has "Saul" and "Paul" where the source text has "Paul."

a young man named **Saul** (Acts 7:58 ULT)

a young man named **Saul**

The footnote would look like:

^[1] This is the same man who is called Paul beginning in Acts 13.

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

Then after the story has explained the name change, you could translate this way.

It came about in Iconium that **Paul** and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue (Acts 14:1 ULT)

It came about in Iconium that **Paul**¹ and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue

The footnote would look like:

^[1] This is the same man who was called Saul before Acts 13.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Copy or Borrow Words](#)

(**Go back to:** [Introduction to Judges](#); [Judges 1:4](#); [1:5](#); [1:10](#); [1:12](#); [1:13](#); [1:16](#); [1:17](#); [1:20](#); [1:23](#); [1:27](#); [1:29](#); [1:30](#); [1:31](#); [1:33](#); [1:35](#); [1:36](#); [2:1](#); [2:8](#); [2:9](#); [2:11](#); [2:13](#); [3:3](#); [3:8](#); [3:12](#); [3:15](#); [3:26](#); [3:31](#); [4:2](#); [4:4](#); [4:6](#); [4:7](#); [4:11](#); [4:17](#); [5:4](#); [5:6](#); [5:14](#); [5:23](#); [6:11](#); [6:32](#); [7:1](#); [7:3](#); [7:10](#); [7:22](#); [7:24](#); [7:25](#); [8:2](#); [8:5](#); [8:8](#); [8:10](#); [8:11](#); [8:13](#); [8:20](#); [8:33](#); [9:6](#); [9:7](#); [9:21](#); [9:26](#); [9:28](#); [9:41](#); [9:46](#); [9:48](#); [9:50](#); [10:1](#); [10:3](#); [10:4](#); [10:5](#); [10:12](#); [11:1](#); [11:3](#); [11:13](#); [11:19](#); [11:20](#); [11:24](#); [11:25](#); [11:26](#); [11:33](#); [12:1](#); [12:8](#); [12:11](#); [12:13](#); [12:15](#); [13:2](#); [13:25](#); [14:1](#); [14:5](#); [15:6](#); [15:8](#); [15:9](#); [15:17](#); [15:19](#); [16:2](#); [16:3](#); [16:4](#); [16:23](#); [16:31](#); [17:1](#); [18:7](#); [18:12](#); [18:28](#); [18:30](#); [20:33](#); [20:43](#); [20:45](#); [21:8](#); [21:19](#))

Hyperbole

Description

A speaker or writer can use exactly the same words to say something that he means as completely true, or as generally true, or as a hyperbole. This is why it can be hard to decide how to understand a statement. For example, the sentence below could mean three different things.

It rains here every night.

The speaker means this as literally true if he means that it really does rain here every night.

The speaker means this as a **generalization** if he means that it rains here most nights.

The speaker means this as a **hyperbole** if he wants to say that it rains more than it actually does, usually in order to express a strong attitude toward the amount or frequency of rain, such as being annoyed or being happy about it.

This page answers the question: *What are hyperboles? What are generalizations? How can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

Hyperbole

In hyperbole, a figure of speech that uses exaggeration, a speaker deliberately describes something with an extreme or even unreal statement, usually to show his strong feeling or opinion about it. He expects people to understand that he is exaggerating.

They will not leave **stone upon stone in you**. (Luke 19:44b ULT)

This is an exaggeration. It means that the enemies will completely destroy Jerusalem.

Moses was educated in **all the wisdom of the Egyptians**. (Acts 7:22a ULT)

This hyperbole means that he had learned everything an Egyptian education could offer.

Generalization

This is a statement that is true most of the time or in most situations that it could apply to.

The one who ignores instruction **will have poverty and shame**, but **honor will come** to him who learns from correction. (Proverbs 13:18)

These generalizations tell about what normally happens to people who ignore instruction and what normally happens to people who learn from correction. There may be some exceptions to these statements, but they are generally true.

And when you pray, do not make useless repetitions as **the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words**. (Matthew 6:7)

This generalization tells about what Gentiles were known for doing. Many Gentiles did this. It does not matter if a few did not. The point was that the hearers should not join in this well-known practice.

Even though a hyperbole or a generalization may have a strong-sounding word like “all,” “always,” “none,” or “never,” it does not necessarily mean **exactly** “all,” “always,” “none,” or “never.” It simply means “most,” “most of the time,” “hardly any,” or “rarely.”

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers need to be able to understand whether or not a statement is literally true.

If readers realize that a statement is not literally true, they need to be able to understand whether it is a hyperbole, a generalization, or a lie. (Though the Bible is completely true, it tells about people who did not always tell the truth.)

Examples From the Bible

Examples of Hyperbole

If your hand causes you to stumble, **cut it off**. It is better for you to enter into life maimed ... (Mark 9:43a ULT)

When Jesus said to cut off your hand, he meant that we should **do whatever extreme things** we need to do in order not to sin. He used this hyperbole to show how extremely important it is to try to stop sinning.

The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel with 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and troops **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**. (1 Samuel 13:5a ULT)

The bolded phrase is an exaggeration for the purpose of expressing the emotion that the Philistine army was overwhelming in number. It means that there were **many, many** soldiers in the Philistine army.

But as his anointing teaches you **everything** and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1 John 2:27b ULT)

This is a hyperbole. It expresses the assurance that God's Spirit teaches us about **all things that we need to know**. God's Spirit does not teach us about everything that it is possible to know.

When they found him, they also said to him, "**Everyone** is looking for you." (Mark 1:37 ULT)

The disciples probably did not mean that everyone in the city was looking for Jesus, but that **many people** were looking for him, or that all of Jesus' closest friends there were looking for him. This is an exaggeration for the purpose of expressing the emotion that they and many others were worried about him.

Examples of Generalization

Can **any good thing** come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46b ULT)

This rhetorical question is meant to express the generalization that there is nothing good in Nazareth. The people there had a reputation for being uneducated and not strictly religious. Of course, there were exceptions.

One of them, of their own prophets, has said, "**Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy bellies**." (Titus 1:12 ULT)

This is a generalization that means that Cretans had a reputation to be like this because, in general, this is how Cretans behaved. It is possible that there were exceptions.

A lazy hand causes a person to be poor, but the hand of the diligent person gains riches. (Proverbs 10:4 ULT)

This is generally true, and it reflects the experience of most people. It is possible that there are exceptions in some circumstances.

Caution

- Do not assume that something is an exaggeration just because it seems to be impossible. God does miraculous things.

They saw Jesus **walking on the sea** and coming near the boat. (John 6:19b ULT)

This is not hyperbole. Jesus really walked on the water. It is a literal statement.

- Do not assume that the word “all” is always a generalization that means “most.”
 - > Yahweh is righteous in **all** his ways
 - > and gracious in **all** he does. (Psalms 145:17 ULT)

Yahweh is always righteous. This is a completely true statement.

Translation Strategies

If the hyperbole or generalization would be natural and people would understand it and not think that it is a lie, consider using it. If not, here are other options.

- (1) Express the meaning without the exaggeration.
- (2) For a generalization, show that it is a generalization by using a phrase like “in general” or “in most cases.”
- (3) For a hyperbole or a generalization, add a word like “many” or “almost” to show that the hyperbole or generalization is not meant to be exact.
- (4) For a hyperbole or a generalization that has a word like “all,” “always,” “none,” or “never,” consider deleting that word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Express the meaning without the exaggeration.

The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and troops **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**. (1 Samuel 13:5a ULT)

The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and **a great number of troops**.

- (2) For a generalization, show that it is a generalization by using a phrase like “in general” or “in most cases.”

The one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame. (Proverbs 13:18a ULT)

In general, the one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame

When you pray, do not make useless repetitions as the **Gentiles do**, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. (Matthew 6:7 ULT)

And when you pray, do not make useless repetitions as the Gentiles **generally do**, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.

- (3) For a hyperbole or a generalization, add a word like “many” or “almost” to show that the hyperbole or generalization is not meant to be exact.

The **whole** country of Judea and **all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. (Mark 1:5a ULT)

Almost all the country of Judea and **almost all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him.
or:

Many of the country of Judea and **many** of the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

(4) For a hyperbole or a generalization that has a word like “all,” “always,” “none,” or “never,” consider deleting that word.

The **whole** country of Judea and **all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. (Mark 1:5a ULT)

The country of Judea and the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

(Go back to: [Judges 5:8](#); [6:5](#); [7:12](#); [8:27](#); [15:18](#); [16:16](#); [18:10](#); [21:6](#); [21:17](#))

Hypothetical Situations

Consider these phrases: “If the sun stopped shining ...” “What if the sun stopped shining ...” “Suppose the sun stopped shining ...” and “If only the sun had not stopped shining.” We use such expressions to set up hypothetical situations, imagining what might have happened or what could happen in the future but probably will not. We also use them to express regret or wishes. Hypothetical expressions occur often in the Bible. You (the translator) need to translate them in a way that people will know that the event did not actually happen and so that they will understand why the event was imagined.

This page answers the question: *What is a hypothetical situation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro\]\]](#)

Description

Hypothetical situations are situations that are not real. They can be in the past, present, or future. Hypothetical situations in the past and present have not happened, are not happening now, and ones in the future are not expected to happen.

People sometimes tell about conditions and what would happen if those conditions were met, but they know that these things have not happened or probably will not happen. (The conditions comprise a phrase that starts with “if.”)

- If he had lived to be 100 years old, he would have seen his grandson’s grandson. (But he did not.)
- If he lived to be 100 years old, he would still be alive today. (But he is not.)
- If he lives to be 100 years old, he will see his grandson’s grandson. (But he probably will not.)

People sometimes express wishes about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- I wish he had come.
- I wish he were here.
- I wish he would come.

People sometimes express regrets about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- If only he had come.
- If only he were here.
- If only he would come.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators need to recognize the different kinds of hypothetical situations in the Bible and understand that they are unreal.
- Translators need to know their own language’s ways of talking about different kinds of hypothetical situations.

Examples From the Bible

Hypothetical Situations in the Past

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

Here in Matthew 11:21, Jesus said that **if** the people living in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon had been able to see the miracles that he performed, they would have repented long ago. The people of Tyre and Sidon did not actually see his miracles, and they did not repent. He said this to rebuke the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida who had seen his miracles and yet did not repent.

Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, **if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**” (John 11:21 ULT)

Martha said this to express her wish that Jesus would have come sooner so that her brother would not have died. But Jesus did not come sooner and her brother did die.

Hypothetical Situations in the Present

And no man puts new wine into old wineskins. **But if he did do that, the new wine would burst the wineskins, and it would be spilled out, and the wineskins would be destroyed.** (Luke 5:37 ULT)

Jesus told about what would happen if a person were to put new wine into old wineskins. But no one would do that. He used this imaginary situation as an example to show that there are times when it is unwise to mix new things with old things. He did this so that people could understand why his disciples were not fasting as people traditionally did.

Jesus said to them, “What man would there be among you, who, **if he had just one sheep, and if this sheep fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath, would not grasp hold of it and lift it out?**” (Matthew 12:11 ULT)

Jesus asked the religious leaders what they would do on the Sabbath if one of their sheep fell into a hole. He was not saying that their sheep would fall into a hole. He used this imaginary situation to show them that they were wrong to judge him for healing people on the Sabbath.

Hypothetical Situation in the Future

Unless those days are shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:22 ULT)

Jesus was talking about a future time when very bad things would happen. He told what would happen if those days of trouble were to last a long time. He did this to show how bad those days will be—so bad that if they lasted a long time, no one would be saved. But then he clarified that God will shorten those days of trouble so that the elect (those he has chosen) will be saved.

Expressing Emotion About a Hypothetical Situation

People sometimes talk about hypothetical situations in order to express regrets and wishes. Regrets are about the past and wishes are about the present and future.

The Israelites said to them, “**If only we had died by Yahweh’s hand in the land of Egypt when we were sitting by the pots of meat and were eating bread to the full.** For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill our whole community with hunger.” (Exodus 16:3 ULT)

Here the Israelites were afraid that they would have to suffer and die of hunger in the wilderness, and so they wished that they had stayed in Egypt and died there with full stomachs. They were complaining, expressing regret that this had not happened.

I know what you have done, and that you are neither cold nor hot. **I wish that you were either cold or hot!** (Revelation 3:15 ULT)

Jesus wished that the people were either hot or cold, but they are neither. He was rebuking them, expressing anger at this.

Translation Strategies

Find out how people speaking your language show:

- that something could have happened, but did not.
- that something could be true now, but is not.
- that something could happen in the future, but will not unless something changes.
- that they wish for something, but it does not happen.
- that they regret that something did not happen.

Use your language's ways of showing these kinds of things.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_hypo.

(Go back to: [Judges 9:19](#); [9:20](#))

Idiom

An idiom is a figure of speech made up of a group of words that, as a whole, has a meaning that is different from what one would understand from the meanings of the individual words. Someone from outside of the culture usually cannot understand an idiom without someone inside the culture explaining its true meaning. Every language uses idioms. Some English examples are:

- You are pulling my leg. (This means, “You are teasing me by telling me something that is not true.”)
- Do not push the envelope. (This means, “Do not take a matter to its extreme.”)
- This house is under water. (This means, “The debt owed for this house is greater than its actual value.”)
- We are painting the town red. (This means, “We are going around town tonight celebrating very intensely.”)

This page answers the question: *What are idioms and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

Description

An idiom is a phrase that has a special meaning to the people of the language or culture who use it. Its meaning is different than what a person would understand from the meanings of the individual words that form the phrase.

He **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

The words “set his face” is an idiom that means “decided.”

Sometimes people may be able to understand an idiom from another culture, but it might sound like a strange way to express the meaning.

I am not worthy that you would **come under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

The phrase “come under my roof” is an idiom that means “enter my house.”

Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

This idiom means “Listen carefully and remember what I say.”

Purpose: An idiom is probably created in a culture somewhat by accident when someone describes something in an unusual way. But, when that unusual way communicates the message powerfully and people understand it clearly, other people start to use it. After a while, it becomes a normal way of talking in that language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People can easily misunderstand idioms in the original languages of the Bible if they do not know the cultures that produced the Bible.
- People can easily misunderstand idioms that are in the source language Bibles if they do not know the cultures that made those translations.
- It is useless to translate idioms literally (according to the meaning of each word) when the target language audience will not understand what they mean.

Examples From the Bible

Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Look, we are your **flesh and bone**.” (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

This means, “We and you belong to the same race, the same family.”

■ The children of Israel went out **with a high hand**. (Exodus 14:8b ASV)

This means, "The Israelites went out defiantly."

■ the one who **lifts up my head** (Psalm 3:3b ULT)

This means, "the one who helps me."

Translation Strategies

If the idiom would be clearly understood in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.
- (2) Use a different idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.

■ Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your **flesh and bone**." (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

■ Look, we all **belong to the same nation**.

■ Then he **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

■ He started to travel to Jerusalem, **determined to reach it**.

■ I am not worthy that you would come **under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

■ I am not worthy that you should enter **my house**.

- (2) Use an idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

■ Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

■ **Be all ears** when I say these words to you.

■ My **eyes grow dim** from grief. (Psalm 6:7a ULT)

■ I am crying my **eyes out**

(Go back to: [Judges 1:19; 1:25; 2:1; 3:7; 4:17; 5:9; 6:6; 6:7; 6:13; 6:16; 6:22; 6:34; 8:19; 8:21; 8:28; 8:32; 9:18; 9:40; 9:57; 10:13; 11:4; 11:11; 11:16; 11:17; 11:24; 11:27; 11:29; 11:31; 11:35; 12:1; 12:3; 12:9; 13:3; 13:7; 13:24; 14:2; 14:3; 14:5; 14:6; 14:8; 14:10; 14:12; 14:15; 14:17; 14:19; 15:1; 15:6; 15:8; 15:13; 15:14; 15:18; 15:19; 16:5; 16:9; 16:12; 16:14; 16:16; 16:18; 16:20; 16:21; 16:28; 17:3; 17:12; 18:2; 18:12; 18:22; 18:26; 19:11; 19:12; 19:13; 19:15; 19:18; 19:21; 19:22; 19:26; 19:29; 20:13; 20:22; 20:34; 20:36; 20:41; 20:48](#))

Introduction of a New Event

Description

When people tell a story, they tell about an event or a series of events. Often they put certain information at the beginning of the story, such as who the story is about, when it happened, and where it happened. This information that the writer gives before the events of the story begin is called the setting of the story. Some new events in a story also have a setting because they might involve new people, new times, and new places. In some languages, people also tell if they saw the event or heard about it from someone else.

When your people tell about events, what information do they give at the beginning? Is there a certain order that they put it in? In your translation, you will need to follow the way your language introduces new information at the beginning of a story or a new event rather than the way the source language did that. In this way your translation will sound natural and communicate clearly in your language.

This page answers the question: *How do we introduce a new event in a story?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro\]\]](#)

[Order of Events](#)

Examples From the Bible

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, **there was a certain priest named Zechariah**, from the division of Abijah. And **his wife was** from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (Luke 1:5 ULT)

The verses above introduce a story about Zechariah. The first bolded phrase tells when it happened, and the next two bolded phrases introduce the main people. The next two verses go on to explain that Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and did not have any children. All of this is the setting. Then the phrase “And it happened that” in Luke 1:8 helps to introduce the first event in this story:

And it happened that in his performing as priest before God, in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, he came up by lot to enter into the temple of the Lord to burn incense. (Luke 1:8-9 ULT)

The birth of Jesus Christ happened in the following way. His mother, Mary, was engaged to marry Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18 ULT)

The bolded sentence above makes it explicit that a story about Jesus is being introduced. The story will tell about how the birth of Jesus happened.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, learned men from the east arrived in Jerusalem. (Matthew 2:1 ULT)

The bolded phrase above shows that the events concerning the learned men happened **after** Jesus was born.

Now in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. (Matthew 3:1-22 ULT)

The bolded phrase above shows that John the Baptist came preaching around the time of the previous events. It is probably very general and refers to when Jesus lived in Nazareth.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River to John, to be baptized by him. (Matthew 3:13 ULT)

The word “then” shows that Jesus came to the Jordan River some time after the events in the previous verses.

Now there was **a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a Jewish leader**.
This man came to Jesus at night. (John 3:1-2a ULT)

The author first introduced the new person and then told about what he did and when he did it. In some languages, it might be more natural to tell about the time first.

6 Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. 7 Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives went into the ark together because of the waters of the flood. (Genesis 7:6-7 ULT)

Verse 6 is a statement of the events that happen in the rest of chapter 7. Chapter 6 already told about how God told Noah that there would be a flood, and how Noah prepared for it. Chapter 7 verse 6 introduces the part of the story that tells about Noah and his family and the animals going into the ship, the rain starting, and the rain flooding the earth. Some languages might need to make it clear that this verse simply introduces the event, or move this verse after verse 7. Verse 6 is not one of the events of the story. The people went into the ship before the flood came.

Translation Strategies

If the information given at the beginning of a new event is clear and natural to your readers, consider translating it as it is in the ULT or UST. If not, consider one of these strategies:

- (1) Put the information that introduces the event in the order that your people put it.
- (2) If readers would expect certain information but it is not in the Bible, consider using an indefinite word or phrase to fill in that information, such as: "another time" or "someone."
- (3) If the introduction is a summary of the whole event, use your language's way of showing that it is a summary.
- (4) If it would be strange in the target language to give a summary of the event at the beginning, indicate that the event would actually happen later in the story.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Put the information that introduces the event in the order that your people put it.

Now there was **a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a Jewish leader**.
This man came to Jesus at night. (John 3:1-2a ULT)

There was a **man whose name was Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Council**. One night he came to Jesus.

One night **a man named Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Council**, came to Jesus.

As he passed by, **he saw Levi the son of Alpheus, sitting** at the tax collector's tent, and he said to him ... (Mark 2:14a ULT)

As he passed by, **Levi the son of Alpheus was sitting** at the tax collector's tent. Jesus saw him and said to him ...

As he passed by, **there was a man sitting** at the tax collector's tent. His name was Levi, and he was the son of Alpheus. Jesus saw him and said to him ...

As he passed by, **there was a tax collector** sitting at the tax collector's tent. His name was Levi, and he was the son of Alpheus. Jesus saw him and said to him ...

(2) If readers would expect certain information, but it is not in the Bible, consider using an indefinite word or phrase such as "another time," or "someone."

Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6 ULT) — If people expect to be told something about when the new event happened, the phrase "after that" can help them see that it happened after the events already mentioned.

After that, when Noah was 600 years old, the flood came upon the earth.

Again he began to teach beside the sea. (Mark 4:1a ULT) — In chapter 3 Jesus was teaching at someone's house. Readers may need to be told that this new event happened at another time, or that Jesus actually went to the sea.

Another time Jesus began to teach people again beside the sea.

Jesus went to the sea and **began to teach people again** there.

(3) If the introduction is a summary of the whole event, use your language's way of showing that it is a summary.

Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6 ULT)

Now this is what happened when Noah was 600 years old and the flood came upon the earth.

This part tells about what happened when the flood came upon the earth. It happened when Noah was 600 years old.

(4) If it would be strange in the target language to give a summary of the event at the beginning, show that the event will actually happen later in the story.

Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives went into the ark together because of the waters of the flood. (Genesis 7:6-7 ULT)

Now this is what happened when Noah was 600 years old. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives went into the ark together because **God had said that the waters of the flood would come.**

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Background Information](#)

[Introduction of New and Old Participants](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 18:1; 19:1](#))

Introduction of New and Old Participants

Description

The first time that people or things are mentioned in a story, they are **new participants**. After that, whenever they are mentioned, they are **old participants**.

Now **there was a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus** ... **This man** came to Jesus at night ... Jesus replied and said to **him** ... (John 3:1, 2a, 3a)

This page answers the question: *Why cannot the readers of my translation understand who the author was writing about?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech]]
[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro]]

The first bolded phrase introduces Nicodemus as a new participant. After being introduced, he is then referred to as “This man” and “him” when he has become an old participant.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In order to make your translation clear and natural, it is necessary to refer to the participants in such a way that people will know if they are new participants or participants that they have already read about. Different languages have different ways of doing this. You must follow the way that your language does this, not the way that the source language does this.

Examples From the Bible

New Participants

Often the most important new participant is introduced with a phrase that says that he existed, such as “There was a man,” as in the example below. The phrase “There was” tells us that this man existed. The word “a” in “a man” tells us that the author is speaking about him for the first time. The rest of the sentence tells where this man was from, who his family was, and what his name was.

Now there was a man from Zorah, of the families of the Danites, and his name was Manoah. (Judges 13:2a ULT)

A new participant who is not the most important participant is often introduced in relation to the more important person who was already introduced. In the example below, Manoah’s wife is simply referred to as “his wife.” This phrase shows her relationship to him.

Now there was one man from Zorah, of the families of the Danites, and his name was Manoah. **His wife** was barren and she had never given birth. (Judges 13:2 ULT)

Sometimes a new participant is introduced simply by name because the author assumes that the readers know who the person is. In the first verse of 1 Kings, the author assumes that his readers know who King David is, so there is no need to explain who he is.

Now King David was old, he had advanced in the days, and they covered him with the garments, but it was not warm enough for him. (1 Kings 1:1 ULT)

Old Participants

A person who has already been brought into the story can be referred to with a pronoun after that. In the example below, Manoah is referred to with the pronoun “his,” and his wife is referred to with the pronoun “she.”

His wife was barren and she had never given birth. (Judges 13:2 ULT)

Old participants can also be referred to in other ways, depending on what is happening in the story. In the example below, the story is about bearing a son, and Manoah’s wife is referred to by the noun phrase “the wife.”

The angel of Yahweh appeared to the wife and he said to her ... (Judges 13:3a ULT)

If the old participant has not been mentioned for a while, or if there could be confusion between participants, the author may use the participant’s name again. In the example below, Manoah is referred to by his name, which the author has not used since verse 2.

Then Manoah prayed to Yahweh. (Judges 13:8a ULT)

Some languages place an affix on the verb that tells something about the subject. In some of those languages, people do not always use noun phrases or pronouns for old participants when they are the subject of the sentence. The marker on the verb gives enough information for the listener to understand who the subject is. (See Verbs.)

Translation Strategies

- (1) If the participant is new, use one of your language’s ways of introducing new participants.
- (2) If it is not clear to whom a pronoun refers, use a noun phrase or name.
- (3) If an old participant is referred to by name or a noun phrase, and people wonder if this is another new participant, try using a pronoun instead. If a pronoun is not needed because people would understand it clearly from the context, then leave out the pronoun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the participant is new, use one of your language’s ways of introducing new participants.

Then Joseph, who was called Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated as Son of Encouragement), a Levite from Cyprus by birth ... (Acts 4:36-37 ULT) — Starting the sentence with Joseph’s name when he has not been introduced yet might be confusing in some languages.

There was a man from Cyprus who was a Levite. His name was Joseph, and he was given the name Barnabas by the apostles (that is, being interpreted, Son of Encouragement). There was a Levite from Cyprus whose name was Joseph. The apostles gave him the name Barnabas, which means Son of encouragement.

- (2) If it is not clear who a pronoun refers to, use a noun phrase or name.

And it happened that when he was praying in a certain place, when he stopped, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” (Luke 11:1 ULT) — Since this is the first verse in a chapter, readers might wonder who “he” refers to.

It happened when Jesus finished praying in a certain place, that one of his disciples said, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.”

(3) If an old participant is referred to by name or a noun phrase, and people wonder if this is another new participant, try using a pronoun instead. If a pronoun is not needed because people would understand it clearly from the context, then leave out the pronoun.

Joseph's master took Joseph and put him in prison, in the place where all the king's prisoners were put, and Joseph stayed there. (Genesis 39:20) — Since Joseph is the main person in the story, some languages might prefer the pronoun.

Joseph's master took **him** and put **him** in prison, in the place where all the king's prisoners were put, and **he** stayed there in the prison.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-pronouns\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 17:1](#))

Irony

Description

Irony is a figure of speech in which the sense that the speaker intends to communicate is actually the opposite of the literal meaning of the words. Sometimes a person does this by using someone else's words, but in a way that communicates that he does not agree with them. People do this to emphasize how different something is from what it should be, or how someone else's belief about something is wrong or foolish. It is often humorous.

This page answers the question: *What is irony and how can I translate it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

Then Jesus answered and said to them, "People who are well do not have need of a physician, but those who have sickness. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
(Luke 5:31-32 ULT)

When Jesus spoke of "righteous people," he was not referring to people who were truly righteous, but to people who wrongly believed that they were righteous. By using irony, Jesus communicated that they were wrong to think that they were better than others and did not need to repent.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

If someone does not realize that a speaker is using irony, he will think that the speaker actually believes what he is saying. He will understand the passage to mean the opposite of what it was intended to mean.

Examples From the Bible

How well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9b ULT)

Here Jesus praises the Pharisees for doing something that is obviously wrong. Through irony, he communicates the opposite of praise: He communicates that the Pharisees, who take great pride in keeping the commandments, are so far from God that they do not even recognize that their traditions are breaking God's commandments. The use of irony makes the Pharisee's sin more obvious and startling.

"Present your case," says Yahweh; "present your best arguments for your idols," says the King of Jacob. **"Let them bring us their own arguments; have them come forward and declare to us what will happen, so we may know these things well. Have them tell us of earlier predictive declarations, so we can reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled."** (Isaiah 41:21-22 ULT)

People worshiped idols as if their idols had knowledge or power, and Yahweh was angry at them for doing that. So he used irony and challenged their idols to tell what would happen in the future. He knew that the idols could not do this, but by speaking as if they could, he mocked the idols, making their inability more obvious, and rebuked the people for worshiping them.

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work?
Can you find the way back to their houses for them?
Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then; "the number of your days is so large!" (Job 38:20-21 ULT)

Job thought that he was wise. Yahweh used irony to show Job that he was not so wise. The two phrases in bold above are irony. They emphasize the opposite of what they say, because they are so obviously false. They

emphasize that Job could not possibly answer God's questions about the creation of light because Job was not born until many, many years later.

Already you are satisfied! Already you have become rich! **You began to reign** apart from us, and I wish you really did reign, so that we also might reign with you. (1 Corinthians 4:8 ULT)

The Corinthians considered themselves to be very wise, self-sufficient, and not in need of any instruction from the Apostle Paul. Paul used irony, speaking as if he agreed with them, to show how proudly they were acting and how far from being wise they really were.

Translation Strategies

If the irony would be understood correctly in your language, translate it as it is stated. If not, here are some other strategies.

- (1) Translate it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.
- (2) The irony is **not** found in the literal words of the speaker, but instead the true meaning is found in the opposite of the literal meaning of the speaker's words.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Translate it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.

How well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9a ULT)

You think that you are doing well when you reject God's commandment so you may keep your tradition!
You act like it is good to reject God's commandment so you may keep your tradition!

I did not come to call **the righteous**, but sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32 ULT)

I did not come to call **people who think that they are righteous** to repentance, but to call sinners to repentance.

- (2) Translate the actual, intended meaning of the statement of irony.

How well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9a ULT)

You are doing a terrible thing when you reject the commandment of God so you may keep your tradition!

"Present your case," says Yahweh; "present your best arguments for your idols," says the King of Jacob. **"Let them bring us their own arguments; have them come forward and declare to us what will happen, so we may know these things well. Have them tell us of earlier predictive declarations, so we can reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled."** (Isaiah 41:21-22 ULT)

'Present your case,' says Yahweh; 'present your best arguments for your idols,' says the King of Jacob. Your idols **cannot bring us their own arguments or come forward to declare to us what will happen** so we may know these things well. We cannot hear them because **they cannot speak** to tell us their earlier predictive declarations, so we cannot reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled.

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work?

Can you find the way back to their houses for them?

**Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then;
the number of your days is so large!** (Job 38:20-21 ULT)

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work? Can you find the way back to their houses for them? **You act like you know how light and darkness were created, as if you were there; as if you are as old as creation, but you are not!**

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Litotes](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 9:9](#))

Litotes

Description

Litotes is a figure of speech in which the speaker expresses a strong positive meaning by using two negative words or a negative word with a word that means the opposite of the meaning he intends. A few examples of negative words are “no,” “not,” “none,” and “never.” The opposite of “good” is “bad.” Someone could say that something is “not bad” to mean that it is extremely good.

This page answers the question: *What is litotes?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not use litotes. People who speak those languages might not understand that a statement using litotes actually strengthens the positive meaning. Instead, they might think that it weakens or even cancels the positive meaning.

Examples From the Bible

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was **not useless**, (1 Thessalonians 2:1 ULT)

By using litotes, Paul emphasized that his visit with them was **very** useful.

Now when it became day, there was **no small disturbance** among the soldiers over what therefore had happened to Peter. (Acts 12:18 ULT)

By using litotes, Luke emphasized that there was a **lot** of excitement or anxiety among the soldiers about what happened to Peter. (Peter had been in prison, and even though there were soldiers guarding him, he escaped when an angel let him out. So they were very agitated.)

But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are **not the least** among the leaders of Judah,
for from you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel. (Matthew 2:6 ULT)

By using litotes, the prophet emphasized that Bethlehem would be a **very important city**.

Translation Strategies

If the litotes would be understood correctly, consider using it.

(1) If the meaning with the negative would not be clear, give the **positive** meaning in a strong way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the meaning with the negative would not be clear, give the **positive** meaning in a strong way.

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was **not useless**. (1 Thessalonians 2:1 ULT)

“For you yourselves know, brothers, our visit to you **did much good**.”

Now when it became day, there was **no small disturbance** among the soldiers over what therefore had happened to Peter. (Acts 12:18 ULT)

“Now when it became day, there was **great excitement** among the soldiers, regarding what had happened to Peter.”

or:

“Now when it became day, the soldiers were **very concerned** because of what had happened to Peter.”

(Go back to: [Judges 2:19](#); [14:6](#); [19:19](#); [20:8](#))

Merism

Definition

Merism is a figure of speech in which a person refers to something by speaking of two extreme parts of it. By referring to the extreme parts, the speaker intends to include also everything in between those parts.

This page answers the question: *What does the word merism mean and how can I translate phrases that have it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

"I am **the alpha and the omega**," says the Lord God, "the one who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8 ULT)

I am **the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end**. (Revelation 22:13, ULT)

Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This is a merism that includes everything from the beginning to the end. It means eternal.

... I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth** ..., (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

Heaven and earth is a merism that includes everything that exists.

Reason This is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not use merism. The readers of those languages may think that the phrase only applies to the items mentioned. They may not realize that it refers to those two things and everything in between.

Examples From the Bible

From the rising of the sun to its setting, Yahweh's name should be praised. (Psalm 113:3 ULT)

This bolded phrase is a merism because it speaks of the east and the west and everywhere in between. It means "everywhere."

He will bless those who honor him, both **young and old**. (Psalm 115:13)

The bolded phrase is merism because it speaks of old people and young people and everyone in between. It means "everyone."

Translation Strategies

If the merism would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

- (1) Identify what the merism refers to without mentioning the parts.
- (2) Identify what the merism refers to and include the parts.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Identify what the merism refers to without mentioning the parts.

I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth**. (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

I praise you, Father, Lord of **everything**.

From the rising of the sun to its setting, Yahweh's name should be praised. (Psalm 113:3 ULT)

In all places, people should praise Yahweh's name.

(2) Identify what the merism refers to and include the parts.

I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth**. (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

I praise you, Father, Lord of **everything, including both what is in heaven and what is on earth**.

He will bless those who honor him, both **young and old**. (Psalm 115:13 ULT)

He will bless **all those** who honor him, regardless of whether they are **young or old**.

(Go back to: [Judges 5:10](#); [13:7](#); [20:1](#))

Metaphor

Description

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of one thing as if it were a different thing because he wants people to think about how those two things are alike.

For example, someone might say, “The girl I love is a red rose.”

A girl and a rose are very different things, but the speaker considers that they are alike in some way. The hearer’s task is to understand in what way they are alike.

This page answers the question: *What is a metaphor and how can I translate a Bible passage that has one?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

[Simile](#)

The Parts of a Metaphor

The example above shows us that a metaphor has three parts. In this metaphor, the speaker is talking about “the girl I love.” This is the **Topic**. The speaker wants the hearer to think about what is similar between her and “a red rose.” The red rose is the **Image** to which he compares the girl. Most probably, he wants the hearer to consider that they are both beautiful. This is the **Idea** that the girl and the rose both share, and so we may also call it the **Point of Comparison**.

Every metaphor has three parts:

- The **Topic**, the item being immediately discussed by the writer/speaker.
- The **Image**, the physical item (object, event, action, etc.) which the speaker uses to describe the topic.
- The **Idea**, the abstract concept or quality that the physical **Image** brings to the mind of the hearer when he thinks of how the **Image** and the **Topic** are similar. Often, the **Idea** of a metaphor is not explicitly stated in the Bible, but it is only implied from the context. The hearer or reader usually needs to think of the **Idea** himself.

Using these terms, we can say that a metaphor is a figure of speech that uses a physical **Image** to apply an abstract **Idea** to the speaker’s **Topic**.

Usually, a writer or speaker uses a metaphor in order to express something about a **Topic**, with at least one **Point of Comparison (Idea)** between the **Topic** and the **Image**. Often in metaphors, the **Topic** and the **Image** are explicitly stated, but the **Idea** is only implied. The writer/speaker often uses a metaphor in order to invite the readers/listeners to think about the similarity between the **Topic** and the **Image** and to figure out for themselves the **Idea** that is being communicated.

Speakers often use metaphors in order to strengthen their message, to make their language more vivid, to express their feelings better, to say something that is hard to say in any other way, or to help people remember their message.

Sometimes speakers use metaphors that are very common in their language. However, sometimes speakers use metaphors that are uncommon, and even some metaphors that are unique. When a metaphor has become very common in a language, often it becomes a “passive” metaphor, in contrast to uncommon metaphors, which we describe as being “active.” Passive metaphors and active metaphors each present a different kind of translation problem, which we will discuss below.

Passive Metaphors

A passive metaphor is a metaphor that has been used so much in the language that its speakers no longer regard it as one concept standing for another. Linguists often call these “dead metaphors.” Passive metaphors are extremely common. Examples in English include the terms “table **leg**,” “family **tree**,” “book **leaf**” (meaning a page

in a book), or the word “crane” (meaning a large machine for lifting heavy loads). English speakers simply think of these words as having more than one meaning. Examples of passive metaphors in Biblical Hebrew include using the word “hand” to represent “power,” using the word “face” to represent “presence,” and speaking of emotions or moral qualities as if they were “clothing.”

Patterned Pairs of Concepts Acting as Metaphors

Many ways of metaphorical speaking depend on pairs of concepts, where one underlying concept frequently stands for a different underlying concept. For example, in English, the direction “up” (the Image) often represents the concepts of “more” or “better” (the Idea). Because of this pair of underlying concepts, we can make sentences such as “The price of gasoline is going **up**,” “A **highly** intelligent man,” and also the opposite kind of idea: “The temperature is going **down**,” and “I am feeling very **low**.”

Patterned pairs of concepts are constantly used for metaphorical purposes in the world’s languages because they serve as convenient ways to organize thought. In general, people like to speak of abstract qualities (such as power, presence, emotions, and moral qualities) as if they were body parts, or as if they were objects that could be seen or held, or as if they were events that could be watched as they happened.

When these metaphors are used in normal ways, it is rare that the speaker and audience regard them as figurative speech. Examples of metaphors in English that go unrecognized are:

- “Turn the heat **up**.” More is spoken of as up.
- “Let us **go ahead** with our debate.” Doing what was planned is spoken of as walking or advancing.
- “You **defend** your theory well.” Argument is spoken of as war.
- “A **flow** of words.” Words are spoken of as liquids.

English speakers do not view these as metaphorical expressions or figures of speech, so it would be wrong to translate them into other languages in a way that would lead people to pay special attention to them as figurative speech. For a description of important patterns of this kind of metaphor in biblical languages, please see Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns and the pages it will direct you to.

When translating something that is a passive metaphor into another language, do not treat it as a metaphor. Instead, just use the best expression for that thing or concept in the target language.

Active Metaphors

These are metaphors that people recognize as one concept standing for another concept, or one thing for another thing. Metaphors make people think about how the one thing is like the other thing, because in most ways the two things are very different. People also easily recognize these metaphors as giving strength and unusual qualities to the message. For this reason, people pay attention to these metaphors. For example,

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.
(Malachi 4:2a ULT)

Here, God speaks about his salvation as if it were the sun rising in order to shine its rays on the people whom he loves. He also speaks of the sun’s rays as if they were wings. Also, he speaks of these wings as if they were bringing medicine that would heal his people. Here is another example:

And he said to them, “Go and tell that fox ...” (Luke 13:32a ULT)

Here, “that fox” refers to King Herod. The people listening to Jesus certainly understood that Jesus was intending for them to apply certain characteristics of a fox to Herod. They probably understood that Jesus intended to communicate that Herod was evil, either in a cunning way or as someone who was destructive, murderous, or who took things that did not belong to him, or all of these.

Active metaphors require the translator's special care to make a correct translation. To do so, you need to understand the parts of a metaphor and how they work together to produce meaning.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35 ULT)

In this metaphor, Jesus called himself the bread of life. The **Topic** is "I" (meaning Jesus himself) and the **Image** is "bread." Bread was the primary food that people ate in that place and time. The similarity between bread and Jesus is that people need both to live. Just as people need to eat food in order to have physical life, people need to trust in Jesus in order to have eternal life. The **Idea** of the metaphor is "life." In this case, Jesus stated the central Idea of the metaphor, but often the Idea is only implied.

Purposes of Metaphor

- One purpose of metaphor is to teach people about something that they do not know (the **Topic**) by showing that it is like something that they already do know (the **Image**).
- Another purpose is to emphasize that something (the **Topic**) has a particular quality (the **Idea**) or to show that it has that quality in an extreme way.
- Another purpose is to lead people to feel the same way about the **Topic** as they would feel about the **Image**.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not recognize that something is a metaphor. In other words, they may mistake a metaphor for a literal statement, and thus, misunderstand it.
- People may not be familiar with the thing that is used as an image, and so, not be able to understand the metaphor.
- If the topic is not stated, people may not know what the topic is.
- People may not know the points of comparison that the speaker wants them to understand. If they fail to think of these points of comparison, they will not understand the metaphor.
- People may think that they understand the metaphor, but they do not. This can happen when they apply points of comparison from their own culture, rather than from the biblical culture.

Translation Principles

- Make the meaning of a metaphor as clear to the target audience as it was to the original audience.
- Do not make the meaning of a metaphor more clear to the target audience than you think it was to the original audience.

Examples From the Bible

Listen to this word, **you cows of Bashan**, (Amos 4:1q ULT)

In this metaphor Amos speaks to the upper-class women of Samaria ("you," the Topic) as if they were cows (the Image). Amos does not say what similarity(s) he intends between these women and cows. He wants the reader to think of them, and he fully expects that readers from his culture will easily do so. From the context, we can see that he means that the women are like cows in that they are fat and interested only in feeding themselves. If we were to apply similarities from a different culture, such as that cows are sacred and should be worshiped, we would get the wrong meaning from this verse.

NOTE: Amos does not actually mean that the women are cows. He speaks to them as human beings.

Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; **we are the clay. You are our potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

The example above has two related metaphors. The Topic(s) are “we” and “you,” and the Image(s) are “clay” and “potter.” The similarity between a potter and God is the fact that both make what they wish out of their material. The potter makes what he wishes out of the clay, and God makes what he wishes out of his people. The Idea being expressed by the comparison between the potter’s clay and “us” is that **neither the clay nor God’s people have a right to complain about what they are becoming**.

Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of **the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees**.” The disciples reasoned among themselves and said, “It is because we did not take bread.” (Matthew 16:6-7 ULT)

Jesus used a metaphor here, but his disciples did not realize it. When he said “yeast,” they thought he was talking about bread, but “yeast” was the Image in his metaphor, and the Topic was the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Since the disciples (the original audience) did not understand what Jesus meant, it would not be good to state clearly here what Jesus meant.

Translation Strategies

If people would understand the metaphor in the same way that the original readers would have understood it, go ahead and use it. Be sure to test the translation to make sure that people do understand it in the right way.

If people do not or would not understand it, here are some other strategies.

- (1) If the metaphor is a common expression in the source language or expresses a patterned pair of concepts in a biblical language (that is, it is a passive metaphor), then express the **Idea** in the simplest way preferred by your language.
- (2) If the metaphor seems to be an active metaphor, you can translate it literally **if you think that the target language also uses this metaphor in the same way to mean the same thing as in the Bible**. If you do this, be sure to test it to make sure that the language community understands it correctly.
- (3) If the target audience does not realize that it is a metaphor, then change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as “like” or “as.” See [Simile](#).
- (4) If the target audience would not know the **Image**, see [Translate Unknowns](#) for ideas on how to translate that image.
- (5) If the target audience would not use that **Image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.
- (6) If the target audience would not know what the **Topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the Topic was.)
- (7) If the target audience would not know the intended similarity (the **Idea**) between the topic and the image, then state it clearly.
- (8) If none of these strategies is satisfactory, then simply state the **Idea** plainly without using a metaphor.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the metaphor is a common expression in the source language or expresses a patterned pair of concepts in a biblical language (that is, a passive metaphor), then express the Idea in the simplest way preferred by your language.

Then, see, one of the leaders of the synagogue, named Jairus, came, and when he saw him, **fell at his feet**. (Mark 5:22 ULT)

Then one of the leaders of the synagogue, named Jairus, came, and when he saw him, **immediately bowed down in front of him**.

(2) If the metaphor seems to be an active metaphor, you can translate it literally **if you think that the target language also uses this metaphor in the same way to mean the same thing as in the Bible**. If you do this, be sure to test it to make sure that the language community understands it correctly.

But Jesus said to them, "He wrote this commandment to you because of your **hardness of heart**." (Mark 10:5 ULT)

It was because of your **hard hearts** that he wrote you this law.

We made no change to this one, but it must be tested to make sure that the target audience correctly understands this metaphor.

(3) If the target audience does not realize that it is a metaphor, then change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as "like" or "as."

Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we **are the clay**. You **are our potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are **like** clay. You are **like** a potter; and we all are the work of your hand.

(4) If the target audience would not know the **Image**, see [Translate Unknowns](#) for ideas on how to translate that image.

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you **to kick against a goad**. (Acts 26:14b ULT)

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to **kick against a pointed stick**.

(5) If the target audience would not use that **Image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.

Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **clay**. You are our **potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

"And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **wood**. You are our **carver**; and we all are the work of your hand."

"And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **string**. You are the **weaver**; and we all are the work of your hand."

(6) If the target audience would not know what the **Topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the topic was.)

Yahweh lives; may **my rock** be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted. (Psalm 18:46 ULT)

Yahweh lives; **He is my rock**. May he be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted.

(7) If the target audience would not know the intended similarity between the Topic and the Image, then state it clearly.

Yahweh lives; may **my rock** be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted. (Psalm 18:46 ULT)

Yahweh lives; may he be praised because he is the rock **under which I can hide from my enemies**. May the God of my salvation be exalted.

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you **to kick against a goad**. (Acts 26:14 ULT)

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? You **fight against me and hurt yourself like an ox that kicks against its owner's pointed stick**.

(8) If none of these strategies are satisfactory, then simply state the idea plainly without using a metaphor.

I will make you to become **fishers of men**. (Mark 1:17b ULT)

I will make you to become **people who gather men**.
Now you gather fish. I will make you **gather people**.

To learn more about specific metaphors, see Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns.

(Go back to: [Judges 2:3](#); [2:11](#); [2:12](#); [2:14](#); [2:16](#); [2:18](#); [2:19](#); [2:20](#); [2:22](#); [3:7](#); [3:8](#); [3:9](#); [3:12](#); [3:15](#); [3:28](#); [4:1](#); [4:2](#); [4:9](#); [4:21](#); [4:23](#); [5:4](#); [5:7](#); [5:14](#); [5:15](#); [5:16](#); [6:1](#); [6:8](#); [8:2](#); [8:27](#); [8:33](#); [Notes](#); [9:9](#); [9:20](#); [9:30](#); [9:31](#); [10:6](#); [10:7](#); [10:10](#); [10:13](#); [11:35](#); [13:1](#); [13:4](#); [13:7](#); [13:14](#); [13:25](#); [14:14](#); [14:18](#); [16:23](#); [17:6](#); [18:30](#); [19:17](#); [19:25](#); [20:34](#); [20:43](#); [21:6](#); [21:25](#))

Metonymy

Description

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which an item (either physical or abstract) is called not by its own name, but by the name of something closely associated with it. A metonym is a word or phrase used as a substitute for something that it is associated with.

This page answers the question: *What is a metonymy?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

... and **the blood** of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin. (1 John 1:7b ULT)

The blood represents Christ's death.

And he took **the cup** in the same way after supper, saying, "**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20 ULT)

The cup represents the wine that is in the cup.

Metonymy can be used

- as a shorter way of referring to something
- to make an abstract idea more meaningful by referring to it with the name of a physical object associated with it

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible uses metonymy very often. Speakers of some languages are not familiar with metonymy and they may not recognize it when they read it in the Bible. If they do not recognize the metonymy, they will not understand the passage or, worse yet, they will get a wrong understanding of the passage. Whenever a metonym is used, people need to be able to understand what it represents.

Examples From the Bible

The Lord God will give to him **the throne** of his father David. (Luke 1:32b ULT)

A throne represents the authority of a king. "Throne" is a metonym for "kingly authority," "kingship," or "reign." This means that God would make him become a king who would follow King David.

Then immediately his **mouth** was opened (Luke 1:64a ULT)

The mouth here represents the power to speak. This means that he was able to talk again.

Who warned you to flee from **the wrath** that is coming? (Luke 3:7b ULT)

The word "wrath" or "anger" is a metonym for "punishment." God was extremely angry with the people and, as a result, he would punish them.

Translation Strategies

If people would easily understand the metonym, consider using it. Otherwise, here are some options.

- (1) Use the metonym along with the name of the thing it represents.
- (2) Use only the name of the thing the metonym represents.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the metonym along with the name of the thing it represents.

And he took the cup in the same way after the supper, saying, “**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” (Luke 22:20 ULT)

He took the cup in the same way after supper, saying, “**The wine in this cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

This verse also contains a second metonym: The cup, (representing the wine it contains) also represents the new covenant made with the blood Christ shed for us.

- (2) Use the name of the thing the metonym represents.

The Lord God will give him **the throne** of his father David. (Luke 1:32b ULT)

“The Lord God will give him **the kingly authority** of his father, David.”

or:

“The Lord God will **make him king** like his ancestor, King David.”

Who warned you to flee from **the wrath** that is coming? (Luke 3:7b ULT)

“Who warned you to flee from God’s coming **punishment**?”

To learn about some common metonymies, see [Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies](#).

(Go back to: [Judges 1:7](#); [1:8](#); [1:10](#); [1:12](#); [1:22](#); [1:25](#); [1:28](#); [1:29](#); [1:30](#); [1:31](#); [1:35](#); [2:2](#); [2:15](#); [2:16](#); [2:18](#); [2:20](#); [2:21](#); [2:23](#); [3:8](#); [3:10](#); [3:11](#); [3:30](#); [3:31](#); [4:2](#); [4:9](#); [4:13](#); [4:15](#); [5:5](#); [5:9](#); [5:14](#); [5:15](#); [5:16](#); [5:17](#); [5:23](#); [5:28](#); [5:31](#); [6:1](#); [6:2](#); [6:6](#); [6:7](#); [6:9](#); [6:10](#); [6:13](#); [6:14](#); [6:15](#); [6:35](#); [7:1](#); [7:2](#); [7:4](#); [7:9](#); [7:14](#); [7:20](#); [7:22](#); [8:1](#); [8:2](#); [8:6](#); [8:10](#); [8:22](#); [8:27](#); [8:28](#); [8:34](#); [8:35](#); [9:2](#); [9:4](#); [9:9](#); [9:16](#); [9:17](#); [9:18](#); [9:19](#); [9:27](#); [9:30](#); [9:45](#); [9:46](#); [10:1](#); [10:3](#); [10:7](#); [10:9](#); [10:12](#); [10:16](#); [11:4](#); [11:7](#); [11:21](#); [12:14](#); [13:1](#); [13:5](#); [13:14](#); [14:15](#); [15:12](#); [16:17](#); [16:31](#); [17:10](#); [17:12](#); [18:2](#); [18:3](#); [18:24](#); [18:25](#); [18:27](#); [18:31](#); [19:8](#); [20:13](#); [20:29](#); [20:48](#))

Nominal Adjectives

Description

In some languages an adjective can be used to refer to a class of things that the adjective describes. When it does, it acts like a noun. For example, the word “rich” is an adjective. Here are two sentences that show that “rich” is an adjective.

The rich man had huge numbers of flocks and herds.
(2 Samuel 12:2 ULT)

The adjective “rich” comes before the word “man” and describes “man.”

He will not be rich; his wealth will not last. (Job 15:29a ULT)

The adjective “rich” comes after the verb “be” and describes “He.”

Here is a sentence that shows that “rich” can also function as a noun.

The rich must not give more than the half shekel, and **the poor** must not give less. (Exodus 30:15b ULT)

In Exodus 30:15, the word “rich” acts as a noun in the phrase “the rich,” and it refers to rich people. The word “poor” also acts as a noun and refers to poor people.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate adjectives that act like nouns?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech]]

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Many times in the Bible adjectives are used as nouns to describe a group of people.
- Some languages do not use adjectives in this way.
- Readers of these languages may think that the text is talking about one particular person when it is really talking about the group of people whom the adjective describes.

Examples From the Bible

The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)

“The righteous” here are people who are righteous, not one particular righteous person.

Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)

“The meek” here are all people who are meek, not one particular meek person.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses adjectives as nouns to refer to a class of people, consider using the adjectives in this way. If it would sound strange, or if the meaning would be unclear or wrong, here is another option:

- (1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)

The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **righteous people**.

Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)

Blessed are **people who are meek**.

(Go back to: [Judges 14:14; 16:30](#))

Numbers

Description

There are many numbers in the Bible. They can be written as words (“five”) or as numerals (“5”). Some numbers are very large, such as “two hundred” (200), “twenty-two thousand” (22,000), or “one hundred million” (100,000,000). Some languages do not have words for all of these numbers. Translators need to decide how to translate numbers and whether to write them as words or numerals.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate numbers?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Translate Unknowns](#)

Some numbers are exact and others are rounded.

■ Abram was **86** years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:16 ULT)

Eighty-six (86) is an exact number.

■ That day about **3,000** of the people died. (Exodus 32:28b ULT)

Here the number three thousand (3,000) is a round number. It may have been a little more than that or a little less than that. The word “about” shows that it is not an exact number.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not have words for some of these numbers.

Translation Principles

- Exact numbers should be translated as closely and specifically as they can be.
- Rounded numbers can be translated more generally.

Examples From the Bible

■ When Jared had lived **162** years, he became the father of Enoch. After he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived **800** years. He became the father of more sons and daughters. Jared lived **962** years, and then he died. (Genesis 5:18-20 ULT)

The numbers 162, 800, and 962 are exact numbers and should be translated with something as close to those numbers as possible.

■ Our sister, may you be the mother of **thousands of ten thousands**. (Genesis 24:60b ULT)

This is a rounded number. It does not say exactly how many descendants she should have, but it was a huge number of them.

Translation Strategies

- (1) Write numbers using numerals.
- (2) Write numbers using your language’s words or the Gateway Language words for those numbers.
- (3) Write numbers using words, and put the numerals in parentheses after them.

(4) Combine words for large numbers.

(5) Use a very general expression for very large rounded numbers and write the numeral in parentheses afterward.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

We will use the following verse in our examples:

Now, see, at great effort I have prepared for Yahweh's house **100,000** talents of gold, **1,000,000** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities. (1 Chronicles 22:14a ULT)

(1) Write numbers using numerals.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house **100,000** talents of gold, **1,000,000** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(2) Write numbers using your language's words or the Gateway Language words for those numbers.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house **one hundred thousand** talents of gold, **one million** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(3) Write numbers using words, and put the numerals in parenthesis after them.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house one **hundred thousand (100,000)** talents of gold, **one million (1,000,000)** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(4) Combine words for large numbers.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house **one hundred thousand** talents of gold, **a thousand thousand** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(5) Use a very general expression for very large rounded numbers and write the numeral in parentheses afterward.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house **a great amount of gold (100,000 talents), ten times that amount of silver (1,000,000 talents)**, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

Consistency

Be consistent in your translations. Decide how the numbers will be translated, using numbers or numerals. There are different ways of being consistent.

- Use words to represent numbers all of the time. (You might have very long words.)
- Use numerals to represent numbers all of the time.
- Use words to represent the numbers that your language has words for and use numerals for the numbers that your language does not have words for.
- Use words for low numbers and numerals for high numbers.
- Use words for numbers that require few words and numerals for numbers that require more than a few words.
- Use words to represent numbers, and write the numerals in parentheses after them.

Consistency in the ULT and UST

The *unfoldingWord® Literal Text* (ULT) and the *unfoldingWord® Simplified Text* (UST) use words for the numbers one through ten and use numerals for all numbers above ten.

When Adam had lived **130** years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and he called his name Seth. After Adam became the father of Seth, he lived **800** years. He became the father of more sons and daughters. Adam lived **930** years, and then he died.
(Genesis 5:3-5 ULT)

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Ordinal Numbers](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-fraction]]

(Go back to: [Judges 1:4](#); [1:7](#); [2:8](#); [3:11](#); [3:14](#); [3:29](#); [3:30](#); [3:31](#); [4:3](#); [4:6](#); [4:10](#); [4:13](#); [4:14](#); [5:8](#); [5:31](#); [7:3](#); [7:6](#); [7:7](#); [7:16](#); [7:19](#); [7:22](#); [8:4](#); [8:10](#); [8:14](#); [8:26](#); [8:28](#); [8:30](#); [9:2](#); [9:4](#); [9:5](#); [9:18](#); [9:24](#); [9:34](#); [9:37](#); [9:43](#); [9:44](#); [9:49](#); [9:56](#); [10:2](#); [10:3](#); [10:4](#); [10:8](#); [11:26](#); [11:33](#); [12:6](#); [12:14](#); [13:1](#); [14:11](#); [14:12](#); [14:19](#); [15:4](#); [15:11](#); [15:15](#); [15:20](#); [16:5](#); [16:27](#); [16:31](#); [17:2](#); [17:3](#); [17:4](#); [18:11](#); [18:16](#); [18:17](#); [19:29](#); [20:10](#); [20:15](#); [20:17](#); [20:21](#); [20:25](#); [20:34](#); [20:35](#); [20:44](#); [20:45](#); [20:46](#); [20:47](#); [21:10](#); [21:12](#))

Order of Events

Description

In the Bible, events are not always told in the order in which they occurred. Sometimes the author wanted to discuss something that happened at an earlier time than the event that he just talked about. This can be confusing to the reader.

This page answers the question: *Why are some events not listed in the order they happened, and how do I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro]]

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs]]

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers might think that the events happened in the order that they are told. It is important to help them understand the correct order of events.

Examples From the Bible

He even added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. Now it came about, when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. (Luke 3:20-21 ULT)

This could sound like John baptized Jesus after John was locked up in prison, but John baptized Jesus before John was locked up in prison.

Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh followed after them. But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

This could sound like Joshua gave the order not to shout after the army had already started their march, but he had given that order before they started marching.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

This sounds like a person must first open the scroll and then break its seals, but the seals that lock the scroll must be broken before the scroll can be unrolled.

Translation Strategies

- (1) If your language uses phrases or time words to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using one of them.
- (2) If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that. (See the section on "Aspect" of Verbs.)
- (3) If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occurred, consider reordering the events so they are in that order. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6). (See Verse Bridges.)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If your language uses phrases, time words or tenses to show that an event happened before the one just mentioned, consider using one of them.

20 he even added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. Now it came about, when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. (Luke 3:20-21 ULT)

20 But then Herod ... had John locked up in prison. 21 **Before John was put in prison**, while all the people were being baptized by John, Jesus also was baptized.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

Who is worthy to open the scroll **after** breaking its seals?

(2) If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that.

Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

8 Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets 10 But Joshua **had commanded** the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout."

(3) If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occur, consider reordering the events. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6).

8 Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

8,10 Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout." Then just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets...

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_events.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Background Information](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/grammar-connect-words-phrases\]\]](#)

[Introduction of a New Event](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-versebridge\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 3:26](#))

Ordinal Numbers

Description

Ordinal numbers are used in the Bible mainly to tell the position of something in a list.

And God has indeed appointed some in the church, **first** apostles, **second** prophets, **third** teachers, then miracles. (1 Corinthians 12:28a ULT)

This page answers the question: *What are ordinal numbers and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Numbers](#)

This is a list of workers that God gave to the church in their order.

Ordinal Numbers in English

Most ordinal numbers in English simply have “-th” added to the end.

Numeral	Number	Ordinal Number
4	four	fourth
10	ten	tenth
100	one hundred	one hundredth
1,000	one thousand	one thousandth

Some ordinal numbers in English do not follow that pattern.

Numeral	Number	Ordinal Number
1	one	first
2	two	second
3	three	third
5	five	fifth
12	twelve	twelfth

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not have special numbers for showing the order of items in a list. There are different ways to deal with this.

Examples From the Bible

The **first** lot went to Jehoiarib, the **second** to Jedaiah, the **third** to Harim, the **fourth** to Seorim ... the **twenty-third** to Delaiah, and the **twenty-fourth** to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

The people cast lots and one went to each of these people in the order given.

You must place in it four rows of precious stones. The **first** row must have a ruby, a topaz, and a garnet. The **second** row must have an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. The **third** row must have a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst. The **fourth** row must have a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper. They must be mounted in gold settings. (Exodus 28:17-20 ULT)

This describes four rows of stones. The first row is probably the top row, and the fourth row is probably the bottom row.

Translation Strategies

If your language has ordinal numbers and using them would give the right meaning, consider using them. If not, here are some strategies to consider:

- (1) Use “one” with the first item and “another” or “the next” with the rest.
- (2) Tell the total number of items and then list them or the things associated with them.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Tell the total number of items, and use “one” with the first item and “another” or “the next” with the rest.

The first lot went to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim ... the twenty-third to Delaiah, and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

There were **24** lots. **One lot** went to Jehoiarib, **another** to Jedaiah, **another** to Harim ... **another** to Delaiah, **and the last** went to Maaziah.

There were **24** lots. **One lot** went to Jehoiarib, **the next** to Jedaiah, **the next** to Harim ... **the next** to Delaiah, **and the last** went to Maaziah.

A river went out of Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became **four** rivers. The name of **the first** is Pishon. It is the one which flows throughout the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. There is also bdellium and the onyx stone there. The name of **the second** river is Gihon. This one flows throughout the whole land of Cush. The name of **the third** river is Tigris, which flows east of Asshur. **The fourth** river is the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14 ULT)

A river went out of Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became **four** rivers. The name of **one** is Pishon. It is the one which flows throughout the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. There is also bdellium and the onyx stone there. The name of **the next** river is Gihon. This one flows throughout the whole land of Cush. The name of **the next** river is Tigris, which flows east of Asshur. The **last** river is the Euphrates.

- (2) Tell the total number of items and then list them or the things associated with them.

The **first** lot went to Jehoiarib, the **second** to Jedaiah, the **third** to Harim, the **fourth** to Seorim ... the **twenty-third** to Delaiah, and the **twenty-fourth** to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

They cast **24** lots. The lots went to Jerhoiarib, Jedaiah, Harim, Seorim ... Delaiah, and Maaziah.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-fraction]]

(Go back to: [Judges 6:25](#); [14:15](#); [14:17](#); [14:18](#))

Parables

A parable is a short story that teaches something(s) that is true, and delivers the lesson in a way that is easy to understand and hard to forget.

This page answers the question: *What is a parable?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

Description

A parable is a short story that is told to teach something(s) that is true. Though the events in a parable could happen, they did not actually happen. They are told only to teach the lesson(s) that the listener is meant to learn. Parables rarely contain the names of specific people. (This may help you identify what is a parable and what is an account of a real event.) Parables often use figures of speech such as [simile](#) and [metaphor](#).

Then he also told them a parable. "A blind man is not able to guide a blind man, is he? Would not both fall into a pit?" (Luke 6:39 ULT)

This parable teaches that if a person does not have spiritual understanding, he cannot help someone else to understand spiritual things.

Examples From the Bible

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but, rather, on the lampstand, and it shines for everyone in the house. Let your light shine before people in such a way that they see your good deeds and praise your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:15-16 ULT)

This parable teaches us not to hide the way we live for God from other people.

>

Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. This seed is indeed the smallest of all other seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32 ULT)

This parable teaches that the kingdom of God may seem small at first, but it will grow and spread throughout the world.

Translation Strategies

(1) If a parable is hard to understand because it has unknown objects in it, you can replace the unknown objects with objects that people in your culture know. However, be careful to keep the lesson the same.

(2) If the teaching of the parable is unclear, consider telling a little about what it teaches in the introduction, such as "Jesus told this story about being generous."

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If a parable is hard to understand because it has unknown objects in it, you can replace the unknown objects with objects that people in your culture know. However, be careful to keep the lesson the same.

Jesus also said to them, "The lamp is not brought in order to put it under a basket, or under the bed, is it? Is it not so that it might be put on the **lampstand**?" (Mark 4:21 ULT)

If people do not know what a lampstand is, you could substitute something else that people put a light on so it can give light to the house.

Jesus also said to them, "The lamp is not brought in order to put it under a basket, or under the bed, is it? Is it not so that it might be put on **a high shelf?**"

Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and **sowed** in his field. It is indeed the smallest of all the seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32 ULT)

To sow seeds means to toss them so that they scatter on the ground. If people are not familiar with sowing, you can substitute planting.

Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and **planted** in his field. This seed is indeed the smallest of all the seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

(2) If the teaching of the parable is unclear, consider telling a little about what it teaches in the introduction, such as "Jesus told this story about being generous."

Jesus also said to them, "The lamp is not brought in order to put it under a basket, or under the bed, is it? Is it not so that it might be put on the lampstand?" (Mark 4:21 ULT)

Jesus told them a parable about why they should witness openly. Jesus also said to them, "The lamp is not brought in order to put it under a basket, or under the bed, is it? Is it not so that it might be put on the lampstand?" (Mark 4:21 ULT)

Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is indeed the smallest of all the seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32 ULT)

Then Jesus presented another parable to them about how the kingdom of God grows. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. This seed is indeed the smallest of all the seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

(Go back to: [Judges 9:7](#); [9:8](#); [9:11](#); [9:12](#); [9:15](#))

Parallelism

Description

Parallelism is a poetic device in which two phrases or clauses that are similar in structure or idea are used together. The following are some of the different kinds of parallelism.

- The second clause or phrase means the same as the first. This is called synonymous parallelism.
- The second clarifies or strengthens the meaning of the first.
- The second completes what is said in the first.
- The second says something that contrasts with the first, but adds to the same idea.

Parallelism is most commonly found in Old Testament poetry, such as in the books of Psalms and Proverbs. It also occurs in Greek in the New Testament, both in the four gospels and in the apostles' letters.

This article will only discuss synonymous parallelism, the kind in which the two parallel phrases mean the same thing, because that is the kind that presents a problem for translation. Note that we use the term "synonymous parallelism" for long phrases or clauses that have the same meaning. We use the term "doublet" for words or very short phrases that mean basically the same thing and are used together.

In the poetry of the original languages, synonymous parallelism has several effects:

- It shows that something is very important by saying it more than once and in more than one way.
- It helps the hearer to think more deeply about the idea by saying it in different ways.
- It makes the language more beautiful and raises it above the ordinary way of speaking.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use synonymous parallelism. They would either think it odd that someone said the same thing twice, or, since it is in the Bible, they would think that the two phrases must have some difference in meaning. For them it would be confusing, rather than beautiful. They would not understand that the repetition of the idea in different words serves to emphasize the idea.

Examples From the Bible

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105 ULT)

Both parts of the sentence are metaphors saying that God's word teaches people how to live. That is the single idea. The words "lamp" and "light" are similar in meaning because they refer to light. The words "my feet" and "my path" are related because they refer to a person walking. Walking is a metaphor for living.

You make him to rule over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)

Both lines say that God made man the ruler of everything. "To rule over" is the same idea as putting things "under his feet," and "the works of your [God's] hands" is the same idea as "all things."

This page answers the question: *What is parallelism?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

Yahweh sees everything a person does
and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

The first phrase and the second phrase mean the same thing. There are three ideas that are the same between these two phrases. “Sees” corresponds to “watches,” “everything...does” corresponds to “all the paths...takes,” and “a person” corresponds to “he.”

Praise Yahweh, all you nations;
exalt him, all you peoples! (Psalm 117:1 ULT)

Both parts of this verse tell people everywhere to praise Yahweh. The words ‘Praise’ and ‘exalt’ mean the same thing. The words ‘Yahweh’ and ‘him’ refer to the same person. The terms ‘all you nations’ and ‘all you peoples’ refer to the same people.

For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people,
and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2b ULT)

The two parts of this verse say that Yahweh has a serious disagreement with his people, Israel. These are not two different disagreements or two different groups of people.

Translation Strategies

For most kinds of parallelism, it is good to translate both of the clauses or phrases. For synonymous parallelism, it is good to translate both clauses if people in your language understand that the purpose of saying something twice is to strengthen a single idea. But if your language does not use parallelism in this way, then consider using one of the following translation strategies.

- (1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.
- (2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as “truly” or “certainly.”
- (3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like “very,” “completely,” or “all.”

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.

Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. (Judges 16:13, ULT)

Delilah expressed this idea twice to emphasize that she was very upset.

Until now you have deceived me with your lies.

Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

The phrase “all the paths he takes” is a metaphor for “all he does.”

Yahweh pays attention to everything a person does.

For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2 ULT)

This parallelism describes one serious disagreement that Yahweh had with one group of people. If this is unclear, the phrases can be combined:

For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, Israel.

(2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as “truly” or “certainly.”

Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

Yahweh truly sees everything a person does.

You make him to rule over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet
(Psalm 8:6 ULT)

You have certainly made him to rule over everything that you have created.

(3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like “very,” “completely” or “all.”

Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. (Judges 16:13, ULT)

All you have done is lie to me.

Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

Yahweh sees absolutely everything that a person does.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Personification](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 5:28](#); [7:3](#); [9:28](#); [10:6](#); [11:35](#); [13:23](#); [14:16](#); [15:19](#); [16:10](#); [16:13](#); [20:8](#))

Personification

Description

Personification is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of something as if it could do things that animals or people can do. People often do this because it makes it easier to talk about things that we cannot see:

Such as wisdom:

Does not Wisdom call out? (Proverbs 8:1a ULT)

Or sin:

Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT)

People also use personification because it is sometimes easier to talk about people's relationships with non-human things such as wealth as if they were relationships between people.

You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

In each case, the purpose of the personification is to highlight a certain characteristic of the non-human thing. As in metaphor, the reader needs to think of the way that the thing is like a certain kind of person.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use personification.
- Some languages use personification only in certain situations.

Examples From the Bible

You cannot **serve** God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

Jesus speaks of wealth as if it were a master whom people might serve. Loving money and basing one's decisions on it is like serving it as a slave would serve his master.

Does not Wisdom **call** out? Does not Understanding **raise her voice**? (Proverbs 8:1 ULT)

The author speaks of wisdom and understanding as if they were woman who calls out to teach people. This means that they are not something hidden, but something obvious that people should pay attention to.

Translation Strategies

If the personification would be understood clearly, consider using it. If it would not be understood, here are some other ways for translating it.

- (1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.
- (2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as "like" or "as" to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.
- (3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

This page answers the question: *What is personification?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.

Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — God speaks of sin as if it were a wild animal that is waiting for the chance to attack. This shows how dangerous sin is. An additional phrase can be added to make this danger clear.

Sin is at your door, **waiting to attack you**.

(2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as “like” or “as” to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.

Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — This can be translated with the word “as.”

Sin is crouching at the door, **just as a wild animal does as it waits to attack a person..**

(3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

Even the **winds and the sea obey him**. (Matthew 8:27b ULT) — The men speak of the “wind and the sea” as if they are able to hear and obey Jesus, just as people can. This could also be translated without the idea of obedience by speaking of Jesus controlling them.

He even **controls the winds and the sea**.

NOTE: We have broadened our definition of “personification” to include “zoomorphism” (speaking of other things as if they had animal characteristics) and “anthropomorphism” (speaking of non-human things as if they had human characteristics) because the translation strategies for them are the same.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Apostrophe](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part1]]

(Go back to: [Judges 5:5](#); [5:20](#); [9:8](#); [9:11](#); [9:12](#); [9:15](#); [16:17](#); [16:19](#); [20:42](#))

Poetry

Description

Poetry is one of the ways that people use the words and sounds of their language to make their speech and writing more beautiful and to express strong emotion. Through poetry, people can communicate deeper emotion than they can through simple non-poetic forms. Poetry gives more weight and elegance to statements of truth, such as proverbs, and is also easier to remember than ordinary speech.

This page answers the question: *What is poetry and how do I translate it into my language?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro\]\]](#)

In poetry we commonly find:

- many figures of speech such as [Apostrophe](#)
- arrangements of clauses into particular patterns such as:
 - parallel lines (See [Parallelism](#))
 - acrostics (beginning lines with successive letters of the alphabet)
 - chiasms (in which the first line relates to the last line, the second to the next-to-last line, etc.):
 - > You should not give what is holy to the dogs,
 - >
 - >> and should not throw your pearls in front of the pigs.
 - >>
 - >> Otherwise they will trample them under their feet,
 - >
 - > and having turned, they might tear you to pieces. (Matt 7:6 ULT)

- repetition of some or all of a line:

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. (Psalm 148:2-3 ULT)

- lines of similar length:

Listen to my call to you,
Yahweh; think about my groanings.
Listen to the sound of my call, my King and my God,
for it is to you that I pray. (Psalm 5:1-2 ULT)

- the same sound used at the end or at the beginning of two or more lines:

“Twinkle, twinkle little **star**. How I wonder what you **are**.” (from an English rhyme)

- the same sound repeated many times:

“Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater” (from an English rhyme)

We also find:

- old words and expressions
- dramatic imagery
- different use of grammar — including:

- incomplete sentences
- lack of connective words

Some places to look for poetry in your language

Songs, particularly old songs or songs used in children's games
Religious ceremony or chants of priests or witch doctors
Prayers, blessings, and curses
Old legends

Elegant or fancy speech

Elegant or fancy speech is similar to poetry in that it uses beautiful language, but it does not use all of the language's features of poetry, and it does not use them as much as poetry does. Popular speakers in the language often use elegant speech, and this is probably the easiest source of text to study to find out what makes speech elegant in your language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

- Different languages use poetry for different things. If a poetic form would not communicate the same meaning in your language, you may need to write it without the poetry.
- Different languages use different poetic devices. A poetic device that conveys elegance or emotion in a biblical language may be confusing or misunderstood in another language.
- In some languages, using poetry for a particular part of the Bible would make it much more powerful.

Examples From the Bible

The Bible uses poetry for songs, teaching, and prophecy. Almost all of the books of the Old Testament have poetry in them and many of the books are completely made up of poetry.

... for you saw my affliction; you knew the distress of my soul. (Psalm 31:7b ULT)

This example of [Parallelism](#) has two lines that mean the same thing.

Yahweh, judge the nations; vindicate me, Yahweh, because I am righteous and innocent, Most High. (Psalm 7:8 ULT)

This example of parallelism shows the contrast between what David wants God to do to him and what he wants God to do to the unrighteous nations. (See [Parallelism](#).)

Keep your servant also from arrogant sins; let them not rule over me. (Psalm 19:13a ULT)

This example of personification speaks of sins as if they could rule over a person. (See [Personification](#).)

Oh, give thanks to Yahweh; for he is good,
for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.

Oh, give thanks to the God of gods,
for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.
(Psalm 136:1-3 ULT)

This example repeats the phrases “give thanks” and “his covenant faithfulness endures forever.”

Translation Strategies

If the style of poetry that is used in the source text would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other ways of translating it.

- (1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry.
- (2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.
- (3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

If you use poetry it may be more beautiful.

If you use ordinary speech it may be more clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of mockers. But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2 ULT)

The following are examples of how people might translate Psalm 1:1-2.

- (1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry. (The style in this example has words that sound similar at the end of each line.)

“Happy is the person not encouraged **to sin**, Disrespect for God he will not **begin**, To those who laugh at God he is **no kin**. God is his constant **delight**, He does what God says **is right**, He thinks of it all day **and night**.”

- (2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.

This is the kind of person who is truly blessed: the one who does not follow the advice of wicked people nor stop along the road to speak with sinners nor join the gathering of those who mock God. Rather, he takes great joy in Yahweh’s law, and he meditates on it day and night.

- (3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

The people who do not listen to the advice of bad people are really happy. They do not spend time with people who continually do evil things or join with those who do not respect God. Instead, they love to obey Yahweh’s law, and they think about it all the time.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-symlanguage\]\]](https://en.ta.man/translate/writing-symlanguage)

(Go back to: [Judges 5:3](#); [5:5](#); [5:12](#))

Possession

Description

In English, the grammatical form that commonly indicates possession is also used to indicate a variety of relationships between people and objects or people and other people. In English, that grammatical relationship is shown by using the word “**of**,” by using **an apostrophe and the letter “s”**, or by using a **possessive pronoun**. The following examples are different ways to indicate that my grandfather owns a house.

- the house **of** my grandfather
- my grandfather’s house
- **his** house

Possession is used in Hebrew, Greek, and English for a variety of situations. Here are a few common situations that it is used for.

- Ownership — Someone owns something.
 - My clothes — The clothes that I own
- Social Relationship — Someone has some kind of social relationship with another.
 - my mother — the woman who gave birth to me, or the woman who cared for me
 - my teacher — the person who teaches me
- Association — A particular thing is associated with a particular person, place, or thing.
 - David’s sickness — the sickness that David is experiencing
 - the fear of the Lord — the fear that is appropriate for a human being to have when relating to the Lord
- Contents — Something has something in it.
 - a bag of clothes — a bag that has clothes in it, or a bag that is full of clothes
- Part and whole: One thing is part of another.
 - my head — the head that is part of my body
 - the roof of a house — the roof that is part of a house

In some languages there is a special form of possession, termed **inalienable possession**. This form of possession is used for things that cannot be removed from you, as opposed to things you could lose. In the examples above, *my head* and *my mother* are examples of inalienable possession (at least in some languages), while *my clothes* or *my teacher* would be alienably possessed. What may be considered alienable vs. inalienable may differ by language.

This page answers the question: *What is possession and how can I translate phrases that show it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech]]
 [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences]]

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between two ideas represented by the two nouns when one is in the grammatical relationship of possessing the other.
- Some languages do not use grammatical possession for all of the situations that your source text Bible might use it for.

Examples From the Bible

Ownership — In the example below, the son owned the money.

█ The younger son ... wasted his wealth by living recklessly. (Luke 15:13b)

Social Relationship — In the example below, the disciples were people who learned from John.

█ Then **the disciples of John** came to him. (Matthew 9:14a ULT)

Association — In the example below, the gospel is the message associated with Paul because he preaches it.

█ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, from the seed of David, according to **my gospel**, (2 Timothy 2:8 ULT)

Material — In the example below, the material used for making the crowns was gold.

█ On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

Contents — In the example below, the cup has water in it.

█ For whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Part of a whole — In the example below, the door was a part of the palace.

█ But Uriah slept at **the door of the king's palace**. (2 Samuel 11:9a ULT)

Part of a group — In the example below, “us” refers to the whole group and “each one” refers to the individual members.

█ Now to **each one of us** grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7 ULT)

Events and Possession

Sometimes one or both of the nouns is an abstract noun that refers to an event or action. In the examples below, the abstract nouns are in **bold** print. These are just some of the relationships that are possible between two nouns when one of them refers to an event.

Subject — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who would do the action named by the first noun. In the example below, **John baptized people**.

█ The **baptism of John**, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me. (Mark 11:30)

In the example below, **Christ loves us**.

█ Who will separate us from the **love of Christ**? (Romans 8:35)

Object — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who or what something would happen to. In the example below, **people love money**.

For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10a ULT)

Instrument — Sometimes the word after “of” tells how something would happen. In the example below, God would **punish people by sending enemies to attack them with swords**.

Then be afraid of the sword, because wrath brings **the punishment of the sword**. (Job 19:29a ULT)

Representation — In the example below, John was baptizing people who were repenting of their sins. They were being baptized to show that they were repenting. Their **baptism represented their repentance**.

John came, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching **a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4 ULT)

Strategies for learning what the relationship is between the two nouns

- (1) Read the surrounding verses to see if they help you to understand the relationship between the two nouns.
- (2) Read the verse in the UST. Sometimes it shows the relationship clearly.
- (3) See what the notes say about it.

Translation Strategies

If possession would be a natural way to show a particular relationship between two nouns, consider using it. If it would be strange or hard to understand, consider these.

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.
- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.
- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

“On their heads were **gold crowns**”

- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.

Whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Whoever gives you a **cup that has water in it** to drink ... will not lose his reward.

Wealth is worthless on **the day of wrath**. (Proverbs 11:4a ULT)

Wealth is worthless on **the day when God shows his wrath**.

or:

Wealth is worthless on the **day when God punishes people because of his wrath**.

(3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb. (In the example below, there are two possession relationships, “punishment of Yahweh” and “your God.”)

Notice that I am not speaking to your children, who have not known or seen **the punishment of Yahweh your God**. (Deuteronomy 11:2a ULT)

Notice that I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen **how Yahweh, the God whom you worship, punished the people of Egypt**.

You will only observe and see the **punishment of the wicked**. (Psalms 91:8 ULT)

You will only observe and see **how Yahweh punishes the wicked**.

You will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. (Acts 2:38b ULT)

You will receive the **Holy Spirit, whom God will give to you**.

(Go back to: [Judges 16:19](#))

Predictive Past

Description

The predictive past is a figure of speech that uses the past tense to refer to things that will happen in the future. This is sometimes done in prophecy to show that the event will certainly happen. It is also called the prophetic perfect.

Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of understanding;
their honored leaders go hungry, and their common people have nothing to drink. (Isaiah 5:13 ULT)

In the example above, the people of Israel had not yet gone into captivity, but God spoke of their going into captivity as if it had already happened because he had decided that they certainly would go into captivity.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue:

Readers who are not aware of the past tense being used in prophecy to refer to future events may find it confusing.

Examples From the Bible

Now Jericho was tightly closed because of the sons of Israel. No one went out and no one came in. Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:1-2 ULT)

For to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given;
and the rule will be on his shoulder. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)

In the examples above, God spoke of things that would happen in the future as if they had already happened.

But even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them, saying, "Look! The Lord came with thousands and thousands of his holy ones." (Jude 1:14 ULT)

Enoch was speaking of something that would happen in the future, but he used the past tense when he said "the Lord came."

Translation Strategies

If the past tense would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.
- (2) If it refers to something in the immediate future, use a form that would show that.
- (3) Some languages may use the present tense to show that something will happen very soon.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.

This page answers the question: *What is the predictive past?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

For to us a child **has been born**, to us a son **has been given**. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)

For to us a child **will be born**, to us a son **will be given**.

(2) If it refers to something that would happen very soon, use a form that shows that.

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:2 ULT)

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I **am about to deliver** over to you Jericho, its king, and its powerful soldiers."

(3) Some languages may use the present tense to show that something will happen very soon.

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:2 ULT)

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I **am delivering** over to you Jericho, its king, and its powerful soldiers."

(Go back to: [Judges 4:14](#); [7:14](#))

Quotes within Quotes

Description

A quotation may have a quote within it, and quotes that are inside of other quotes can also have quotes within them. When a quote has quotes within it, we say there are “layers” of quotation, and each of the quotes is a layer. When there are many layers of quotes inside of quotes, it can be hard for listeners and readers to know who is saying what. Some languages use a combination of direct quotes and indirect quotes to make it easier.

This page answers the question: *What is a quote within a quote, and how can I help the readers understand who is saying what?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Direct and Indirect Quotations](#)

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

When there is a quote within a quote, the listener needs to know who the pronouns refer to. For example: if a quote that is inside a quote has the word “I,” the listener needs to know whether “I” refers to the speaker of the inner quote or the outer quote.

Some languages make this clear by using different kinds of quotes when there are quotes within quotes.

They may use direct quotes for some and indirect quotes for others.

Some languages do not use indirect quotes.

Examples From the Bible

A quotation with only one layer

But Paul said, “I, however, was indeed born a citizen.” (Acts 22:28b ULT)

Quotations with two layers

Jesus answered and said to them, “Be careful that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name. They will say, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will lead many astray.” (Matthew 24:4-5 ULT)

The outermost layer is what Jesus said to his disciples. The second layer is what other people will say.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king.” (John 18:37b ULT)

The outermost layer is what Jesus said to Pilate. The second layer is what Pilate said about Jesus.

A quotation with three layers

Abraham said, “... I said to her, ‘You must show me this faithfulness as my wife: At every place where we go, say about me, **“He is my brother.”**’” (Genesis 20:11a, 13 ULT)

The outermost layer is what Abraham responded to Abimelech. The second layer is what Abraham had told his wife. The third layer is what he wanted his wife to say. (We have bolded the third layer.)

A quotation with four layers

They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Yahweh says this: **'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal- Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'**"'" (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

The outermost layer is what the messengers said to the king. The second layer is what the man who had met the messengers told them. The third is what that man wanted the messengers to say to the king. The fourth is what Yahweh said. (We have bolded the fourth layer.)

Translation Strategies

Some languages use only direct quotes. Other languages use a combination of direct quotes and indirect quotes. In those languages it might sound strange and perhaps even be confusing if there are many layers of direct quotes.

(1) Translate all of the quotes as direct quotes.

(2) Translate one or some of the quotes as indirect quotes. (See [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#).)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate all of the quotes as direct quotes. In the example below we have bolded the indirect quotes in the ULT and the quotes that we have changed to direct quotes below it.

Festus presented to the king the things concerning Paul, saying, "There is a certain man was left here as a prisoner by Felix. So I am uncertain about the things concerning this matter. I asked **if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there to be judged concerning these things**. But when Paul appealed **to keep him in custody for the decision of the emperor**, I ordered him **to be held in custody until when I could send him to Caesar**." (Acts 25:14b, 20-21 ULT)

Festus presented Paul's case to the king. He said, "A certain man was left behind here by Felix as a prisoner. I was uncertain about the things concerning this matter. I asked him, **'Will you go to Jerusalem to be judged there concerning these things?'** But when Paul said, **'I want to be kept in custody for the emperor's decision,'** I told the guard, **'Keep him in custody until when I can send him to Caesar.'**"

(2) Translate one or some of the quotes as indirect quotes. In English the word "that" can come before indirect quotes. It is bolded in the examples below. The pronouns that changed because of the indirect quote are also bolded.

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Speak to them and say, 'During the evenings you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be satisfied with bread. And you will know that I am Yahweh your God.'" (Exodus 16:11-12 ULT)

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Tell them **that** during the evenings **they** will eat meat, and in the morning **they** will be satisfied with bread. And **they** will know that I am Yahweh **their** God."

They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'""'" (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

They told him **that** a man had come to meet **them** who said to **them**, "Go back to the king who sent you, and tell him **that** Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'"

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-quotemarks\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 2:3](#); [9:2](#))

Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a question that a speaker asks when he is more interested in expressing his attitude about something than in getting information about it. Speakers use rhetorical questions to express deep emotion or to encourage hearers to think deeply about something. The Bible contains many rhetorical questions, often to express surprise, to rebuke or scold the hearer, or to teach. Speakers of some languages use rhetorical questions for other purposes as well.

This page answers the question: *What are rhetorical questions and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentencetypes\]\]](#)

Description

A rhetorical question is a question that strongly expresses the speaker's attitude toward something. Often the speaker is not looking for information at all. Or, if he is asking for information, it is not usually the information that the question appears to ask for. The speaker is more interested in expressing his attitude than in getting information.

But those who stood by said, **“Are you insulting the high priest of God?”** (Acts 23:4 ULT)

The people who asked Paul this question were not asking if he was insulting God's high priest. Rather, they used this question to accuse Paul of insulting the high priest.

The Bible contains many rhetorical questions. These rhetorical questions might be used for the purposes: of expressing attitudes or feelings, rebuking people, teaching something by reminding people of something they know and encouraging them to apply it to something new, or introducing something they want to talk about.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use rhetorical questions; for them a question is always a request for information.
- Some languages use rhetorical questions, but for purposes that are different or more limited than in the Bible.
- Because of these differences between languages, some readers might misunderstand the purpose of a rhetorical question in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

Do you not still rule the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7b ULT)

Jezebel used the question above to remind King Ahab of something he already knew: he still ruled the kingdom of Israel. The rhetorical question made her point more strongly than if she had merely stated it, because it forced Ahab to admit the point himself. She did this in order to rebuke him for being unwilling to take over a poor man's property. She was implying that, since he was the king of Israel, he had the power to take the man's property.

Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

God used the question above to remind his people of something they already knew: a young woman would never forget her jewelry or a bride forget her veils. He then rebuked his people for forgetting him who is so much greater than those things.

Why did I not die when I came out from the womb? (Job 3:11a ULT)

Job used the question above to show deep emotion. This rhetorical question expresses how sad he was that he did not die as soon as he was born. He wished that he had not lived.

And how has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? (Luke 1:43 ULT)

Elizabeth used the question above to show how surprised and happy she was that the mother of her Lord came to her.

Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

Jesus used the question above to remind the people of something they already knew: a good father would never give his son something bad to eat. By introducing this point, Jesus could go on to teach them about God with his next rhetorical question:

Therefore, if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? (Matthew 7:11 ULT)

Jesus used this question to teach the people in an emphatic way that God gives good things to those who ask him.

What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed that a man took and threw into his garden ... (Luke 13:18b-19a ULT)

Jesus used the question above to introduce what he was going to talk about. He was about to compare the kingdom of God to something. In this case, he compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed.

Translation Strategies

In order to translate a rhetorical question accurately, first be sure that the question you are translating truly is a rhetorical question and is not an information question. Ask yourself, "Does the person asking the question already know the answer to the question?" If so, it is a rhetorical question. Or, if no one answers the question, did the person who asked it expect to receive an answer? If not, it is a rhetorical question.

When you are sure that the question is rhetorical, then be sure that you understand the purpose for the rhetorical question. Is it to encourage or rebuke or shame the hearer? Is it to bring up a new topic? Is it to do something else?

When you know the purpose of the rhetorical question, then think of the most natural way to express that purpose in the target language. It might be as a question, or a statement, or an exclamation.

If using the rhetorical question would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing so. If not, here are other options:

- (1) Add the answer after the question.
- (2) Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.
- (3) Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.
- (4) Change the form of the question so that it communicates in your language what the original speaker communicated in his.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Add the answer after the question.

Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? **Of course not!** Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number!

Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? **None of you would do that!**

(2) Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.

What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed. (Luke 13:18-19a ULT)

This is what the kingdom of God is like. It is like a mustard seed ...

Are you insulting the high priest of God? (Acts 23:4b ULT) (Acts 23:4 ULT)

You should not insult God's high priest!

Why did I not die when I came out from the womb? (Job 3:11a ULT)

I wish I had died when I came out from the womb!

And how has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (Luke 1:43 ULT)

How wonderful it is that the mother of my Lord has come to me!

(3) Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.

Do you not still rule the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7b ULT)

You still rule the kingdom of Israel, **do you not?**

(4) Change the form of the question so that it communicates in your language what the original speaker communicated in his.

Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

If your son asks you for a loaf of bread, **would you give him a stone?**

Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

What virgin would forget her jewelry, and what bride would forget her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number

(Go back to: [Judges 2:2](#); [4:14](#); [5:16](#); [5:17](#); [5:30](#); [6:13](#); [6:14](#); [6:15](#); [6:31](#); [8:1](#); [8:2](#); [8:3](#); [8:6](#); [8:15](#); [9:9](#); [9:11](#); [9:13](#); [9:28](#); [9:38](#); [10:12](#); [11:23](#); [11:24](#); [11:25](#); [11:26](#); [13:18](#); [Notes](#); [14:3](#); [14:15](#); [14:16](#); [14:18](#); [15:2](#); [15:11](#); [16:15](#); [18:9](#); [18:14](#); [18:19](#); [18:23](#); [18:24](#); [21:3](#))

Simile

Description

A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. The simile focuses on a particular trait the two items have in common, and it includes the words “like,” “as,” or “than.”

This page answers the question: *What is a simile?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were troubled and discouraged, **like sheep not having a shepherd**. (Matthew 9:36)

Jesus compared the crowds of people to sheep without a shepherd. Sheep grow frightened when they do not have a good shepherd to lead them in safe places. The crowds were like that because they did not have good religious leaders.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be as wise **as the serpents** and harmless **as the doves**. (Matthew 10:16 ULT)

Jesus compared his disciples to sheep and their enemies to wolves. Wolves attack sheep; Jesus' enemies would attack his disciples.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

God's word is compared to a two-edged sword. A two-edged sword is a weapon that can easily cut through a person's flesh. God's word is very effective in showing what is in a person's heart and thoughts.

Purposes of Simile

- A simile can teach about something that is unknown by showing how it is similar to something that is known.
- A simile can emphasize a particular trait, sometimes in a way that gets people's attention.
- Similes help form a picture in the mind or help the reader experience what he is reading about more fully.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not know how the two items are similar.
- People may not be familiar with both of the items being compared.

Examples From the Bible

Suffer hardship with me, **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3 ULT)

In this simile, Paul compares suffering with what soldiers endure, and he encourages Timothy to follow their example.

Just as the lightning flashing from a place under the sky shines to another place under the sky, so will the Son of Man be. (Luke 17:24b ULT)

This verse does not tell how the Son of Man will be like the lightning. But in context we can understand from the verses before it that just as lighting flashes suddenly and everyone can see it, the Son of Man will come suddenly and everyone will be able to see him. No one will have to be told about it.

Translation Strategies

If people would understand the correct meaning of a simile, consider using it. If they would not, here are some strategies you can use:

- (1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.
- (2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.
- (3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — This compares the danger that Jesus' disciples would be in with the danger that sheep are in when they are surrounded by wolves.

See, I send **you out among wicked people** and you will be in danger from them **as sheep are in danger when they are among wolves**.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

For the word of God is living and active and **more powerful than a very sharp two-edged sword**.

- (2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — If people do not know what sheep and wolves are, or that wolves kill and eat sheep, you could use some other animal that kills another.

See, I send you out **as chickens in the midst of wild dogs**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to gather your children together, **as a mother closely watches over her infants**, but you refused!

If you have faith **as a grain of mustard** ... (Matthew 17:20)

If you have faith even as small **as a tiny seed**,

- (3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT)

See, I send you out among **people who will want to harm you**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to **protect you**, but you refused!

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Metaphor](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part1]]

(Go back to: [Judges 2:17](#); [5:31](#); [6:5](#); [7:12](#); [13:6](#); [15:10](#); [15:14](#); [16:9](#); [16:12](#); [17:11](#); [20:1](#); [20:8](#))

Symbolic Action

Description

A symbolic action is something that someone does in order to express a certain idea. For example, in some cultures people nod their heads up and down to mean “yes” or turn their heads from side to side to mean “no.” Symbolic actions do not mean the same things in all cultures. In the Bible, sometimes people perform symbolic actions and sometimes they only refer to the symbolic action.

This page answers the question: *What is a symbolic action and how do I translate it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Translate Unknowns](#)

Examples of symbolic actions

- In some cultures people shake hands when they meet to show that they are willing to be friendly.
- In some cultures people bow when they meet to show respect to each other.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

An action may have a meaning in one culture and a different meaning or no meaning at all in another culture. For example, in some cultures raising the eyebrows means “I am surprised” or “What did you say?” In other cultures it means “yes.”

In the Bible, people did things that had certain meanings in their culture. When we read the Bible, we might not understand what someone meant if we interpret the action based on what it means in our own culture today.

You (the translator) need to understand what people in the Bible meant when they used symbolic actions. If an action does not mean the same thing in your own culture, then you need to figure out how to translate what the action meant.

Examples From the Bible

And behold, a man came whose name was Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And **falling at the feet of Jesus**, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: He did this to show great respect to Jesus.

Look, I am standing at the door and am knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: When people wanted someone to welcome them into their home, they stood at the door and knocked on it.

Translation Strategies

If people would correctly understand what a symbolic action meant to the people in the Bible, consider using it. If not, here are some strategies for translating it.

- (1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.
- (2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.

(3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning. Do this only in poetry, parables, and sermons. Do not do this when there actually was a person who did a specific action.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Jairus fell down at Jesus' feet in order to show that he greatly respected him.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Look, I stand at the door and knock on it, asking you to let me in.

(2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Jairus showed Jesus great respect.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Look, I stand at the door and ask you to let me in.

(3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT) — Since Jairus actually did this, you should not substitute an action from your own culture.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT) — Jesus was not standing at a real door. Rather he was speaking about wanting to have a relationship with people. So in cultures where it is polite to clear one's throat when wanting to be let into a house, you could use that.

Look, I stand at the door and clear my throat.

(Go back to: [Judges 2:12](#); [3:20](#); [9:8](#); [9:15](#); [11:35](#); [13:20](#))

Synecdoche

Description

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a speaker uses a part of something to refer to the whole thing, or uses the whole to refer to a part.

■ **My soul** magnifies the Lord. (Luke 1:46b ULT)

Mary was very happy about what the Lord was doing, so she said “my soul,” which means the inner, emotional part of herself, to refer to her whole self.

■ So **the Pharisees** said to him, “Look, why are they doing that which is not lawful?” (Mark 2:24a ULT)

The Pharisees who were standing there did not all say the same words at the same time. Instead, it is more likely that one man representing the group said those words.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some readers may not recognize the synecdoche and thus misunderstand the words as a literal statement.
- Some readers may realize that they are not to understand the words literally, but they may not know what the meaning is.

Example From the Bible

■ Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

“My hands” is a synecdoche for the whole person because clearly the arms and the rest of the body and the mind were also involved in the person’s accomplishments. The hands are chosen to represent the person because they are the parts of the body most directly involved in the work.

Translation Strategies

If the synecdoche would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

■ **“My soul** magnifies the Lord.” (Luke 1:46b ULT)

■ **“I** magnify the Lord.”

So **the Pharisees** said to him ... (Mark 2:24a ULT)

■ **A representative of the Pharisees** said to him ...

Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

This page answers the question: *What is a synecdoche, and how can I translate such a thing into my language?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

I looked on all the deeds that I had accomplished

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Metonymy](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part2]]

(Go back to: [Judges 1:2](#); [1:5](#); [1:8](#); [1:20](#); [1:25](#); [2:23](#); [3:3](#); [3:8](#); [3:10](#); [3:12](#); [4:7](#); [4:16](#); [4:24](#); [5:8](#); [5:11](#); [5:19](#); [5:20](#); [5:21](#); [5:30](#); [7:3](#); [8:6](#); [8:8](#); [8:9](#); [8:11](#); [8:16](#); [8:17](#); [9:43](#); [9:45](#); [11:12](#); [11:17](#); [11:19](#); [11:20](#); [11:27](#); [11:32](#); [11:33](#); [12:2](#); [12:3](#); [12:4](#); [15:8](#); [16:24](#); [18:20](#); [18:27](#); [19:5](#); [19:18](#); [19:21](#); [21:18](#))

Translate Unknowns

While working to translate the Bible, you (the translator) might find yourself asking: “How do I translate words like lion, fig tree, mountain, priest, or temple when people in my culture have never seen these things and we do not have a word for them?”

This page answers the question: *How can I translate ideas that my readers are not familiar with?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences\]\]](#)

Description

Unknowns are things that occur in the source text that are not known to the people of your culture. The unfoldingWord® Translation Words pages and the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes will help you understand what they are. After you understand them, you will need to find ways to refer to those things so that people who read your translation will understand what they are.

They said to him, “We have nothing here except five loaves of **bread** and two fish.” (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

Bread is a particular food made by mixing finely crushed grains with oil, and then cooking the mixture so that it is dry. (Grains are the seeds of a kind of grass.) In some cultures people do not have bread and do not know what it is.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the things that are in the Bible because those things are not part of their own culture.
- Readers may have difficulty understanding a text if they do not know some of the things that are mentioned in it.

Translation Principles

- Use words that are already part of your language if possible.
- Keep expressions short if possible.
- Represent God’s commands and historical facts accurately.

Examples From the Bible

So I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals**. (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

Jackals are wild animals like dogs that live in only a few parts of the world. So they are not known in many places.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous **wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

If wolves do not live where the translation will be read, the readers may not understand that they are fierce, wild animals like dogs that attack and eat sheep.

They offered him wine mixed with **myrrh**, but he did not drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT)

People may not know what myrrh is and that it was used as a medicine.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

Some languages have terms for things that give light, like the sun and fire, but they have no general term for lights.

■ Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT)

People in many parts of the world have not seen snow, but they may have seen it in pictures.

Translation Strategies

Here are ways you might translate a term that is not known in your language:

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.
- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.
- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.
- (4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.
- (5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.

■ Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

■ Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly they are very hungry and dangerous animals**.

"Ravenous wolves" is part of a metaphor here, so the reader needs to know that they are very dangerous to sheep in order to understand this metaphor. (If sheep are also unknown, then you will need to also use one of the translation strategies to translate sheep, or change the metaphor to something else, using a translation strategy for metaphors. See [Translating Metaphors](#).)

■ "We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

■ We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked grain seeds** and two fish.

- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.

■ Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT) This verse is not about snow. It uses snow in a figure of speech to help people understand how white something will be.

■ Your sins ... will be white like **milk**.

■ Your sins ... will be white like **the moon**.

- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **myrrh**. But he refused to drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT) — People may understand better what myrrh is if it is used with the general word “medicine.”

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **a medicine called myrrh**. But he refused to drink it.

“We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish.” (Matthew 14:17 ULT) — People may understand better what bread is if it is used with a phrase that tells what it is made of (seeds) and how it is prepared (crushed and baked).

We have nothing here except five loaves of **baked crushed seed bread** and two fish.

(4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals** (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **wild dogs**

“We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish.” (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked food** and two fish.

(5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

to him who made **the sun and the moon**

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Copy or Borrow Words](#)

[How to Translate Names](#)

(Go back to: [Judges 11:34](#); [16:13](#))



unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 28

covenant faithfulness, covenant loyalty, covenant love

Definition:

In biblical times, the term translated as “covenant faithfulness” was used to describe the kind of faithfulness, loyalty, kindness, and love that was both expected and demonstrated between people who were closely related to one another, either by marriage or by blood. This same term is used often in the Bible to describe the way God relates to his people, especially his commitment to fulfill the promises that he made to them.

- The way this term is translated can depend on how each of the individual terms “covenant” and “faithfulness” are translated.
- Other ways to translate this term might include: “faithful love;” “loyal, committed love;” or “loving dependability.”

(See also: covenant, [faithful](#), grace, Israel, people of God, promise)

Bible References:

- Ezra 3:11
- Numbers 14:18

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H2617

(Go back to: [Judges 2 General Notes](#))

curse, cursed, cursing

Definition:

The term “curse” means to cause negative things to happen to the person or thing that is being cursed.

- A curse can be a statement that harm will happen to someone or something.
- To curse someone can also be an expression of desire that bad things will happen to them.
- It can also refer to the punishment or other negative things that someone causes to happen to someone.

Translation Suggestions:

- This term could be translated as “cause bad things to happen to” or “declare that something bad will happen to” or “swear to cause evil things to happen to.”
- In the context of God sending curses on his disobedient people, it could be translated as “punish by allowing bad things to happen.”
- The term “cursed” when used to describe people could be translated as “(this person) will experience much trouble.”
- The phrase “cursed be” could be translated as “May (this person) experience great difficulties.”
- The phrase, “Cursed is the ground” could be translated as “The soil will not be very fertile.”
- However, if the target language has the phrase “cursed be” and it has the same meaning, then it is good to keep the same phrase.

(See also: bless)

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 14:24-26
- 2 Peter 2:12-14
- Galatians 3:10
- Galatians 3:14
- Genesis 3:14
- Genesis 3:17
- James 3:10
- Numbers 22:6
- Psalms 109:28

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **2:9** God said to the snake, “You are **cursed!**”
- **2:11** “Now the ground is **cursed**, and you will need to work hard to grow food.”
- **4:4** “I will bless those who bless you and **curse** those who **curse** you.”
- **39:7** Then Peter vowed, saying, “May God **curse** me if I know this man!”
- **50:16** Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought sin into this world, God **cursed** it and decided to destroy it.

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0422, H0423, H0779, H1288, H2763, H2764, H3994, H5344, H6895, H7043, H7045, H7621, H8381, G03310, G03320, G06850, G19440, G25510, G26520, G26530, G26710, G26720, G60350

(Go back to: [Judges 9 General Notes](#))

evil, wicked, unpleasant

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “evil” can refer either to the concept of moral wickedness or emotional unpleasantness. The context will usually make it clear which meaning is intended in the specific instance of the term.

- While “evil” may describe a person’s character, “wicked” may refer more to a person’s behavior. However, both terms are very similar in meaning.
- The term “wickedness” refers to the state of being that exists when people do wicked things.
- The results of evil are clearly shown in how people mistreat others by killing, stealing, slandering and being cruel and unkind.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the terms “evil” and “wicked” can be translated as “bad” or “sinful” or “immoral.”
- Other ways to translate these could include “not good” or “not righteous” or “not moral.”
- Make sure the words or phrases that are used to translate these terms fit the context that is natural in the target language.

(See also: disobey, [sin](#), good, [righteous](#), demon)

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 24:11
- 1 Timothy 6:10
- 3 John 1:10
- Genesis 2:17
- Genesis 6:5-6
- Job 1:1
- Job 8:20
- Judges 9:57
- Luke 6:22-23
- Matthew 7:11-12
- Proverbs 3:7
- Psalms 22:16-17

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **2:4** “God just knows that as soon as you eat it, you will be like God and will understand good and **evil** like he does.”
- **3:1** After a long time, many people were living in the world. They had become very **wicked** and violent.
- **3:2** But Noah found favor with God. He was a righteous man living among **wicked** people.
- **4:2** God saw that if they all kept working together to do **evil**, they could do many more sinful things.
- **8:12** “You tried to do **evil** when you sold me as a slave, but God used the **evil** for good!”
- **14:2** They (Canaanites) worshiped false gods and did many **evil** things.
- **17:1** But then he (Saul) became a **wicked** man who did not obey God, so God chose a different man who would one day be king in his place.
- **18:11** In the new kingdom of Israel, all the kings were **evil**.
- **29:8** The king was so angry that he threw the **wicked** servant into prison until he could pay back all of his debt.

- **45:2** They said, "We heard him (Stephen) speak **evil** things about Moses and God!"
- **50:17** He (Jesus) will wipe away every tear and there will be no more suffering, sadness, crying, **evil**, pain, or death.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H0605, H1100, H1681, H1942, H2154, H2162, H2254, H2617, H3399, H3415, H4209, H4849, H5753, H5766, H5767, H5999, H6001, H6090, H7451, H7455, H7489, H7561, H7562, H7563, H7564, G00920, G01130, G04590, G09320, G09870, G09880, G14260, G25490, G25510, G25540, G25550, G25560, G25570, G25590, G25600, G26350, G26360, G41510, G41890, G41900, G41910, G53370

(Go back to: [Judges 6 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

faith

Definition:

In general, the term “faith” refers to a belief, trust or confidence in someone or something.

- To “have faith” in someone is to believe that what he says and does is true and trustworthy.
- To “have faith in Jesus” means to believe all of God’s teachings about Jesus. It especially means that people trust in Jesus and his sacrifice to cleanse them from their sin and to rescue them from the punishment they deserve because of their sin.
- True faith or belief in Jesus will cause a person to produce good spiritual fruits or behaviors because the Holy Spirit is living in him.
- Sometimes “faith” refers generally to all the teachings about Jesus, as in the expression “the truths of the faith.”
- In contexts such as “keep the faith” or “abandon the faith,” the term “faith” refers to the state or condition of believing all the teachings about Jesus.

Translation Suggestions:

- In some contexts, “faith” can be translated as “belief” or “conviction” or “confidence” or “trust.”
- For some languages these terms will be translated using forms of the verb “believe.” (See: [abstractnouns](#))
- The expression “keep the faith” could be translated by “keep believing in Jesus” or “continue to believe in Jesus.”
- The sentence “they must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith” could be translated by “they must keep believing all the true things about Jesus that they have been taught.”
- The expression “my true son in the faith” could be translated by something like “who is like a son to me because I taught him to believe in Jesus” or “my true spiritual son, who believes in Jesus.”

(See also: believe, [faithful](#))

Bible References:

- 2 Timothy 4:7
- Acts 6:7
- Galatians 2:20-21
- James 2:20

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **5:6** When Isaac was a young man, God tested Abraham’s **faith** by saying, “Take Isaac, your only son, and kill him as a sacrifice to me.”
- **31:7** Then he (Jesus) said to Peter, “You man of little **faith**, why did you doubt?”
- **32:16** Jesus said to her, “Your **faith** has healed you. Go in peace.”
- **38:9** Then Jesus said to Peter, “Satan wants to have all of you, but I have prayed for you, Peter, that your **faith** will not fail.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0529, H0530, G16800, G36400, G41020, G60660

(Go back to: [Judges 18 General Notes](#))

faithful, faithfulness, trustworthy

Definition:

To be “faithful” to God means to consistently live according to God’s teachings. It means to be loyal to him by obeying him. The state or condition of being faithful is “faithfulness.”

- A person who is faithful can be trusted to always keep his promises and to always fulfill his responsibilities to other people.
- A faithful person perseveres in doing a task, even when it is long and difficult.
- Faithfulness to God is the consistent practice of doing what God wants us to do.

Translation Suggestions:

- In many contexts, “faithful” can be translated as “loyal” or “dedicated” or “dependable.”
- In other contexts, “faithful” can be translated by a word or phrase that means “continuing to believe” or “persevering in believing and obeying God.”
- Ways that “faithfulness” could be translated could include “persevering in believing” or “loyalty” or “trustworthiness” or “believing and obeying God.”

(See also: believe, [faith](#), believe)

Bible References:

- Genesis 24:49
- Leviticus 26:40
- Numbers 12:7
- Joshua 2:14
- Judges 2:16-17
- 1 Samuel 2:9
- Psalm 12:1
- Proverbs 11:12-13
- Isaiah 1:26
- Jeremiah 9:7-9
- Hosea 5:7
- Luke 12:46
- Luke 16:10
- Colossians 1:7
- 1 Thessalonians 5:24
- 3 John 1:5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **8:5** Even in prison, Joseph remained **faithful** to God, and God blessed him.
- **14:12** Even so, God was still **faithful** to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- **15:13** The people promised to remain **faithful** to God and follow his laws.
- **17:9** David ruled with justice and **faithfulness** for many years, and God blessed him. However, toward the end of his life he sinned terribly against God.
- **35:12** “The older son said to his father, ‘All these years I have worked **faithfully** for you!’”
- **49:17** But God is **faithful** and says that if you confess your sins, he will forgive you.
- **50:4** “If you remain **faithful** to me to the end, then God will save you.”

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0529, H0530, H0539, H0540, H0571, H0898, H2181, H4603, H4604, H4820, G05690, G05710, G41030

(Go back to: [Introduction to Judges](#))

glory, glorious, glorify

Definition:

The term “glory” is a general term for a family of concepts including value, worth, importance, honor, splendor, or majesty. The term “glorify” means to ascribe glory to someone or something, or to show or tell how glorious something or someone is.

- In the Bible, the term “glory” is especially used to describe God, who is more valuable, more worthy, more important, more honorable, more splendid, and more majestic than anyone or anything in the universe. Everything about his character reveals his glory.
- People can glorify God by telling about the wonderful things he has done. They can also glorify God by living in accordance with God’s character, because doing so shows to others his value, worth, importance, honor, splendor, and majesty.
- The expression to “glory in” means to boast about or take pride in something.

Old Testament

- The specific phrase “the glory of Yahweh” in the Old Testament usually refers to some perceptible manifestation of Yahweh’s presence in a particular location.

New Testament

- God the Father will glorify God the Son by revealing to all people the full extent of how glorious Jesus is.
- Everyone who believes in Christ will be glorified with him. This use of the term “glorify” carries a unique meaning. It means that when people who believe in Christ are raised to life, they will be changed physically to be like Jesus as he appeared after his resurrection.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, different ways to translate “glory” could include “splendor” or “majesty” or “awesome greatness” or “extreme value.”
- The term “glorious” could be translated as “full of glory” or “extremely valuable” or “brightly shining” or “awesomely majestic.”
- The expression “give glory to God” could be translated as “honor God’s greatness” or “praise God because of his splendor” or “tell others how great God is.”
- The expression “glory in” could also be translated as “praise” or “take pride in” or “boast about” or “take pleasure in.”
- “Glorify” could also be translated as “give glory to” or “bring glory to” or “cause to appear great.”
- The phrase “glorify God” could also be translated as “praise God” or “talk about God’s greatness” or “show how great God is” or “honor God (by obeying him).”
- The term “be glorified” could also be translated as “be shown to be very great” or “be praised” or “be exalted.”

(See also: honor, majesty, exalt, obey, praise)

Bible References:

- Exodus 24:17
- Numbers 14:9-10
- Isaiah 35:2

- Luke 18:43
- Luke 2:9
- John 12:28
- Acts 3:13-14
- Acts 7:1-3
- Romans 8:17
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- Philippians 2:14-16
- Philippians 4:19
- Colossians 3:1-4
- 1 Thessalonians 2:5
- James 2:1-4
- 1 Peter 4:15-16
- Revelation 15:4

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **23:7** Suddenly, the skies were filled with angels praising God, saying, “**Glorify** to God in heaven and peace on earth to the people he favors!”
- **25:6** Then Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and all their **glory** and said, “I will give you all this if you bow down and worship me.”
- **37:1** When Jesus heard this news, he said, “This sickness will not end in death, but it is for the **glory** of God.”
- **37:8** Jesus responded, “Did I not tell you that you would see God’s **glory** if you believe in me?”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0117, H0142, H0155, H0215, H1342, H1921, H1926, H1935, H1984, H3367, H3513, H3519, H3520, H6286, H6643, H7623, H8597, G13910, G13920, G17400, G17410, G27440, G48880

(Go back to: [Judges 7 General Notes](#))

god, false god, goddess, idol, idolater, idolatrous, idolatry

Definition:

A false god is something that people worship instead of the one true God. The term “goddess” refers specifically to a female false god.

- These false gods or goddesses do not exist. Yahweh is the only God.
- People sometimes make objects into idols to worship as symbols of their false gods.
- In the Bible, God’s people frequently turned away from obeying him in order to worship false gods.
- Demons often deceive people into believing that the false gods and idols they worship have power.
- Baal, Dagon, and Molech were three of the many false gods that were worshiped by people in Bible times.
- Asherah and Artemis (Diana) were two of the goddesses that ancient peoples worshiped.

An idol is an object that people make so they can worship it. Something is described as “idolatrous” if it involves giving honor to something other than the one true God.

- People make idols to represent the false gods that they worship.
- These false gods do not exist; there is no God besides Yahweh.
- Sometimes demons work through an idol to make it seem like it has power, even though it does not.
- Idols are often made of valuable materials like gold, silver, bronze, or expensive wood.
- An “idolatrous kingdom” means a “kingdom of people who worship idols” or a “kingdom of people who worship earthly things.”
- The term “idolatrous figure” is another word for a “carved image” or an “idol.”

Translation Suggestions:

- There may already be a word for “god” or “false god” in the language or in a nearby language.
- The term “idol” could be used to refer to false gods.
- In English, a lower case “g” is used to refer to false gods, and upper case “G” is used to refer to the one true God. Other languages also do that.
- Another option would be to use a completely different word to refer to the false gods.
- Some languages may add a word to specify whether the false god is described as male or female.

(See also: God, Asherah, Baal, Molech, demon, image, kingdom, worship)

Bible References:

- Genesis 35:2
- Exodus 32:1
- Psalms 31:6
- Psalms 81:8-10
- Isaiah 44:20
- Acts 7:41
- Acts 7:43
- Acts 15:20
- Acts 19:27
- Romans 2:22
- Galatians 4:8-9
- Galatians 5:19-21
- Colossians 3:5
- 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **10:2** Through these plagues, God showed Pharaoh that he is more powerful than Pharaoh and all of Egypt's **gods**.
- **13:4** Then God gave them the covenant and said, "I am Yahweh, your God, who saved you from slavery in Egypt. Do not worship other **gods**."
- **14:2** They (Canaanites) worshiped false **gods** and did many evil things.
- **16:1** The Israelites began to worship the Canaanite **gods** instead of Yahweh, the true God.
- **18:13** But most of Judah's kings were evil, corrupt, and they worshiped idols. Some of the kings even sacrificed their children to false **gods**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H0367, H0410, H0426, H0430, H0457, H1322, H1544, H1892, H2553, H3649, H4656, H4906, H5236, H5566, H6089, H6090, H6091, H6456, H6459, H6673, H6736, H6754, H7723, H8163, H8251, H8267, H8441, H8655, G14930, G14940, G14950, G14960, G14970, G22990, G27120

(Go back to: [Judges 3 General Notes](#))

Holy Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit

Facts:

These terms all refer to the Holy Spirit, who is God. The one true God exists eternally as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit is also referred to as “the Spirit” and “Spirit of Yahweh” and “Spirit of truth.”
- Because the Holy Spirit is God, he is absolutely holy, infinitely pure, and morally perfect in all his nature and in everything he does.
- Along with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit was active in creating the world.
- When God’s Son, Jesus, returned to heaven, God sent the Holy Spirit to his people to lead them, teach them, comfort them, and enable them to do God’s will.
- The Holy Spirit guided Jesus and he guides those who believe in Jesus.

Translation Suggestions:

- This term could simply be translated with the words used to translate “holy” and “spirit.”
- Ways to translate this term could also include “Pure Spirit” or “Spirit who is Holy” or “God the Spirit.”

(See also: holy, spirit, God, Lord, God the Father, Son of God, gift)

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 10:10
- 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8
- Acts 8:17
- Galatians 5:25
- Genesis 1:1-2
- Isaiah 63:10
- Job 33:4
- Matthew 12:31
- Matthew 28:18-19
- Psalms 51:10-11

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:1** But **God’s Spirit** was there over the water.
- **24:8** When Jesus came up out of the water after being baptized, **the Spirit of God** appeared in the form of a dove and came down and rested on him.
- **26:1** After overcoming Satan’s temptations, Jesus returned in the power of **the Holy Spirit** to the region of Galilee where he lived.
- **26:3** Jesus read, “God has given me **his Spirit** so that I can proclaim good news to the poor, freedom to captives, recovery of sight for the blind, and release to the oppressed.”
- **42:10** “So go, make disciples of all people groups by baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and **the Holy Spirit** and by teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
- **43:3** They were all filled with the **Holy Spirit** and they began to speak in other languages.
- **43:8** “And Jesus has sent the **Holy Spirit** just as he promised he would do. The **Holy Spirit** is causing the things that you are now seeing and hearing.”
- **43:11** Peter answered them, “Every one of you should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that God will forgive your sins. Then he will also give you the gift of the **Holy Spirit.**”
- **45:1** He (Stephen) had a good reputation and was full of the **Holy Spirit** and of wisdom.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H3068, H6944, H7307, G00400, G41510

(Go back to: [Judges 15 General Notes](#))

inherit, inheritance, heir

Definition:

The term “inherit” refers to receiving something valuable from a parent after a parent dies. The term can also refer to receiving something valuable from some other person because of a special relationship with that person. An “inheritance” is the things that are received, and an “heir” is a person who receives an inheritance.

- A physical inheritance that is received may be money, land, or other kinds of property.
- God promised Abraham and his descendants that they would inherit the land of Canaan, that it would belong to them forever.

Translation Suggestions:

- As always, consider first whether there are already terms in the target language for the concept of an heir or an inheritance, and use those terms.
- Depending on the context, other ways that the term “inherit” could be translated might include “receive” or “possess” or “come into possession of.”
- Ways to translate “inheritance” could include “promised gift” or “secure possession.”
- The term “heir” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “privileged child who receives the father’s possessions.”
- The term “heritage” could be translated as “inherited blessings.”

(See also: heir, Canaan, Promised Land, possess)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- 1 Peter 1:4
- 2 Samuel 21:3
- Acts 7:4-5
- Deuteronomy 20:16
- Galatians 5:21
- Genesis 15:7
- Hebrews 9:15
- Jeremiah 2:7
- Luke 15:11
- Matthew 19:29
- Psalm 79:1

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **4:6** When Abram arrived in Canaan God said, “Look all around you. I will give to you and your descendants all the land that you can see as an **inheritance**.”
- **27:1** One day, an expert in the Jewish law came to Jesus to test him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to **inherit** eternal life?”
- **35:3** “There was a man who had two sons. The younger son told his father, ‘Father, I want my **inheritance** now!’ So the father divided his property between the two sons.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H2490, H2506, H3423, H3425, H4181, H5157, H5159, G28160, G28170, G28190, G28200

(Go back to: [Judges 18 General Notes](#))

judge, judgment

Definition:

The terms “judge” and “judgment” often refer to making a decision about whether or not something is good, wise, or right. However, these terms can also refer to actions performed by a person as the result of a decision, usually in the context of deciding that something is bad, wrong, or evil.

- The terms “judge” and “judgment” can also mean “to cause harm to” (usually because God has decided a person or nation’s actions are wicked).
- The “judgment of God” often refers to his decision to condemn something or someone as sinful.
- God’s judgment usually includes punishing people for their sin.
- The term “judge” can also mean “condemn.” God instructs his people not to judge each other in this way.
- Another meaning is “arbitrate between” or “judge between,” as in deciding which person is right in a dispute between them.
- In some contexts, God’s “judgments” are what he has decided is right and just. They are similar to his decrees, laws, or precepts.
- “Judgment” can refer to wise decision-making ability. A person who lacks “judgment” does not have the wisdom to make wise decisions.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, ways to translate to “judge” could include to “decide” or to “condemn” or to “punish” or to “decree.”
- The term “judgment” could be translated as “punishment” or “decision” or “verdict” or “decree” or “condemnation.”
- In some contexts, the phrase “in the judgment” could also be translated as “on judgment day” or “during the time when God judges people.”

(See also: decree, judge, judgment day, just, law, [law](#))

Bible References:

- 1 John 4:17
- 1 Kings 3:9
- Acts 10:42-43
- Isaiah 3:14
- James 2:4
- Luke 6:37
- Micah 3:9-11
- Psalm 54:1

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **19:16** The prophets warned the people that if they did not stop doing evil and start obeying God, then God would **judge** them as guilty, and he would punish them.
- **21:8** A king is someone who rules over a kingdom and **judges** the people. The Messiah would come would be the perfect king who would sit on the throne of his ancestor David. He would reign over the whole world forever, and who would always **judge** honestly and make the right decisions.
- **39:4** The high priest tore his clothes in anger and shouted to the other religious leaders, “We do not need any more witnesses! You have heard him say that he is the Son of God. What is your **judgment**?”

- **50:14** But God will **judge** everyone who does not believe in Jesus. He will throw them into hell, where they will weep and grind their teeth in anguish forever.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0148, H0430, H1777, H1778, H1779, H1780, H1781, H1782, H2940, H4055, H4941, H6414, H6415, H6416, H6417, H6419, H6485, H8196, H8199, H8201, G01440, G03500, G09680, G11060, G12520, G13410, G13450, G13480, G13490, G29170, G29190, G29200, G29220, G29230, G42320

(Go back to: [Judges 15 General Notes](#))

law, law of Moses, law of Yahweh, law of God

Definition:

Most simply, the term “law” refers to a rule or instruction that should be followed. In the Bible, the term “law” is often used generally to refer to anything and everything God wants his people to obey and do. The specific term “law of Moses” refers to the commandments and instructions that God gave Moses for the Israelites to obey.

- Depending on the context, the “law” can refer to:
 - the Ten Commandments that God wrote on stone tablets for the Israelites
 - all the laws given to Moses
 - the first five books of the Old Testament
 - the entire Old Testament (also referred to as “scriptures” in the New Testament).
 - all of God’s instructions and will
- The phrase “the Law and the Prophets” is used in the New Testament to refer to the Hebrew scriptures (or “Old Testament”)

Translation Suggestions:

- These terms could be translated using the plural, “laws,” since they refer to many instructions.
- The term “law of Moses” could be translated as “the laws that God told Moses to give to the Israelites.”
- Depending on the context, “the law of Moses” could also be translated as “the law that God told to Moses” or “God’s laws that Moses wrote down” or “the laws that God told Moses to give to the Israelites.”
- Ways to translate “the law” or “law of God” or “God’s laws” could include “laws from God” or “God’s commands” or “laws that God gave” or “everything that God commands” or “all of God’s instructions.”
- The phrase “law of Yahweh” could also be translated as “Yahweh’s laws” or “laws that Yahweh said to obey” or “laws from Yahweh” or “things Yahweh commanded.”

(See also: instruct, Moses, Ten Commandments, lawful, Yahweh)

Bible References:

- Acts 15:6
- Daniel 9:13
- Exodus 28:42-43
- Ezra 7:25-26
- Galatians 2:15
- Luke 24:44
- Matthew 5:18
- Nehemiah 10:29
- Romans 3:20

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **13:7** God also gave many other **laws** and rules to follow. If the people obeyed these **laws**, God promised that he would bless and protect them. If they disobeyed them, God would punish them.
- **13:9** Anyone who disobeyed **God’s law** could bring an animal to the altar in front of the Tent of Meeting as a sacrifice to God.
- **15:13** Then Joshua reminded the people of their obligation to obey the covenant that God had made with the Israelites at Sinai. The people promised to remain faithful to God and follow **his laws**.
- **16:1** After Joshua died, the Israelites disobeyed God and did not drive out the rest of the Canaanites or obey **God’s laws**.

- **21:5** In the New Covenant, God would write **his law** on the people's hearts, the people would know God personally, they would be his people, and God would forgive their sins.
- **27:1** Jesus answered, "What is written in **God's law**?"
- **28:1** Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me 'good?' There is only one who is good, and that is God. But if you want to have eternal life, obey **God's laws**."

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0430, H1881, H1882, H2706, H2710, H3068, H4687, H4872, H4941, H8451, G23160, G35510, G35650

(Go back to: [Judges 17 General Notes](#))

oppress, oppressed, oppression, oppressor, dominate

Definition:

The terms “oppress” and “oppression” refer to treating people harshly. An “oppressor” is a person who oppresses people.

- The term “oppression” especially refers to a situation where people of greater strength mistreat or enslave people who are under their power or rule.
- The term “oppressed” describes the people who are being harshly treated.
- Often enemy nations and their rulers were oppressors to the people of Israel.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, “oppress” could be translated as “severely mistreat” or “cause to be heavily burdened” or “put under miserable bondage” or “rule harshly.”
- Ways to translate “oppression” could include “heavy suppression and bondage” or “burdensome control.”
- The phrase “the oppressed” could be translated as “oppressed people” or “people in terrible bondage” or “those who are treated harshly.”
- The term “oppressor” could be translated as “person who oppresses” or “nation who controls and rules harshly” or “persecutor.”

(See also: bind, enslave, persecute)

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 10:17-19
- Deuteronomy 26:7
- Ecclesiastes 4:1
- Job 10:3
- Judges 2:18-19
- Nehemiah 5:14-15
- Psalms 119:134

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1790, H1792, H2541, H2555, H3238, H3905, H3906, H4642, H5065, H6031, H6125, H6184, H6206, H6216, H6217, H6231, H6233, H6234, H6693, H7429, H7533, H7701, G26160, G26690

(Go back to: [Judges 6 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess

Definition:

A “prophet” is a man who speaks God’s messages to people. A woman who does this is called a “prophetess.”

- Often prophets warned people to turn away from their sins and obey God.
- A “prophecy” is the message that the prophet speaks. To “prophesy” means to speak God’s messages.
- Often the message of a prophecy was about something that would happen in the future.
- Many prophecies in the Old Testament have already been fulfilled.
- In the Bible the collection of books written by prophets are sometimes referred to as “the prophets.”
- For example the phrase, “the law and the prophets” is a way of referring to all the Hebrew scriptures, which are also known as the “Old Testament.”
- An older term for a prophet was “seer” or “someone who sees.”
- Sometimes the term “seer” refers to a false prophet or to someone who practices divination.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “prophet” could be translated as “God’s spokesman” or “man who speaks for God” or “man who speaks God’s messages.”
- A “seer” could be translated as “person who sees visions” or “man who sees the future from God.”
- The term “prophetess” could be translated as “spokeswoman for God” or “woman who speaks for God” or “woman who speaks God’s messages.”
- Ways to translate “prophecy” could include, “message from God” or “prophet message.”
- The term “prophesy” could be translated as “speak words from God” or “tell God’s message.”
- The figurative expression, “law and the prophets” could also be translated as “the books of the law and of the prophets” or “everything written about God and his people, including God’s laws and what his prophets preached.” (See: [synecdoche](#))
- When referring to a prophet (or seer) of a false god, it may be necessary to translate this as “false prophet (seer)” or “prophet (seer) of a false god” or “prophet of Baal,” for example.

(See also: Baal, divination, [false god](#), false prophet, fulfill, [law](#), vision)

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16
- Acts 3:25
- John 1:43-45
- Malachi 4:4-6
- Matthew 1:23
- Matthew 2:18
- Matthew 5:17
- Psalm 51:1

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **12:12** When the Israelites saw that the Egyptians were dead, they trusted in God and believed that Moses was a **prophet** of God.
- **17:13** God was very angry about what David had done, so he sent the **prophet** Nathan to tell David how evil his sin was.
- **19:1** Throughout the history of the Israelites, God sent them **prophets**. The **prophets** heard messages from God and then told the people God’s messages.

- **19:6** All the people of the entire kingdom of Israel, including the 450 **prophets** of Baal, came to Mount Carmel.
- **19:17** Most of the time, the people did not obey God. They often mistreated the **prophets** and sometimes even killed them.
- **21:9** The **prophet** Isaiah **prophesied** that the Messiah would be born from a virgin.
- **43:5** "This fulfills the **prophecy** made by the **prophet** Joel in which God said, 'In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit.'"
- **43:7** "This fulfills the **prophecy** which says, 'You will not let your Holy One rot in the grave.'"
- **48:12** Moses was a great **prophet** who proclaimed the word of God. But Jesus is the greatest **prophet** of all. He is the Word of God.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2372, H2374, H4853, H5012, H5013, H5016, H5017, H5029, H5030, H5031, H5197, G24950, G43940, G43950, G43960, G43970, G43980, G55780

(Go back to: [Judges 13 General Notes](#))

righteous, righteousness, unrighteous, unrighteousness, upright, uprightness

Definition:

The term “righteousness” refers to God’s absolute goodness, justice, faithfulness, and love. Having these qualities makes God “righteous.” Because God is righteous, he must condemn sin.

- These terms are also often used to describe a person who obeys God and is morally good. However, because all people have sinned, no one except God is completely righteous.
- Examples of people the Bible who were called “righteous” include Noah, Job, Abraham, Zachariah, and Elisabeth.
- When people trust in Jesus to save them, God cleanses them from their sins and declares them to be righteous because of Jesus’ righteousness.

The term “unrighteous” means to be sinful and morally corrupt. “Unrighteousness” refers to sin or the condition of being sinful.

- These terms especially refer to living in a way that disobeys God’s teachings and commands.
- Unrighteous people are immoral in their thoughts and actions.
- Sometimes “the unrighteous” refers specifically to people who do not believe in Jesus.

The terms “upright” and “uprightness” refer to acting in a way that follows God’s laws.

- The meaning of these words includes the idea of standing up straight and looking directly ahead.
- A person who is “upright” is someone who obeys God’s rules and does not do things that are against his will.
- Terms such as “integrity” and “righteous” have similar meanings and are sometimes used in parallelism constructions, such as “integrity and uprightness.” (See: [parallelism](#))

Translation Suggestions:

- When it describes God, the term “righteous” could be translated as “perfectly good and just” or “always acting rightly.”
- God’s “righteousness” could also be translated as “perfect faithfulness and goodness.”
- When it describes people who are obedient to God, the term “righteous” could also be translated as “morally good” or “just” or “living a God-pleasing life.”
- The phrase “the righteous” could also be translated as “righteous people” or “God-fearing people.”
- Depending on the context, “righteousness” could also be translated with a word or phrase that means “goodness” or “being perfect before God” or “acting in a right way by obeying God” or “doing perfectly good.”
- The term “unrighteous” could simply be translated as “not righteous.”
- Depending on the context, other ways to translate this could include “wicked” or “immoral” or “people who rebel against God” or “sinful.”
- The phrase “the unrighteous” could be translated as “unrighteous people.”
- The term “unrighteousness” could be translated as “sin” or “evil thoughts and actions” or “wickedness.”
- If possible, it is best to translate this in a way that shows its relationship to “righteous, righteousness.”
- Ways to translate “upright” could include “acting rightly” or “one who acts rightly” or “following God’s laws” or “obedient to God” or “behaving in a way that is right.”
- The term “uprightness” could be translated as “moral purity” or “good moral conduct” or “rightness.”
- The phrase “the upright” could be translated as “people who are upright” or “upright people.”

(See also: [evil](#), [faithful](#), good, holy, integrity, just, law, [law](#), obey, pure, [righteous](#), [sin](#), unlawful)

Bible References:

- Deuteronomy 19:16
- Job 1:8
- Psalms 37:30
- Psalms 49:14
- Psalms 107:42
- Ecclesiastes 12:10-11
- Isaiah 48:1-2
- Ezekiel 33:13
- Malachi 2:6
- Matthew 6:1
- Acts 3:13-14
- Romans 1:29-31
- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- Galatians 3:7
- Colossians 3:25
- 2 Thessalonians 2:10
- 2 Timothy 3:16
- 1 Peter 3:18-20
- 1 John 1:9
- 1 John 5:16-17

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:2** But Noah found favor with God. He was a **righteous** man, living among wicked people.
- **4:8** God declared that Abram was **righteous** because he believed in God's promise.
- **17:2** David was a humble and **righteous** man who trusted and obeyed God.
- **23:1** Joseph, the man Mary was engaged to, was a **righteous** man.
- **50:10** Then the **righteous** ones will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God their Father.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H1368, H2555, H3072, H3474, H3476, H3477, H3483, H4334, H4339, H4749, H5228, H5229, H5324, H5765, H5766, H5767, H5977, H6662, H6663, H6664, H6665, H6666, H6968, H8535, H8537, H8549, H8552, G00930, G00940, G04580, G13410, G13420, G13430, G13440, G13450, G13460, G21180, G37160, G37170

(Go back to: [Judges 21 General Notes](#))

sin, sinful, sinner, sinning

Definition:

The term “sin” refers to actions, thoughts, and words that are against God’s will and laws. Sin can also refer to not doing something that God wants us to do.

- Sin includes anything we do that does not obey or please God, even things that other people don’t know about.
- Thoughts and actions that disobey God’s will are called “sinful.”
- Because Adam sinned, all human beings are born with a “sinful nature,” a nature that controls them and causes them to sin.
- A “sinner” is someone who sins, so every human being is a sinner.
- Sometimes the word “sinners” was used by religious people like the Pharisees to refer to people who didn’t keep the law as well as the Pharisees thought they should.
- The term “sinner” was also used for people who were considered to be worse sinners than other people. For example, this label was given to tax collectors and prostitutes.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “sin” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “disobedience to God” or “going against God’s will” or “evil behavior and thoughts” or “wrongdoing.”
- To “sin” could also be translated as to “disobey God” or to “do wrong.”
- Depending on the context “sinful” could be translated as “full of wrongdoing” or “wicked” or “immoral” or “evil” or “rebellious against God.”
- Depending on the context the term “sinner” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “person who sins” or “person who does wrong things” or “person who disobeys God” or “person who disobeys the law.”
- The term “sinners” could be translated by a word or phrase that means “very sinful people” or “people considered to be very sinful” or “immoral people.”
- Ways to translate “tax collectors and sinners” could include “people who collect money for the government, and other very sinful people” or “very sinful people, including (even) tax collectors.”
- Make sure the translation of this term can include sinful behavior and thoughts, even those that other people don’t see or know about.
- The term “sin” should be general, and different from the terms for “wickedness” and “evil.”

(See also: disobey, [evil](#), flesh, tax collector)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 9:1-3
- 1 John 1:10
- 1 John 2:2
- 2 Samuel 7:12-14
- Acts 3:19
- Daniel 9:24
- Genesis 4:7
- Hebrews 12:2
- Isaiah 53:11
- Jeremiah 18:23
- Leviticus 4:14
- Luke 15:18
- Matthew 12:31

- Romans 6:23
- Romans 8:4

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:15** God said, "I promise I will never again curse the ground because of the evil things people do, or destroy the world by causing a flood, even though people are **sinful** from the time they are children."
- **13:12** God was very angry with them because of their **sin** and planned to destroy them.
- **20:1** The kingdoms of Israel and Judah both **sinned** against God. They broke the covenant that God made with them at Sinai.
- **21:13** The prophets also said that the Messiah would be perfect, having no **sin**. He would die to receive the punishment for other people's **sin**.
- **35:1** One day, Jesus was teaching many tax collectors and other **sinner**s who had gathered to hear him.
- **38:5** Then Jesus took a cup and said, "Drink this. It is my blood of the New Covenant that is poured out for the forgiveness of **sins**."
- **43:11** Peter answered them, "Every one of you should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that God will forgive your **sins**."
- **48:8** We all deserve to die for our **sins**!
- **49:17** Even though you are a Christian, you will still be tempted to **sin**. But God is faithful and says that if you confess your **sins**, he will forgive you. He will give you strength to fight against **sin**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0817, H0819, H2398, H2399, H2400, H2401, H2402, H2403, H2408, H2409, H5771, H6588, H7683, H7686, G02640, G02650, G02660, G02680, G03610, G37810, G39000, G42580

(Go back to: [Judges 3 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

test, tested, testing, testing in the fire

Definition:

The term “test” refers to a difficult or painful experience that reveals a person’s strengths and weaknesses.

- God tests people, but he does not tempt them to sin. Satan, however, tempts people to sin.
- God sometimes uses tests to expose people’s sin. A test helps a person to turn away from sin and to draw closer to God.
- Gold and other metals are tested with fire to find out how pure and strong they are. This is a picture of how God uses painful circumstances to test his people.
- To “put to the test” can mean, “challenge something or someone to prove its value.”
- In the context of putting God to the test, it means to try to make him do a miracle for us, taking advantage of his mercy.
- Jesus told Satan that it is wrong to put God to the test. He is the almighty, holy God who is above everything and everyone.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term to “test” could also be translated as, to “challenge” or to “cause to experience difficulties” or to “prove.”
- Ways to translate “a test” could be, “a challenge” or “a difficult experience.”
- To “put to the test” could be translated as to “test” or to “set up a challenge” or to “force to prove oneself.”
- In the context of testing God, this could be translated as “trying to force God to prove his love.”
- In some contexts, when God is not the subject, the term “test” can mean “tempt.”

(See also: tempt)

Bible References:

- 1 John 4:1
- 1 Thessalonians 5:21
- Acts 15:10
- Genesis 22:1
- Isaiah 7:13
- James 1:12
- Lamentations 3:40-43
- Malachi 3:10
- Philippians 1:10
- Psalm 26:2

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H5254, H5713, H5715, H5749, H6030, H8584, G12420, G12630, G13030, G13820, G19570, G31400, G31410, G31420, G31430, G39840, G43030, G44510, G48280, G60200

(Go back to: [Judges 2 General Notes](#))

VOW

Definition:

A “vow” is a solemn promise or oath that a person makes to God.

- If a person in ancient Israel made a vow to God, that person was obligated to fulfill the vow. The ancient Israelites believed that God might punish a person who did not fulfill a vow that he made.
- In ancient Israel, sometimes a person would ask God to protect him or provide for him in exchange for making the vow. However, the ancient Israelites did not believe that God was obligated to fulfill these requests.
- Depending on the context, the term “vow” can be translated as “solemn promise” or “solemn oath” or “promise made to God.”

(See also: promise, oath)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 7:27-28
- Acts 21:23
- Genesis 28:21
- Genesis 31:12-13
- Jonah 1:14-16
- Jonah 2:9-10
- Proverbs 7:14

Word Data:

- Strong's: H5087, H5088, G21710

(Go back to: [Judges 13 General Notes](#))

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