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unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Isaiah

Introduction to Isaiah

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of the Book of Isaiah

Yahweh judges his people but gives them hope (chapters 1–12)

Isaiah prophesies against many nations (13–23)

Universal judgment and promise of redemption (24–27)

The people of Yahweh judged (28–31)

The righteous kingdom (32–33)

The nations judged; the ransomed will be restored (34–35)

Hezekiah and Sennacherib (36–39)

Yahweh comforts his people and will restore them (40–45)

Prophecies against Babylon (46–48)

The servant of Yahweh (49–55)

Ethics of Yahweh's kingdom (56–59)

Restored Jerusalem (60–66)

What is the Book of Isaiah about?

The first part of the Book of Isaiah (chapters 1–39) contains many different prophecies. Some of Isaiah's prophecies are about how God would send an army to destroy the southern kingdom of Judah. Some of the prophecies are about how God would punish other nations of the world. The end of the first part (chapters 36–39) tells how Isaiah helped King Hezekiah when the Assyrians were about to attack Jerusalem.

The second part of the Book of Isaiah (chapters 40–66) has prophecies about how God will comfort and restore his people. He will do this through his chosen servant. By the suffering of this servant, God will forgive his people (chapter 53). This servant will also cause Gentiles to worship Yahweh. The Book of Isaiah ends with a prophecy about God creating a new heavens and earth.

How should the title of this book be translated?

Translators can use the traditional title, "The Book of Isaiah" or just "Isaiah." Or they may call it "The Book about Isaiah" or "The Sayings of Isaiah." (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

When was the Book of Isaiah written?

Isaiah prophesied around 740–700 B.C., when the Assyrian Empire was becoming more powerful. Isaiah spoke the prophecies from God to the people of Judah during the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The story of Isaiah helping King Hezekiah (chapters 36–39) is also found in 2 Kings 19–20.

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

What did Isaiah prophesy about the future Messiah of Israel?

Jews and Christians have interpreted many passages in Isaiah to be about the Messiah. In 9:1–7, Isaiah described a child being born who would rule over David's kingdom. In chapter 11, Isaiah described a descendant of David who would have God's spirit upon him. Several prophecies in chapters 40–66 are about "the servant." This servant will

comfort the people, rule righteously, and suffer so that God will forgive the people for sinning against him. The New Testament writers interpret these prophecies to be about Jesus Christ.

What did Isaiah mean by the “last days”?

Isaiah prophesied of the “last days” (2:2) as some later or final period of time. The New Testament writers understood the “last days” to be the church age (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2). The Book of Isaiah was one of the first books to include prophecies about the last days. Isaiah explained that in the last days there would be a future kingdom of Israel. Jerusalem would be its main city. And people from all over the world will go there to learn about Yahweh and worship him.

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

What is the meaning of the term “Israel”?

The name “Israel” is used in many different ways in the Bible. Jacob was the son of Isaac. God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. The descendants of Jacob became a nation also called Israel. Eventually, the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom was named Israel. The southern kingdom was named Judah. (See: [Israel, Israelites](#))

What are some characteristics of prophetic literature in the Book of Isaiah?

Most of Isaiah’s prophecies are in poetic form. Many prophets in Israel used poetry when they spoke important messages that were meant to be remembered.

Sometimes Isaiah’s messages are hard to understand. He assumed his original hearers would know what he was talking about. But readers today do not always understand what he meant. However, Isaiah’s basic messages are still clear to us today. These messages are about how God’s people sinned against him, how he would punish them, and how he would eventually comfort and restore them.

Isaiah also speaks about the Servant of Yahweh, in four different poems that are today called the “Four Servant Songs.” Christians understand these very clearly as prophecies about Jesus Christ, the Messiah. These “songs” are in Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12. (See: [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#) and [mercy](#), [merciful](#) and [Christ, Messiah](#))

Isaiah 1

Isaiah 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 1:2-31, which is a vision Isaiah receives. These are the words of Yahweh.

Special concepts in this chapter

Woe

The prophecy of this chapter serves as a warning to the people of the kingdom of Judah. If they do not change their evil ways, Yahweh will punish them. (See: [woe](#) and [prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess](#) and [evil, wicked, unpleasant](#))

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphors

There are many vivid metaphors used to describe Judah's sin. Their sin is described as a sickness that spreads. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [sin, sinful, sinner, sinning](#))

Rhetorical Questions

Yahweh uses several rhetorical questions in this chapter. The purpose of these questions is to convince the people of Judah of their sin. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Isaiah 1:1

The vision of Isaiah ... that he saw

Alternate translation: "This is the vision of Isaiah ... that Yahweh showed him" or "This is what God showed Isaiah"

Amoz

Amoz was the father of Isaiah. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Judah and Jerusalem

"Judah" refers to the southern kingdom of Israel. "Jerusalem" was its most important city. The names of the places represent the people who live in them. Alternate translation: "those living in Judah and Jerusalem" or "the people of Judah and Jerusalem" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, that he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, {and} Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

UST

¹ The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, that Yahweh showed him about Judah and Jerusalem during the years of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah

This is an idiom and refers to the time when each king reigned. They reigned one after the other, not all at the same time. Alternate translation: "when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings of Judah" (See: [Idiom](#))

Isaiah 1:2

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Hear, heavens, and give ear, earth

Although these prophecies were meant for the people of Jerusalem and Judah to hear, Isaiah knows they will not listen. This could mean: (1) he speaks in apostrophe, as though the “heavens” and “earth” would be able to listen to what Yahweh said, or (2) the words “heavens” and “earth” are metonyms and a merism for all living beings everywhere. Alternate translation: “you who live in the heavens ... you who live on the earth” (See: [Apostrophe](#) and [Merism](#))

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.

I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me

Words that Yahweh spoke and which Isaiah is speaking to the Israelites for Yahweh.

I have nourished and brought up children

Yahweh speaks as if his words were food and as if the Israelites were his children. Alternate translation: “I have taken care of the people living in Judah like they were my children” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² Hear, heavens, and give ear, earth; for Yahweh has spoken: “Children I have raised and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

UST

² Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth, because this is what Yahweh said: “I have raised people since they were born, but they have rebelled against me.

Isaiah 1:3

The ox knows ... does not understand

Words that Yahweh spoke and which Isaiah is speaking to the Israelites for Yahweh.

the donkey his master's feeding trough

You can make clear the understood information. Alternate translation: "the donkey knows his master's feeding trough" or "the donkey knows where his master gives him food" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

but Israel does not know, Israel does not understand

This probably means "but the people of Israel do not know me, they do not understand that I am the one who cares for them."

Israel

This is a metonym for the people of Israel. Judah is part of what had been the nation of Israel. Alternate translation: "the people of Israel" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³ The ox knows his owner, and the donkey the feeding trough of his master; {but} Israel does not know, my people does not understand."

UST

³ Oxen know their owners, and donkeys know who feeds them, but Israel does not know; Israel does not understand."

Isaiah 1:4

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Nation, sinners

This could mean: (1) Isaiah is saying two different things about them. Alternate translation: "Nation of Israel, you sinners" or (2) he is saying only one thing about them. Alternate translation: "Nation of sinners"

a people weighed down with iniquity

Something very heavy that a person might carry is a metaphor for their many sins. Alternate translation: "their sin is like a heavy bag on their shoulders that makes it hard for them to walk" (See: [Metaphor](#))

offspring of evildoers

The word "offspring" is a metaphor for people who do what others have done. Alternate translation: "people who do the same evil they see others doing" (See: [Metaphor](#))

act corruptly

do evil deeds

They have abandoned Yahweh

Alternate translation: "They have gone away from Yahweh"

have despised

Alternate translation: "have refused to obey" or "have refused to respect"

Israel

Judah is part of what had been the nation of Israel.

they have estranged themselves from him

Though at one time they were friends, they now treat him as though they do not know him.

ULT

⁴ Woe! Sinful nation, people heavy with iniquity, seed of evildoers, sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned Yahweh, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they have estranged themselves from him.

UST

⁴ Terrible things will happen to this sinful nation, this people group weighted down by their sin, these children of people who do evil things, these sons who are unjust. They have left Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. They have turned away from him.

Isaiah 1:5

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Why are you still being beaten? Why do you rebel more and more?

Isaiah uses these questions to scold the people of Judah. The questions can be translated as statements. This can also be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "You keep doing things that Yahweh has to punish you for. You continue to rebel against him." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

you

Here the word "you" refers to the people who live in Judah and so is plural. (See: [Forms of You](#))

The whole head is sick, the whole heart is weak

This metaphor compares the nation of Israel to a person who has been beaten. Alternate translation: "You are like someone whose head is wounded and whose heart is weak" or "You are like someone whose whole mind and heart are sick" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Why should you still be beaten, should you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, the whole heart is weak.

UST

⁵ Why do you do things for which Yahweh should punish you? Why do you continue to rebel against him? You are like someone whose whole mind and heart are sick.

Isaiah 1:6

there is no part unharmed

This can be stated positively. It can also be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “every part of you has been harmed” or “someone has harmed every part of you” (See: [Double Negatives](#))

they have not been closed, cleansed, bandaged, nor treated with oil

This metaphor compares the punishment God has given Israel to physical wounds. It can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “no one has closed, cleansed, bandaged, or treated them with oil” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁶ From the sole of the foot to the head {there is} no health in it; {but} bruises, and sores, and fresh wounds; they have not been pressed out, and they have not been bandaged, and they have not been softened with oil.

UST

⁶ From the bottom of the foot to the top of the head, nothing is healthy. There are open wounds, cuts, and sores that have not been cleaned or bandaged, and no one has put oil on them to heal them.

Isaiah 1:7

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Your country is ruined

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “They have ruined your country” or “Your enemies have ruined your country” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

your cities are burned

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “they have burned your cities” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

your fields—in your presence, strangers are destroying them

Alternate translation: “people who are not from your own country steal the crops from your fields while you watch”

abandoned devastation

“empty and devastated.” This abstract noun phrase can be expressed as verbal phrases. Alternate translation: “they have destroyed the land and no one lives there” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

overthrown by strangers

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “strangers have overthrown your country” or “a foreign army has completely conquered it” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁷ Your land {is} a desolation; your cities {are} burned with fire; your field—in front of you strangers are devouring it; a desolation as the overthrowing of strangers.

UST

⁷ Enemies have ruined your country; they have burned your towns, and there is no one left. Foreigners plunder the crops in your fields while you watch; they destroy everything that they see.

Isaiah 1:8

The daughter of Zion is left

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I have left the daughter of Zion" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

The daughter of Zion

The "daughter" of a city means the people of the city. Alternate translation: "The people of Zion" or "The people who live in Zion" (See: [Idiom](#))

is left like a hut in a vineyard, like a shed in a garden of cucumbers

This could mean: (1) "has become as small as a hut in a vineyard or a shed in a garden of cucumbers" or (2) "is left the way a farmer leaves a hut in a vineyard or a shed in a garden of cucumbers when he is finished with them" (See: [Simile](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

like ... cucumbers, like a besieged city

Another possible meaning is "like ... cucumbers. She is a besieged city"

ULT

⁸ And Daughter Zion is left like a hut in a vineyard, like a shed in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.

UST

⁸ The city of Jerusalem has become as small as a shepherd's hut. It is like a shelter in a vineyard; it is like a watchman's hut in a field of melons. It is a city surrounded by its enemies who are waiting to attack it.

Isaiah 1:9

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

If Yahweh

This describes something that could have happened in the past but did not. (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

a small remnant

Alternate translation: "a few survivors"

us ... we

Here these words refer to Isaiah and includes all the people of Judah and Jerusalem. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

we would have been like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah

How Judah would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "God would have destroyed us, like he destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

⁹ If Yahweh of hosts had not left for us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.

UST

⁹ If Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, had not allowed a few of his people to survive, we would have all been destroyed, like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

Isaiah 1:10

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

you rulers of Sodom ... you people of Gomorrah

Isaiah is comparing the people of Judah to Sodom and Gomorrah to emphasize how sinful they have become. Alternate translation: “you rulers who are as sinful as the people of Sodom ... you people who are as wicked as those who lived in Gomorrah” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

10 Hear the word of Yahweh, rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, people of Gomorrah:

UST

10 Listen to what Yahweh has to say to you, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

Isaiah 1:11

What is the multitude of your sacrifices to me?

God is using a question to scold the people. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement.
Alternate translation: "Your many sacrifices mean nothing to me!"
(See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹¹ "What is the multitude of your sacrifices to me?" says Yahweh. "I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fatted beasts; and in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats I do not delight.

UST

¹¹ "What do your many sacrifices mean to me?" says Yahweh; "I do not want any more burnt offerings of rams, or the fat of bulls. The blood of bulls, lambs, or goats does not make me happy.

Isaiah 1:12

General Information:

Isaiah speaks Yahweh's words to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

who has required this of you, to trample my courts?

The word “trample” means to step on and crush with one's feet. God is using a question to scold the people who live in Judah. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “no one told you to stomp around in my courtyards!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹² When you come to appear before me, who has required this of you, to trample my courts?

UST

¹² When you come to my temple to worship me, who has told you to tramp around in my courtyard while you perform all those rituals?

Isaiah 1:13

Bring no more meaningless offerings

Alternate translation: "Do not bring me any more of your worthless gifts"

incense is an abomination to me

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **abomination**, you could express the same idea with the verb "hate." Alternate translation: "I hate the incense the priests burn" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

I cannot tolerate these wicked assemblies

This could mean: (1) "I cannot allow you to gather together because of the wicked things you do" or (2) "I cannot allow myself to watch you gather together because of the wicked things you do."

ULT

13 Do not continue to bring an offering of worthlessness; incense is an abomination to me; new moon and Sabbath and calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity with a festive assembly.

UST

13 Stop bringing to me those offerings, because they are useless to me; I am disgusted with the incense that the priests burn! And your feasts to celebrate the new moon each month and your Sabbath days and your other festivals— I hate them because of the wicked things that you do!

Isaiah 1:14

General Information:

Isaiah speaks Yahweh's words to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

your new moons and your appointed feasts

The words "new moons" are a metonym for the celebrations of the new moon. They are also a synecdoche for all regular celebrations. Alternate translation: "your celebrations of the new moon and your other regular feasts" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

new moons

A new moon is when the moon first shows light after having been dark.

they are a burden to me; I am tired of enduring them

This compares how God feels about the people's celebrations to carrying a heavy object. Alternate translation: "they are a heavy load that I am tired of carrying" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 My soul hates your new moons and your appointed feasts; they are a burden to me; I have become weary with carrying.

UST

14 I hate all your celebrations of the new moon and the other festivals that you celebrate. They are like a heavy burden that I am tired of carrying.

Isaiah 1:15

I hide my eyes from you

This idiom is a way of saying “I will not look at you” or “I will not pay attention to you” (See: [Idiom](#))

your hands are full of blood

This is the reason that God will not listen to their prayers. The blood likely refers to violence that they have done against people. Alternate translation: “because it is like your hands are covered with the blood of those you have harmed” or “because you are guilty of violence” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

15 So when you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you multiply prayer, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

UST

15 So when you lift up your hands to pray to me, I will not look at you. Even if you pray to me often, I will not listen to you, because it is as though your hands are covered with the blood of people whom you have killed.

Isaiah 1:16

General Information:

Isaiah speaks Yahweh's words to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Wash, cleanse yourselves

Here God compares a person who stops sinning with one who washes his body. Alternate translation: "Repent and wash the sin from your heart like you wash the dirt from your body" (See: [Metaphor](#))

remove the evil of your deeds from my sight

God was not telling them to do their evil deeds somewhere else, but to stop doing them. Alternate translation: "stop doing the evil deeds that I see you doing" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 Wash, cleanse yourselves; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; stop doing evil;

UST

16 Wash your hearts and become clean! Get rid of your evil behavior! Stop doing things that are wrong!

Isaiah 1:17

make straight the oppression

God speaks of people who oppress others as if they had made crooked something that should be straight, and he calls on them to make that object straight again. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **oppression**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “make sure that those helpless people you have harmed no longer suffer from the bad things you have done to them” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

give justice to the fatherless

Alternate translation: “be fair to the children who do not have fathers”

defend the widow

Alternate translation: “protect the women whose husbands have died”

ULT

17 learn to do good; seek justice, correct the oppressor, ^[1] give justice to the fatherless, contend for the widow.”

UST

17 Learn to do deeds that are good and try to cause people to do what is just. Stop people from mistreating others, and defend orphans and widows when people take them to court.”

Isaiah 1:18

Come now, and let

Yahweh graciously and lovingly invites the people to listen to what he is about to say. "Please listen to me. Let" or "Pay attention; I want to help you. Let"

let us reason together

"let us think about this together" or "we need to discuss this" or "what are we going to do?" Yahweh invites the people to discuss the future. Here the word "us" refers to Yahweh and includes the people of Judah. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

though your sins are like scarlet, they will be white like snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool

Isaiah is speaking of the people as if they were wearing clothes that were supposed to be white wool and of their sins as if they were red stains on the clothes. If Yahweh forgives their sins, it will be as if their clothes become white again. (See: [Metaphor](#))

like scarlet

Scarlet is a bright red color. Alternate translation: "bright red" (See: [Simile](#))

white like snow

White is often a symbol for holiness or purity. "Snow" refers to something like frozen rain that is very white. Since this simply describes something as very white, you could replace it with something else that is white: "white as a seashell" or "white as a dove." This means that their sins will be forgiven. (See: [Simile](#))

red like crimson

Crimson is a dark red color. Alternate translation: "dark red" (See: [Simile](#))

like wool

Wool is the hair of a sheep or goat. How they will be like wool can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "white like wool" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

18 "Come now, and let us argue together," says Yahweh; "though your sins are like scarlet, they will be white like snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool."

UST

18 Yahweh says, "You need to think about what you do. Even though your sins are like scarlet red, they will be as white as snow; though your sins are like crimson red, they will be as white as sheeps' wool."

Isaiah 1:19

If you are willing and obedient

Here, “willing” and “obedient” are used together to express one idea.
Alternate translation: “If you willingly obey” (See: [Hendiadys](#))

you will eat the good of the land

Alternate translation: “the land will produce good food for you to eat”

ULT

¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land,

UST

¹⁹ If you are willing to obey me, you will eat good food from the land.

Isaiah 1:20

but if you refuse and rebel

Alternate translation: “but if you refuse to listen and instead disobey me”

the sword will devour you

The word “sword” refers to Judah’s enemies. Also, the word “devour” compares Judah’s enemies coming to kill them to a wild animal that attacks and eats other animals. Alternate translation: “your enemies will kill you” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

the mouth of Yahweh has spoken it

The word “mouth” emphasizes that Yahweh has spoken and what he says will certainly happen. Alternate translation: “Yahweh has spoken” or “Yahweh has said that this will happen” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

20 but if you refuse and rebel, by the sword you will be devoured,” for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.

UST

20 But if you turn away from me and rebel against me, your enemies will slaughter you.” That will happen because Yahweh said it.

Isaiah 1:21

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

How the faithful city

This exclamation shows Isaiah's anger and sadness about the people of Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "See how the people of Jerusalem, who had been faithful to God" (See: [Metonymy](#))

has become a prostitute

Isaiah compared the people to a woman who is not loyal to her husband but who sleeps with other men for money. The people were no longer loyal to God but were worshiping false gods. Alternate translation: "acts like a prostitute" (See: [Metaphor](#))

but now she is full of murderers

The word "she" refers to Jerusalem and its people. Those who wrote the Bible often refer to cities as women. Alternate translation: "but now the people of Jerusalem are murderers" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

21 How the faithful city has become a prostitute! She who was full of justice—righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.

UST

21 At one time you people of Jerusalem faithfully worshiped only Yahweh, but now you have become like prostitutes who are not faithful to any husband. The people there always acted justly and righteously, but now your city is full of murderers.

Isaiah 1:22

Your silver has become impure, your wine mixed with water

Possible meanings are that Isaiah uses silver and wine as metaphors for: (1) the people of Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "You are like silver that is no longer pure, and like wine that is mixed with water" or (2) the good deeds that the people formerly did. Alternate translation: "You used to do good deeds, but now your bad deeds make your good deeds worthless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

silver ... impure

Someone needs to clean silver often or it will no longer shine brightly.

wine ... water

Wine with water in it has little taste and so is no better than water.

ULT

²² Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water.

UST

²² Your silver is no longer pure, and your wine has become mixed with water.

Isaiah 1:23

General Information:

Isaiah speaks Yahweh's words to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Your princes are rebels

Alternate translation: "Your leaders rebel against God"

companions of thieves

Alternate translation: "they are friends with people who steal from others"

bribes ... payoffs

People give "bribes" as gifts to dishonest rulers so the rulers will then act unjustly. Rulers receive "payoffs" as gifts from those who make profits from unjust laws that the ruler has passed.

runs after payoffs

A person eagerly desiring for someone to give him a bribe is spoken of as if the payoff were running away and the person were running after it. Alternate translation: "everyone desires for someone to pay money to them to make dishonest decisions" (See: [Metaphor](#))

They do not defend the fatherless

Alternate translation: "they do not protect those who do not have fathers"

nor does the widow's legal plea come before them

Alternate translation: "nor do they listen when widows go to them for help against those who break the law" or "and they do not help widows who go to them for help against those who break the law"

ULT

23 Your princes {are} rebels and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes and runs after payoffs. They do not defend the fatherless, and the legal plea of the widow does not come before them.

UST

23 Your leaders are rebels; they are friends of thieves. They all want to get money and make others to give them gifts in order to decide cases in court in their favor. They do not defend orphans in court, and they do not help widows to get what they should receive.

Isaiah 1:24

General Information:

Isaiah begins to speak Yahweh's words to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Therefore

Alternate translation: "For that reason"

this is the declaration of the Lord Yahweh of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Alternate translation: "this is what the Lord Yahweh of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, has declared" or "this is what I, Yahweh, the Mighty One of Israel, have declared" (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

I will take vengeance against my adversaries, and avenge myself against my enemies

Both of these phrases mean basically the same thing. The words "take vengeance against my adversaries" speak more of Yahweh doing whatever he needs to do to those who work against him so he can be happy. The words "avenge myself against my enemies" speak more of Yahweh justly punishing his enemies. Alternate translation: "I will punish those who opposed me" or "I will do what pleases me to those who work against me, and I will justly punish my enemies" (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

²⁴ Therefore this is the declaration of the Lord Yahweh of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: "Woe! I will take vengeance against my adversaries, and avenge myself against my enemies;

UST

²⁴ Therefore Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the mighty God of Israel, says, "I will get revenge against those who are against me, and avenge myself on my enemies.

Isaiah 1:25

I will turn my hand against you

Here “hand” refers to God’s power which he would use to punish his people. Alternate translation: “I will begin to use all my power against you” (See: [Metonymy](#))

refine away your dross as with lye

Here the process in which God removes his people’s sin is spoken of as if he were separating metal from the bad things mixed with it. The words “as with lye” adds another metaphor, because lye is used in soap, not in refining metal. Alternate translation: “and like fire removing the dirt from silver, I will remove all the evil from among you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

dross

This is the dirt and other things that people remove from metals so the metal will be pure.

ULT

²⁵ I will turn my hand against you, refine away your dross as with lye, and take away all your dross.

UST

²⁵ I will raise my fist to strike you, and I will punish you severely, as though you were silver and I needed to heat you very greatly to melt you and get rid of the impurities.

Isaiah 1:26

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

at the first ... at the beginning

These are two ways of speaking of the first part or beginning of Israel's history, when Israel first became a nation.

you will be called

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "people will call you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the city of righteousness, a faithful town

Here "city" and "town" refer to the people living in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "the city where the people are righteous and loyal to God" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁶ I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning; afterwards you will be called the city of righteousness, a faithful town."

UST

²⁶ After that happens, I will give you good judges like you had in the past. You will have wise counselors like you had long ago. Then people will call your city a city where people act righteously, a faithful city."

Isaiah 1:27

General Information:

Isaiah speaks Yahweh's words to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Zion will be redeemed by justice, and her repentant ones by righteousness

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. This could mean: (1) "Yahweh will redeem Zion because the people there do what is just, and he will redeem those who repent because they do what Yahweh says is right" or (2) "Yahweh will redeem Zion because he is just, and he will redeem those who repent because he is righteous" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

Zion

This is a metonym for the people who live on Mount Zion. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁷ Zion will be redeemed by justice, and her repentant ones by righteousness.

UST

²⁷ Because the people of Jerusalem will do what is fair, Yahweh will restore their city, and he will save those who repent because of their righteousness.

Isaiah 1:28

Rebels and sinners will be crushed together

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "God will destroy those who rebel and sin against him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

those who abandon Yahweh will be done away with

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "and Yahweh will completely do away with those who turn away from him" or "and Yahweh will kill all who reject him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁸ Rebels and sinners {will be} crushed together, and those who abandon Yahweh will come to an end.

UST

²⁸ But he will crush rebels and sinners, and those who forsake him will disappear.

Isaiah 1:29

General Information:

Isaiah speaks Yahweh's words to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

the sacred oak trees ... gardens

These phrases refer to places where the people of Judah worshiped idols.

you will be embarrassed by

Some versions read, "you will blush because of." A person blushes when his face turns hot and red, often because he feels that he has done something wrong.

ULT

29 "For they will be ashamed of the sacred oak trees that you desired, and you will be embarrassed by the gardens that you have chosen.

UST

29 "You will be ashamed because you worshiped idols under the oak trees that you thought were sacred, and you will be disgraced because you worshiped idols in the gardens that you loved so much.

Isaiah 1:30

**For you will be like an oak whose leaf fades,
and like a garden that has no water**

Water gives life to trees and gardens. The people have cut themselves off from Yahweh, who gives them life. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

³⁰ For you will be like an oak whose leaf fades, and like a garden that has no water.

UST

³⁰ You will be like a very large tree that has withered leaves, like a garden that has dried up because it has no water.

Isaiah 1:31

General Information:

Isaiah speaks Yahweh's words to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

The strong man

"The strong person" or "Whoever is powerful." This may refer to people who are important and who influence other people.

tinder

dry material that burns easily

his work like a spark

This compares the person's deeds or evil works to a spark that falls on tinder and sets it on fire. Alternate translation: "his work will be like a spark that starts a fire" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

31 The strong man will be like tinder, and his work like a spark; both of them will burn together, and there will be no one to quench {them}."

UST

31 Those among you who are very strong will become like dry wood, and the work they do will be like a spark. Both they and the evil things that they do will burn up, and no one will be able to put out the fire."

Isaiah 2

Isaiah 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 2:2-22.

Special concepts in this chapter

Latter days

This is probably a reference to the “last days.” This makes parts of this prophecy reference events near the end of this world. Most scholars expect these prophecies to be fulfilled by Jesus. (See: [last day](#), [latter days](#) and [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Idolatry

While the first prophecy of Isaiah concerned the lack of justice in Judah, this chapter focuses on the presence of idolatry in Judah. (See: [just](#), [justice](#), [unjust](#), [injustice](#), [justify](#), [justification](#))

Isaiah 2:1

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Judah and Jerusalem

“Judah” and “Jerusalem” are metonyms for the people who live there. Alternate translation: “those living in Judah and Jerusalem” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ The things that Isaiah son of Amoz perceived in a vision, concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

UST

¹ This is a message that Yahweh gave to Isaiah son of Amoz, in a vision about Judah and Jerusalem.

Isaiah 2:2

in the last days

Alternate translation: “in the future”

the mountain of Yahweh’s house will be established

This can be stated (1) as a description. Alternate translation: “The mountain of Yahweh’s house will stand” or (2) in active form. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will establish the mountain on which his temple is built” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

as the highest of the mountains

Isaiah speaks of importance as if it were physical height. Alternate translation: “the most important of the mountains” or “the most important place in the world” (See: [Metaphor](#))

it will be raised up above the hills

Isaiah speaks of honor in metaphor as if it were physical height. This can be stated (1) in active form. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will honor it more than any other hill” or (2) as a metonym for the people who worship there. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will honor the people who worship there more than he honors any other people” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#) and [Metonymy](#))

all the nations

Here “nations” is a metonym for the people of those nations. Alternate translation: “people from all the nations” (See: [Metonymy](#))

will flow to it

The people around the world going to the mountain of Yahweh is compared to how a river flows. This emphasizes that many people will come, not just a few people. Alternate translation: “will flow like a river to it” or “will go to it” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² It will be in the last days {that} the mountain of Yahweh’s house will be established as the highest of the mountains, and it will be raised up above the hills, and all the nations will flow to it.

UST

² In the future, the hill on which Yahweh’s temple is built will be the most important place on the earth. It will be as though it is the highest mountain, as though it has been raised up above all other hills, and people from all over the world will come there.

Isaiah 2:3

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Jacob, so he may teach ... and we may walk

Another possible meaning is "Jacob. He will teach ... and we will walk"

he may teach us some of his ways, and we may walk in his paths

The words "ways" and "paths" are metaphors for the way a person lives. If your language has only one word for the ground on which people walk, you may combine these phrases. Alternate translation: "he may teach us his will so that we may obey him" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

For out of Zion will go the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem

These phrases mean the same thing. Isaiah was emphasizing that all nations will understand that the truth is found in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "People in Zion will teach God's law, and people in Jerusalem will teach the word of Yahweh" (See: [Parallelism](#))

For out of Zion will go the law

"For the law will go out from Zion." Isaiah speaks as if the law were something like a river that moves without people doing anything. Alternate translation: "Those to whom they teach the law will go out from Zion" or "Yahweh will proclaim his law from Zion" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem

"the word of Yahweh will go out from Jerusalem." Isaiah speaks as if the word of Yahweh were something like a river that moves without people doing anything. You can make clear the understood information. Alternate translation: "Those to whom they teach the word of Yahweh will go out from Jerusalem" or "Yahweh will proclaim his word from Jerusalem" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

³ Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob, so he may teach us some of his ways, and we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion will go the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.

UST

³ People from many people groups will say to each other, "Come, let us go up to the hill, to the temple of Yahweh, to worship the God whom Jacob worshiped. There he will teach us what he desires us to know, in order that our behavior will please him." They will teach us in Jerusalem; we will learn there what Yahweh desires to tell us.

Isaiah 2:4

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

He will judge

Alternate translation: "Yahweh will judge"

will render decisions

Alternate translation: "will solve disputes"

they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks

The people of the nations will turn their weapons of war into tools for farming.

swords ... spears ... sword

These words are synecdoches for weapons of any kind. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

plowshares ... pruning hooks

These words are synecdoches for tools of any kind that people use in peaceful activity. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

they will hammer their swords into plowshares

"they will make their swords into tools for planting seeds." A plowshare is a blade that people use to dig into soil so they can plant seeds there.

their spears into pruning hooks

"they will hammer their spears into pruning hooks" or "they will make their spears into tools for caring for plants." A pruning hook is a knife that people use to cut unwanted branches off of plants.

nation will not lift up sword against nation

"no nation will lift up its sword against another nation." The sword is a metonym for war. Alternate translation: "one nation will not fight wars against another nation" (See: [Metonymy](#))

nor will they train for war

"nor will they even train to fight wars." The writer expects his reader to believe that those who fight wars train before they fight and that some who train do not fight.

ULT

⁴ He will judge between the nations and will render decisions for many peoples; they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any longer.

UST

⁴ Yahweh will listen to the disputes between nations, and he will settle their arguments. Then, instead of fighting against each other, they will hammer their swords into plow blades, and they will hammer their spears into pruning knives. The armies of the nations will no longer fight against each other, and they will not even train men to fight in battles.

Isaiah 2:5

General Information:

In 2:5 Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah, and in 2:6 he speaks to Yahweh. Both times he speaks in the form of a poem. (See:

[Parallelism](#))

House of Jacob

“You descendants of Jacob.” The word “house” is a metonym for the people who live in the house, the family. Here “Jacob” represents the nation of Judah, but it would be best to use “Jacob” here. (See:

[Metonymy](#))

come

a gentle encouragement to do what the speaker is about to tell the hearer to do

let us walk in the light of Yahweh

Isaiah speaks of people learning and then doing what Yahweh wants them to do as if they were walking at night with a lamp that Yahweh has provided so they can see the path. Alternate translation: “let us learn how Yahweh wants us to live and then live that way” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ House of Jacob, come, and let us walk in the light of Yahweh.

UST

⁵ You descendants of Jacob, let us behave in the way that we should because Yahweh is with us!

Isaiah 2:6

For you have abandoned your people

“For you have left your people” and do not care what happens to them. Here the word “you” refers to Yahweh and so is singular. (See: [Pronouns](#))

they are filled with customs from the east

Isaiah speaks as if the people were containers who were full of something from the east. Possible meanings are that he speaks of: (1) the deeds that the eastern peoples do. Alternate translation: “they do all the time the evil things the people who live in lands east of Israel do” or (2) people, specifically those who claim to speak to dead people, who have come from the east to do evil deeds. Alternate translation: “many diviners have come from the east and now live there” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

they practice divination

they try to tell the future by looking at things like animal parts and leaves

they shake hands with sons of foreigners

Clasping hands together is the symbol of friendship and peace. Alternate translation: “they make peace and work together with people who are not from Israel” (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

⁶ For you have abandoned your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with customs from the east and they practice divination like the Philistines, and they shake hands with sons of foreigners.

UST

⁶ Yahweh, you have abandoned us, your people who are descendants of Jacob, because everywhere your people practice the customs of people who live east of Israel. They also perform rituals to find out what will happen in the future, like the people in Philistia do. They make agreements with foreigners who do not know Yahweh.

Isaiah 2:7

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to Yahweh in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Their land is full of silver and gold ... their land also is full of horses

Isaiah speaks as if the land were a container in which someone had placed silver, horses, and idols. The word “land” is a metonym for the people themselves, and the words “is full of” is a metaphor for the people possessing these items. Alternate translation: “They possess much silver and gold ... they also possess many horses” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ Their land is full of silver and gold, and is there no limit to their wealth; their land also is full of horses, nor is there limit to their chariots.

UST

⁷ Israel is full of silver and gold; there are very many treasures here. The land is full of war horses and war chariots.

Isaiah 2:8

Their land also is full of idols

Isaiah speaks as if the land were a container in which someone had placed silver, horses, and idols. The word “land” is a metonym for the people themselves, and the words “is full of” is a metaphor for the people possessing these items. Alternate translation: “They also possess many idols” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

the craftsmanship of their own hands, things that their own fingers have made

These two phrases mean almost the same thing and emphasize that these are not real gods. If your language has no general word for something someone has made, you can combine these two phrases into one. Alternate translation: “things that they themselves have made” (See: [Parallelism](#))

craftsmanship of their own hands

The word “hands” is a synecdoche for the people themselves. Alternate translation: “their own craftsmanship” or “their own work” or “things they have made with their hands” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

things that their own fingers have made

The word “fingers” is a synecdoche for the people themselves. Alternate translation: “things that they have made with their own fingers” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁸ Their land also is full of idols; they worship the craftsmanship of their own hands, things that their own fingers have made.

UST

⁸ But the land is also full of idols; the people worship things that they have made with their own hands.

Isaiah 2:9

General Information:

In 2:9 Isaiah finishes speaking to Yahweh. In 2:10-11 Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah. Both times he speaks in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

The people will be bowed down, and individuals will fall down

Here being low to the ground represents people who are completely humiliated because they realize all they trusted in is worthless, and they can do nothing to help themselves. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "God will make the people ashamed, and they will realize that all they trusted in is worthless" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

The people

human beings, as opposed to animals

individuals

Alternate translation: "each person"

do not raise them up

The words "raise them up" are a metaphor for Yahweh forgiving the people. Alternate translation: "do not forgive them" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ The people will be bowed down, and individuals will fall down; therefore do not raise them up.

UST

⁹ So now they will be humbled; Yahweh will disgrace them. Yahweh, do not forgive them!

Isaiah 2:10

Go into the rocky places

Possible meanings are the people should go into: (1) caves on steep hillsides or (2) places where there are many large rocks among which to hide.

hide in the ground

Possible meanings are that the people should hide: (1) in natural holes in the ground or (2) in pits that they dig in the ground.

from the terror of Yahweh

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **terror**, you could express the same idea with the verb “terrifying.” Alternate translation: “to get away from Yahweh’s terrifying presence” or “from Yahweh because you will be extremely afraid of him” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the glory of his majesty

“the great beauty and power he has as king” or “his royal splendor.” See how you translated this in [Isaiah 2:10](#).

ULT

10 Go into the rocky places and hide in the ground from the terror of Yahweh and from the glory of his majesty.

UST

10 All you people should crawl into the caves in the rock cliffs! You should hide in pits in the ground because you will be afraid of Yahweh and of his glorious and awesome power.

Isaiah 2:11

The lofty gaze of man will be brought low

“Yahweh will bring down the lofty gaze of man.” A man with a “lofty gaze” is looking above everyone to show them that he is better than they are. Here all people are guilty of thinking they are better than Yahweh, and the way they look at those who worship Yahweh, is a metonym for their pride. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will make ashamed all people because they think they are better than he is” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

the pride of men will be brought down

“The pride of men” here is a metonym for proud people, and being “brought down” is a metaphor for being humbled or ashamed. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will bring down proud men” or “Yahweh will make proud people ashamed of themselves” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

Yahweh alone will be exalted

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “people will praise only Yahweh” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

on that day

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “on the day that Yahweh judges everyone” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

11 The lofty gaze of man will be brought low, and the pride of men will be brought down, and Yahweh alone will be exalted on that day.

UST

11 Yahweh will cause you people to no longer be arrogant and he will stop you from being proud. On that day people will praise and honor only Yahweh.

Isaiah 2:12

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah in the form of a poem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

who is proud and raised up

One who is “raised up” is proud and considers himself better than other people. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “who is proud and who raises himself above other people” or “who is proud and thinks that he is better than other people” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Metaphor](#))

who is proud ... who is arrogant

Someone who is arrogant speaks and acts as if he is better than other people. These two phrases have similar meanings and are used together to emphasize that Yahweh will punish them. (See: [Doublet](#))

he will be brought down

“every proud person will be brought down.” If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will humble him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

12 For there will be a day of Yahweh of hosts against everyone who is proud and raised up, and against everyone who is arrogant—and he will be {brought} down—

UST

12 Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has chosen a day when he will judge those who are proud, every one of them, and he will humble them.

Isaiah 2:13

against all the cedars of Lebanon ... against all the oaks of Bashan

The “day of Yahweh of Hosts” will be against the cedars and oaks. This could mean: (1) these trees are a metaphor for the proud people whom God will judge or (2) God will actually destroy these mighty trees. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹³ and against all the cedars of Lebanon {that are} high and lifted up, and against all the oaks of Bashan.

UST

¹³ He will get rid of all those who think others should admire them, like the tall cedar trees in Lebanon, and like all the great oak trees in the region of Bashan.

Isaiah 2:14

against

In 2:14-16 Isaiah lists things that God will destroy. This could mean: (1) these refer to prideful people that God will humble or (2) God will actually destroy all these things in the list.

mountains ... hills

These words are metaphors for the pride of the Israelites. They also appear in [Isaiah 2:2](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

that are lifted up

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “that are very high” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

14 That day of Yahweh of hosts will be against all the high mountains, and against all the hills {that are} lifted up,

UST

14 He will get rid of all those who think they are as great as all the high hills, as great as the high mountains.

Isaiah 2:15

high tower ... impregnable wall

These refer to things people would build around their cities so they could defend themselves against their enemies. They are a metaphor for the Israelites' pride and belief that they had no need for Yahweh and could stand against any punishment Yahweh would mete out to them for their sins. (See: [Metaphor](#))

impregnable wall

Alternate translation: "wall that nothing can break down or go through"

ULT

¹⁵ and against every high tower, and
against every impregnable wall,

UST

¹⁵ He will get rid of all those who think
that they are like high towers and high
strong walls inside of which they are
safe.

Isaiah 2:16

ships of Tarshish ... beautiful sailing vessels

These refer to large boats that people used to travel far on the sea and bring back goods to the cities.

ships of Tarshish

Alternate translation: "ships on which they go to Tarshish"

ULT

¹⁶ and against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all beautiful sailing vessels.

UST

¹⁶ He will destroy all those who are rich because they own big ships that carry goods to other countries and own other beautiful ships, too.

Isaiah 2:17

The pride of man will be brought low

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “He will bring low every proud man” or “He will humiliate every proud man” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the haughtiness of men will fall

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **haughtiness**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: “those people who are haughty will stop being haughty” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Yahweh alone will be exalted

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 2:11](#). Alternate translation: “people will praise only Yahweh” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

17 The pride of man will be brought low, and the haughtiness of men will fall; Yahweh alone will be exalted on that day.

UST

17 He will cause people to no longer be arrogant, and he will cause them to stop being proud. On that day people will praise and honor only Yahweh.

Isaiah 2:18

The idols will completely pass away

Alternate translation: "All idols will disappear" or "There will be no more idols"

ULT

¹⁸ The idols will completely pass away.

UST

¹⁸ All idols will disappear then.

Isaiah 2:19

Men will go ... from the terror

The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "Men will go ... to hide from the terror" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the caves of the rocks

"the caves in the rocks." These are large rocks, not small stones that can be held in the hand.

from the terror of Yahweh, and from the glory of his majesty

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 2:10](#).

from the terror of Yahweh

because they are very afraid of Yahweh

the glory of his majesty

Here the word "glory" describes "majesty." Alternate translation: "the beauty he has as king" (See: [Hendiadys](#))

when he rises to terrify the earth

Alternate translation: "when Yahweh takes action and causes the people of the earth to be terribly afraid of him"

ULT

19 Men will go into the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from the terror of Yahweh, and from the glory of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.

UST

19 When Yahweh comes to terrify the people on the earth, they will run to hide in caves in rock cliffs and in holes in the ground, because they are afraid of Yahweh and of his glorious and awesome power.

Isaiah 2:20

to the moles and bats

Moles are small animals that dig and live underground. Bats are small flying animals that sometimes live in caves. Alternate translation: “to the animals” (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

²⁰ On that day people will throw away their idols of silver and of gold that they have made for themselves to worship—they will throw them away to the moles and bats.

UST

²⁰ On that day, people will get rid of all their gold and silver idols that they made to worship, and they will throw them to the bats and rats.

Isaiah 2:21

the crevices in the rocks ... the clefts of the ragged rocks

If your language does not have two different words for “crevice” and “cleft,” the space that appears between the two parts of a rock when it splits, you can combine these two phrases into one.

from the terror of Yahweh

because they are very afraid of Yahweh. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 2:19](#).

the glory of his majesty

“the great beauty and power he has as king” or “his royal majesty.” See how you translated this in [Isaiah 2:10](#).

when he rises to terrify the earth

“when Yahweh takes action and causes the people of the earth to be terribly afraid of him.” See how you translated this in [Isaiah 2:19](#).

ULT

²¹ The people will go into the crevices in the rocks and into the clefts of the {ragged} rocks, from the terror of Yahweh and from the glory of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.

UST

²¹ Then they will crawl into caves and hide in holes in the cliffs. They will try to escape from Yahweh, who is coming to punish them; They will fear what he will do because he is glorious and awesome, when he comes to terrify the people on the earth.

Isaiah 2:22

whose life-breath is in his nostrils

This describes how man is human and weak by emphasizing that he needs to breathe to live. Alternate translation: “who is weak and will die” or “who needs the breath in his nose to live” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

nostrils

the holes in the nose through which people breathe

for what does he amount to?

Isaiah uses a question to remind the people of something they should already know. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “for man amounts to nothing!” or “for man is not worth anything!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²² Stop trusting in man, whose life-breath {is} in his nostrils, for what does he amount to?

UST

²² So do not trust that people will save you, because they are as powerless as a person's breath. People certainly cannot help you!

Isaiah 3

Isaiah 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter is a continuation of the material in the previous 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 3:1-26, which is a vision Isaiah receives. These are the words of Yahweh.

Judgment

This chapter is structured as a judgment against the Jews. God is acting as a judge reading the list of convictions against them and then he reads the judgment. (See: [judge](#), [judgment](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Exile

While the previous part of the prophecy in chapter 2 discussed the last days, this part of the prophecy predicts the exile of Judah to Babylon. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophecy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [last day](#), [latter days](#))

Isaiah 3:1

See

The word “see” here adds emphasis to what follows. It can also be translated as “Listen” or “Indeed.”

support and staff

Both of these words refer to a walking stick, on which someone leans for support. This idea here stands for the things that people need the most in order to live: food and water. Alternate translation: “everything that supports you” or “everything that you depend on” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ See, the Lord Yahweh of hosts is about to take away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and staff: the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water;

UST

¹ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is about to take away from Jerusalem and other places in Judah everything that you depend on— all food and water.

Isaiah 3:2

**the mighty man ... the warrior ... the judge ...
the prophet ... the one who practices
divination ... the elder**

This is a list of categories of people that others depend on. Since they do not refer to particular individuals, they can all be translated with plural nouns as in the UST. Alternate translation: “the mighty men ... the warriors ... the judges ... the prophets ... the ones who practices divination ... the elders” (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

the one who practices divination

This is a person who claims that he can tell the future by looking at things like animal parts and leaves. See how you translated similar words in [Isaiah 2:6](#).

ULT

² the mighty man and the warrior, the judge and the prophet, the one who practices divination and the elder,

UST

² He will take away heroes and other soldiers, judges and prophets, people who do rituals to find out what will happen in the future and the elders,

Isaiah 3:3

the captain of fifty ... the respected citizen ... the counselor ... the expert craftsman ... the skillful enchanter

This is a list of categories of people that others depend on. Since they do not refer to particular individuals, they can all be translated with plural nouns as in the UST. Alternate translation: “the captains of fifty ... the respected citizens ... the counselors ... the expert craftsmen ... the skillful enchanters” (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

the captain of fifty

This could mean: (1) the word “fifty” represents the exact amount of soldiers that the captain led. Alternate translation: “the captains of 50 soldiers” or (2) the word translated as “fifty” does not represent an exact number, but is the name of a small military unit. Alternate translation: “the captain of a small military unit” (See: [Numbers](#))

fifty

“50” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

³ the captain of fifty and the respected citizen, the counselor, the expert craftsman and the skillful enchanter.

UST

³ army officers and other important people, advisors, skilled craftsmen, and those who perform rituals of magic.

Isaiah 3:4

I will place mere youths as their leaders, and the young will rule over them

These phrases mean basically the same thing. This could mean: (1) "I will place young people as their leaders, and those young people will rule over them" or (2) "youths" is a metaphor for simple and foolish men. Alternate translation: "I will place over them leaders who are immature, like young people, and those bad leaders will rule over them" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

I will place

Here the word "I" refers to Yahweh. This can also be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "Yahweh says, 'I will place'" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴ "I will place mere youths as their leaders, and the young will rule over them.

UST

⁴ Yahweh says, "I will appoint boys to be leaders; young children will rule.

Isaiah 3:5

The people will be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Everyone will be cruel to others and will mistreat his neighbor" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the degraded

Alternate translation: "the people who are without honor" or "the people whom no one respects"

the honorable

Alternate translation: "the people with honor" or "the people whom everyone respects"

ULT

⁵ The people will be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor; the child will insult the elderly, and the degraded will challenge the honorable.

UST

⁵ People will treat each other cruelly: people will fight against their neighbors. Young people will say shameful things against older people, and vulgar people will sneer at people whom others usually honor.

Isaiah 3:6

let this ruin be in your hands

Here “hands” represents authority. Alternate translation: “take charge of this ruin” or “rule over this ruin” (See: [Metaphor](#))

this ruin

This could mean: (1) many or most of the buildings in the city of Jerusalem were destroyed or (2) the people in Jerusalem have no more prosperity or leadership. Alternate translation: “this city, which is now ruined” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ A man will even take hold of his brother in his father’s house {and say}, ‘You have a coat; be our ruler, and {let} this ruin {be} in your hands.’

UST

⁶ At that time, someone will grab one of his brothers in his father’s house and say to him, ‘You still have a coat; people respect you for that. So you be our leader! You rule this city, which is now a pile of ruins.’

Isaiah 3:7

I will not be a healer

Solving the people's troubles is spoken of as if it were healing them.
Alternate translation: "No, I cannot fix this problem" or "No, I cannot help you" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ On that day he will shout and say, 'I will not be a healer; I have no bread or clothing. You will not make me ruler of the people.'

UST

⁷ But his brother will reply, 'No, I cannot help you, because I do not have any extra food or clothes in this house. So do not make me your leader!'

Isaiah 3:8

Connecting Statement:

The prophet begins to comment on this situation.

Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen

Disobeying God is spoken of as if it were stumbling and falling. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the eyes of his glory

Here “the eyes” stands for God himself, who is glorious. Alternate translation: “him who is glorious” or “Yahweh who is glorious” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁸ For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their actions {are} against Yahweh, defying the eyes of his glory.

UST

⁸ The people in Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah have disobeyed God, because everything that the people do and say there opposes Yahweh, the powerful and glorious one, and they refuse to obey him. They rebel against him.

Isaiah 3:9

The look on their faces witnesses against them

Expressions of arrogance on people's faces are spoken of as if the expressions were persons who could testify against the proud people. Alternate translation: "The prideful looks on their faces show that they oppose Yahweh" (See: [Personification](#))

they tell of their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it

Here the people of Judah are said to be like the people of Sodom, because they openly boasted about their sins. Alternate translation: "like the people of Sodom, they talk about their sins and let everyone know about them" (See: [Simile](#))

For they have completed a catastrophe for themselves

The catastrophe is still coming, but the people have finished doing what will cause it to come. The catastrophe's causes are spoken of here as if they were the catastrophe itself. Alternate translation: "For they have done everything that will cause a catastrophe to happen" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ The look on their faces witnesses against them; and they tell of their sin like Sodom; they do not hide {it.} Woe to them! For they have completed a catastrophe for themselves.

UST

⁹ They even show on their faces that they oppose Yahweh. They are proud about their sins, like the people of Sodom were long ago; they do not try to hide their sins; they talk about them. Because of their sins, terrible things will certainly happen to them.

Isaiah 3:10

Tell the righteous person that it will be well

Alternate translation: "Tell the one who is doing what is right that I will make things good for him"

the righteous person

This refers to righteous people in general. Alternate translation: "righteous people" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

for they will eat the fruit of their deeds

Deeds are spoken of as if they were trees giving fruit that can be eaten. The fruit stands for the reward for doing good deeds. Alternate translation: "for they will receive their reward for their good deeds" or "for they will receive their reward for the good things they have done" (See: [Metaphor](#))

they will eat the fruit of their deeds

The Hebrew text has these plural pronouns here, but they refer to any righteous person. Translators can choose to translate them as singular: "he will eat the fruit of his deeds."

ULT

10 Tell the righteous person that it will be well, for they will eat the fruit of their deeds.

UST

10 You people must tell the righteous people that good things will happen to them; they will enjoy the blessings that they will receive for their good deeds.

Isaiah 3:11

for the recompense of his hands will be done to him

Here "hands" stands for the deeds that the person has done.

Alternate translation: "for what the wicked person has done to others will be done to him" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

11 Woe to the wicked! It will go badly for him, for the recompense of his hands will be done to him.

UST

11 But terrible things will happen to wicked people; Yahweh will pay them back for the evil things that they have done.

Isaiah 3:12

My people ... My people

This could mean: (1) Isaiah is talking and “My” refers to Isaiah, or (2) Yahweh is talking and “My” refers to Yahweh.

children are their oppressors

This could mean: (1) “young people have become their leaders and they oppress the people” or (2) “their leaders are immature like children and oppress the people.” (See: [Metaphor](#))

women rule over them

This could mean: (1) “women rule over the people” or (2) “their leaders are weak like women.”

ULT

12 My people—children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. My people, those who guide you lead {you} astray and confuse the direction of your path.

UST

12 Youths who have become leaders treat my people cruelly, and women rule over my people. My people, your leaders are misleading you; they are causing you to do all kinds of evil things.

those who guide you lead you astray and confuse the direction of your path

It was common in the Ancient Middle East to speak of a nation’s leaders as if they were shepherds. As shepherds lead the sheep along good paths to safety, leaders should teach the people the truth and help them do what is right. Judah’s leaders were not doing this. Alternate translation: “your leaders are like bad shepherds who lead you away from good paths and do not show you where to go” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Isaiah 3:13

Yahweh stands up for an accusation; he is standing to accuse the people

Isaiah speaks of Yahweh's decision to harm the people as if Yahweh were bringing a legal accusation in a courtroom against the people of Israel. The second part of this line means the same thing as the first part, but it says it a little more completely. Alternate translation: "It is as though Yahweh had taken his place in a courtroom and were ready to accuse the people" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹³ Yahweh stands up for an accusation; he is standing to accuse the people.

UST

¹³ It is as though Yahweh had taken his place in a courtroom and were ready to accuse his people of breaking the covenant between themselves and him.

Isaiah 3:14

will come with judgment

Judgment is spoken of as if it were an object that one could bring to another person. Alternate translation: “will announce his judgment” or “will declare his judgment” (See: [Metaphor](#))

You have ruined the vineyard

Here “you” refers to the elders and rulers. Yahweh is speaking of his people as if they were a vineyard. Like someone who fails to care for a vineyard so that the vines give no more grapes, the elders and leaders are discouraging the Israelites from serving God. Alternate translation: “My people are like a vineyard, and you have ruined it” (See: [Forms of You](#) and [Metaphor](#))

the plunder from the poor is in your houses

Alternate translation: “the things you have taken from the poor are in your houses”

the poor

This nominal adjective can be stated as an adjective. Alternate translation: “those who are poor” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

14 Yahweh will come with judgment against the elders of his people and their leaders: “You have ruined the vineyard; the plunder from the poor {is} in your houses.

UST

14 He will stand up to declare why he should punish the elders and rulers of his people; he says, “The people of Israel are like a vineyard that I planted, but you leaders have made unable to bear any fruit. Your houses are full of things that you have stolen from poor people.

Isaiah 3:15

Why do you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor?

Yahweh asks this question in order to accuse the leaders of the people. This accusation can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "I am angry with you evil men because you are crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

crush my people

Making people suffer is spoken of as if it were crushing them with a very heavy weight. Alternate translation: "cruelly harm my people" (See: [Metaphor](#))

grind the faces of the poor

Making people suffer is spoken of as if it were rubbing their faces into the ground. Alternate translation: "harm the poor and make them suffer" (See: [Metaphor](#))

This is the declaration of the Lord Yahweh of hosts

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Alternate translation: "this is what the Lord Yahweh of hosts has declared" or "this is what I, the Lord Yahweh of hosts, have declared" (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Why do you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor?" This is the declaration of the Lord Yahweh of hosts.

UST

¹⁵ You should stop making my people suffer. It is as though you were pushing the faces of poor people into the ground." That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

Isaiah 3:16

the daughters of Zion

Zion, meaning here the city of Jerusalem, is spoken of as if it were a woman with her daughters. Alternate translation: “the women of Zion” (See: [Metaphor](#))

with their necks extended

Alternate translation: “in an arrogant way”

with flirting eyes

Looking at men in a way that makes the men think the women want sexual relations.

walking with tiny steps as they go

This is how they would walk to attract men, possibly because the bracelets on their ankles were connected by chains decorated with bells so they could not take normal steps.

ULT

16 Yahweh says that because the daughters of Zion are proud, they walk with their necks extended, with flirting eyes, walking with tiny steps as they go, making tinkling sounds from bracelets on their ankles.

UST

16 Yahweh says this: “The women of Jerusalem are haughty; they walk around sticking their chins out, and flirting with men with their eyes. They walk with tiny steps with bracelets on their ankles that jingle.”

Isaiah 3:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

17 Therefore the Lord will form scabs on the heads of the daughters of Zion, and Yahweh will make them bald.

UST

17 So the Lord will cause sores to be on their heads, and he will cause those beautiful women in Jerusalem to become bald.

Isaiah 3:18

the Lord will remove

Here what the Lord causes others to do is spoken of as the Lord doing it himself. Alternate translation: “the Lord will cause others to remove” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ankle jewelry

a decoration that women wear on the ankle, just above the foot

head bands

a decoration that women wear over the head and hair

crescent ornaments

moon-shaped ornaments that people wear in the belief that they will protect the person from evil

ULT

18 On that day the Lord will remove their beautiful ankle jewelry, head bands, the crescent ornaments,

UST

18 At the time that the Lord does that, he will also cause others to take away from the women of Jerusalem all of the beautiful things they like to wear—the ornaments on their ankles and their headbands, their crescent necklaces,

Isaiah 3:19

ear pendants

jewelry that hangs from the ear or over the ear

bracelets

a decoration that women wear on the arm near the hands

veils

a very thin material used to cover a woman's head and face

ULT

¹⁹ the ear pendants, the bracelets, and the veils;

UST

¹⁹ their earrings and bracelets and veils,

Isaiah 3:20

headscarves

long, thin pieces of cloth that women tie around the head or hair

ankle chains

These are decorations that women wear near the feet. Often the chains hang down to make a gentle noise.

sashes

a piece of cloth that people wear around the waist or across the chest

perfume boxes

a small box or bag containing perfume that women wore on chains or strings around their necks so they smelled good

lucky charms

jewelry that people wear in the belief that it will bring good luck

ULT

20 the headscarves, the ankle chains, the sashes, and the perfume boxes, and the lucky charms.

UST

20 their scarves and ankle bracelets and sashes, their perfumes and charms.

Isaiah 3:21

rings

a decoration worn around the finger

nose jewels

a decoration worn in or through the nose

ULT

²¹ He will remove the rings and the nose jewels;

UST

²¹ He will cause others to remove the women's finger rings and nose rings,

Isaiah 3:22

festive robes

a long, loose garment with decorations that was worn over other clothes for everyone to see

mantles

a cloth worn over the shoulders on the outside of the clothes

veils

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 3:19](#).

handbags

a bag to used to carry small things

ULT

²² the festive robes, the mantles, the veils, and the handbags;

UST

²² their nice robes and capes and veils and purses,

Isaiah 3:23

hand mirrors

a small surface, held in one's hand and used to see oneself

fine linen

a soft cloth worn by rich people

head pieces

a cloth or small hat worn over the hair

wraps

a decorative cloth that a woman would wrap around herself to make her beautiful

ULT

²³ the hand mirrors, the fine linen, the head pieces, and the wraps.

UST

²³ their mirrors and nice linen clothes, the ornaments for their heads, and the shawls.

Isaiah 3:24

sash

a piece of cloth that people wear around the waist or across the chest. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 3:20](#).

a rope

This may refer to a rope that enemies would tie on the people of Judah when they captured them. Or it might mean that Jerusalem's women would have nothing to wear but rough clothing secured with ropes.

well-arranged hair, baldness

Alternate translation: "pretty hair, their heads will be bald"

ULT

²⁴ Instead of sweet perfume there will be stench; and instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-arranged hair, baldness; and instead of a robe, a covering of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty.

UST

²⁴ Instead of smelling nice from perfume, they will stink; instead of beautiful sashes, they will have ropes around their waists. Instead of having fancy hairdos, they will be bald. Instead of fancy robes, they will wear rough sackcloth, Instead of beauty, scars of branding.

Isaiah 3:25

Your men will fall by the sword, and your strong men will fall in war

Falling represents being killed, and the sword represents battle.
Alternate translation: "Your men will be killed in battle, and your strong men will be killed in war" or "Enemies will kill your soldiers in battle" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁵ Your men will fall by the sword, and your strong men will fall in war.

UST

²⁵ Your men will die by their enemies' swords, and your soldiers will also die in battle.

Isaiah 3:26

Jerusalem's gates will lament and mourn

Here the city gates represent the people who sit at the public places near the city gates. Alternate translation: "The people of Jerusalem will sit at the city gates and cry and mourn" (See: [Metonymy](#))

she will be alone and sit upon the ground

Isaiah speaks of the people of Jerusalem, whom no one will save from their enemies, as if they were the city itself and as if they were a woman who sits on the ground because all her friends have deserted her. (See: [Personification](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁶ Jerusalem's gates will lament and mourn; and she will be alone and sit upon the ground.

UST

²⁶ People will mourn and cry at the gates of the city. The city will be like a woman who sits on the ground because all her friends have deserted her.

Isaiah 4

Isaiah 4 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

More women than men

This chapter describes a time when there will be many more women than men in Judah. This is because so many of Judah's fighting men will have died before the exile. Those who come through this difficult time will be a holy remnant. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [holy, holiness, unholy, sacred](#) and [remnant](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Branch of Yahweh

Scholars are divided over the possible meaning of this metaphor. Some believe it is a reference to the Messiah, while others believe it is a reference to the faithful remnant. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Christ, Messiah](#) and [faithful, faithfulness, trustworthy](#))

Isaiah 4:1

let us take your name

This phrase means "let us marry you." (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹ On that day seven women will take hold of one man and say, "Our own food we will eat, our own clothing we will wear. But let us take your name to remove our shame."

UST

¹ When that happens, there will be very few unmarried men. So seven unmarried women will grab one man and say, "Allow us all to marry you! We will provide our own food and clothing. All that we want is to no longer be disgraced because of not being married."

Isaiah 4:2

the branch of Yahweh will be beautiful

This could mean: (1) “branch” is a synecdoche that represents the crops Yahweh will cause to grow in the land of Israel. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will cause the crops in Israel to be beautiful” or (2) “branch” is a metaphor that refers to the Messiah. (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

will be beautiful and glorious

Alternate translation: “will be full of beauty and glory”

the fruit of the land will be tasty and delightful for those survivors in Israel

“Fruit” sometimes simply represents food produced in the land, and sometimes it represents spiritual blessings. This could mean: (1) God will cause the land to produce good food again. Alternate translation: “the people who are still in Israel will enjoy the best food from the land” or (2) the future Messiah will bring spiritual blessings to the people in the land. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² On that day the branch of Yahweh will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be tasty and delightful for those survivors in Israel.

UST

² But some day, Israel will be very beautiful and great. The people of Israel who will still be there will be very proud of the wonderful crops that will grow in their land.

Isaiah 4:3

the one who is left in Zion and the one who remains in Jerusalem

Both of these statements mean the same thing. Here “the one who” does not refer to a specific person but to people in general who are still alive in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: “everyone who remains in Jerusalem” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

will be called holy

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the Lord will call them holy” or “will belong to the Lord” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

everyone who is written down as living in Jerusalem

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “everyone whose name is on the list of the people who live in Jerusalem” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ It will happen that {the one who is} left in Zion and the one who remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who is written down as living in Jerusalem.

UST

³ All the people who will remain in Jerusalem, who did not die when the enemy destroyed Jerusalem, will belong to the Lord—all those whose names are listed among those who live there.

Isaiah 4:4

when the Lord will have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion

This expression speaks of sin as if it were physical dirt. Alternate translation: “after the Lord removes the sins of the daughters of Zion as someone washes away filth” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the daughters of Zion

This could mean: (1) the women of Jerusalem or (2) the people of Jerusalem.

will have cleansed the blood stains from Jerusalem’s midst

“Blood stains” here represents violence and murder. Alternate translation: “will have taken away those in Jerusalem who harm innocent people” (See: [Metonymy](#))

by means of the spirit of judgment and the spirit of flaming fire

This is how God would remove the sin from Jerusalem. Here “spirit” probably represents the activity of judging and burning. Alternate translation: “by judgment and flaming fire” (See: [Metaphor](#))

spirit of judgment

This could mean: (1) Yahweh will punish the people or (2) Yahweh will declare the people guilty.

the spirit of flaming fire

This could mean: (1) this is a metaphor that means Yahweh will remove sinners from Zion like a fire removes impurities or (2) “flaming fire” is a metonym that represents the destruction in general of all the sinners. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ This will happen when the Lord will have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and will have cleansed the blood stains from Jerusalem’s midst, by means of the spirit of judgment and the spirit of flaming fire.

UST

⁴ That will happen when the Lord washes away the guilt of the women of Jerusalem, and when he stops the violence on the streets of Jerusalem by punishing the people of Jerusalem. When he does that, it will be like a fire that burns up all the impure things.

Isaiah 4:5

a canopy over all the glory

This could mean: (1) a canopy for protecting the glorious city, or (2) a canopy consisting of God's glory that will protect the city. If the first meaning is followed, then it may further mean that the city is glorious because Yahweh is present in it.

canopy

This is a cloth that is hung over something to cover it for protection.

ULT

⁵ Then over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her place of assembly, Yahweh will create cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; it {will be} a canopy over all the glory.

UST

⁵ Then Yahweh will send a cloud of smoke during the days and a flaming fire during the nights to cover Jerusalem and all those who gather there; it will be like a canopy over God's glorious presence in the city.

Isaiah 4:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁶ It will be a shelter for shade in the daytime from the heat, and a refuge and a cover from the storm and rain.

UST

⁶ It will shelter the people from the sun during the daytime and protect them when there are windstorms and rain.

Isaiah 5

Isaiah 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Woe

This chapter presents a series of woes, or judgments against those who are spoken against. Most of these judgements are due to the lack of justice in Judah. (See: [woe](#) and [judge, judgment](#) and [just, justice, unjust, injustice, justify, justification](#))

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Allegory

This chapter begins as an allegory. An allegory is a story with a symbolic meaning. This allegory is meant to teach the Jews that they sinned against Yahweh and that there was nothing more he could have done for them. (See: [spirit, wind, breath](#) and [sin, sinful, sinner, sinning](#))

Animals being present where people once lived

Verse 17 ("Then the sheep will feed as in their own pasture, and in the ruins of the rich people, lambs will graze") is an example of the Old Testament's prophets' habit of describing complete ruin and desolation in terms of a picture of animals--usually wild animals, but here sheep and lambs--living in or feeding in those places. Whether the picture is of flocks or wild animals, the purpose is to say that the human habitation has gone back to wild nature, and that this has happened because of God's punishment on the people.

Isaiah 5:1

General Information:

Isaiah tells a parable about a farmer and his vineyard. The farmer represents God and the vineyard represents the people of Judah, the southern kingdom of the Israelites. (See: [Parables](#))

my well beloved

Alternate translation: "my dear friend"

on a very fertile hill

Alternate translation: "on a hill where very good crops could grow"

ULT

¹ Let me sing for my well beloved, a song of my beloved about his vineyard. My well beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

UST

¹ Now I will sing a song about Yahweh, my dear friend, and about his vineyard. The vineyard was on a very fertile hillside.

Isaiah 5:2

He spaded it

“He prepared the soil.” This expression refers to using a tool to dig into the ground to prepare it for planting.

He built a tower in the middle of it

“He made a tall building in the middle of the vineyard to watch over it.” Someone would stand at the top of the tower to watch the vineyard and make sure that no animals or people went into it. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

built a winepress

“dug a pit to squeeze out the grape juice.” A winepress is a low place carved out of rock in the ground where workers step on the grapes to crush them with their feet, in order to remove the grape juice.

wild grapes

Alternate translation: “worthless grapes” or “bad tasting grapes”

ULT

² He spaded it, removed the stones, and planted it with an excellent kind of vine. He built a tower in the middle of it, and also built a winepress. He waited for {it} to produce grapes, but it only produced wild grapes.

UST

² My friend plowed the ground and cleared away the stones. Then he planted very good grapevines on that ground. In the middle of the vineyard, he built a watchtower, and he dug a winepress. Then he waited each year to harvest some good grapes, but the vines produced only sour grapes.

Isaiah 5:3

General Information:

In Isaiah's parable of the vineyard, the owner of the vineyard, who represents God, speaks to the people of Jerusalem and Judah about his vineyard. (See: [Parables](#))

inhabitant of Jerusalem and man of Judah

These expressions refer in general to all people living in Jerusalem and Judah, so they can be translated with plural nouns. Alternate translation: "all of you who live in Jerusalem and Judah" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

Jerusalem ... Judah

"Judah" was the name of the southern kingdom of Israelites, and Jerusalem was the capital city.

judge between me and my vineyard

The idea of a space separating two things is often used to express the idea of choosing one or the other of those things. Alternate translation: "decide who has acted right, I or my vineyard" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ So now, inhabitant of Jerusalem and man of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

UST

³ Now this is what my friend Yahweh says: "You people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, You are like my vineyard; so you judge which of us has done what is right.

Isaiah 5:4

What more could have been done for my vineyard, that I have not done for it?

The owner uses this question to make a statement about his vineyard. This rhetorical questions can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "I have done all that I could do for my vineyard!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

When I looked for it to produce grapes, why did it produce wild grapes?

The owner uses a question to say that his vineyard should have produced good grapes. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "I wanted it to make good grapes, but it only produced worthless grapes" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁴ What more could have been done for my vineyard, that I have not done for it? When I looked for {it} to produce grapes, why did it produce wild grapes?

UST

⁴ What more could I have done for you than what I have already done? I expected you to be doing good deeds, so it is disgusting that you were doing only evil deeds like the vineyard that produced only sour grapes!

Isaiah 5:5

remove the hedge

“take away the border of bushes.” A hedge is a row of bushes or small trees that have been planted in order to protect a garden or some other kind of area. Here “hedge” probably refers to the thorn bushes that were planted to grow on the stone wall surrounding the vineyard.

I will turn it into a pasture

“I will allow animals to go there and eat.” This is a grassy place where animals feed.

it will be trampled down

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “animals will trample it down” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ Now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will remove the hedge, I will turn it into a pasture, I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled down.

UST

⁵ So, I will now tell you what I will do to Judah, the place that is like my vineyard. I will cut down the hedges, and my vineyard will become a pasture. I will tear down the walls of the cities and allow wild animals to trample the land.

Isaiah 5:6

I will lay it waste

Alternate translation: "I will destroy it"

it will not be pruned nor hoed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "no one will prune it or hoe it" or "no one will cut off the branches that are not needed, and no one will take care of the soil" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

briers and thorns will spring up

Briers and thorns are often used as symbols of ruined cities and land. (See: [Symbolic Language](#))

ULT

⁶ I will lay it waste, and it will not be pruned nor hoed. Instead, briers and thorns will spring up. I will also command the clouds not to rain on it.

UST

⁶ I will cause it to become a wasteland where the vines are not pruned and the ground is not hoed. It will be a place where briers and thorns grow. And I will command that no rain will fall on it."

Isaiah 5:7

General Information:

Isaiah explains the parable of the vineyard.

For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts is the house of Israel

Isaiah states that the vineyard in the parable represents the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts represents the house of Israel” or “The people of Israel are like the vineyard of Yahweh, Lord of the angel armies” (See: [Parables](#))

the house of Israel

The word “house” is a metonym for the family that lives in the house. In this case it refers to the kingdom of Israel. Alternate translation: “Israel” or “the kingdom of Israel” or “the people of Israel” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the man of Judah his pleasant planting

The people of Judah are spoken of as if they are a vine that Yahweh planted. This can be stated as a simile. Alternate translation: “the people of Judah are like a vine that Yahweh planted for Yahweh’s pleasure” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#))

the man of Judah

Here “man” represents all the people of Judah. Alternate translation: “the people of Judah” (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **justice**, you could express the same idea with the verb “do what is fair.” If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **killing**, you could express the same idea with “killed one another.” Alternate translation: “Yahweh waited for the people to do what is fair, but instead they killed one another” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

for righteousness

The phrase “he waited” is understood from earlier in the verse. It can be repeated to make the meaning clear. Alternate translation: “He waited for righteousness” or “He waited for them to do what is right” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

instead, a shout for help

The words “there was” are understood from earlier in the verse. They can be repeated to make the meaning clear. The reason people shouted out for help can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “instead, there was a shout for help” or “instead, those who were weak shouted out for someone to help them because others were attacking them” (See: [Ellipsis](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁷ For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts {is} the house of Israel, and the man of Judah his pleasant planting; he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing; for righteousness, but, instead, a shout {for help}.

UST

⁷ The nation of Israel is like the vineyard of Yahweh who is commander of the angel armies. The people of Judah are like the garden that was pleasing to him. He expected them to be doing what is just, but instead, what he saw was people murdering others. He expected that they would be doing righteous deeds, but instead, he heard people shouting for someone to help them, because others were attacking them.

a shout

This expression probably stands for many shouts. (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

Isaiah 5:8

General Information:

Isaiah announces God's judgment.

to those who join house to house, who join field to field

"to those who take more and more houses, and who take more and more fields." Isaiah assumes that his audience knows that the law forbids someone from taking land from a family permanently. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ Woe to those who join house to house, who join field to field, until no room remains, and you alone remain in the land!

UST

⁸ Terrible things will happen to those who keep acquiring houses and fields without paying attention to the laws about who owns the land. You use your riches to gain more and more property, and soon there is no more property for others to buy, and you would be the only land owners there are in that place.

Isaiah 5:9

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

without any inhabitant

Alternate translation: “without anyone living in it”

ULT

⁹ Yahweh of hosts {told} me, many houses will be empty, even great and impressive ones, without any inhabitant.

UST

⁹ But I heard Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, solemnly declare this: “Some day, many houses will have no one to live in them, even the large and beautiful homes will be empty.”

Isaiah 5:10

a ten-yoke vineyard

The size of the vineyard is represented by the number of pairs of oxen that could plow it in one day. Each pair of oxen would be connected by a yoke. Alternate translation: “a vineyard that is large enough for ten pairs of oxen to plow it” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

one bath

“one bath of wine” or “22 liters of wine” (See: [Biblical Volume](#))

one homer of seed will yield only an ephah

“220 liters of seed will produce only 22 liters of grain.” One homer equals ten ephahs. (See: [Biblical Volume](#))

ULT

¹⁰ For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only one bath, and one homer of seed will yield only an ephah.

UST

¹⁰ The land that grows vines in this place should require ten pairs of oxen to work them, but this land would not produce enough grapes to make even twenty liters of wine. When ten baskets of seed are sown on that land, that land will only produce one basket of grain at harvest time.”

Isaiah 5:11

those who rise up early in the morning ... who linger late into the night

This refers to people who do nothing all day but drink alcoholic drinks. (See: [Merism](#))

until wine inflames them

Here the power of wine to make its drinkers drunk is spoken of as if it were inflaming them, that is, setting them on fire. Alternate translation: "until they are drunk with wine" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹¹ Woe to those who rise up early in the morning to obtain strong drink, those who linger late into the night {until} wine inflames them.

UST

¹¹ Terrible things will happen to those who get up early each morning to begin drinking alcoholic drinks, and who stay awake until late at night drinking a lot more wine until they are completely drunk.

Isaiah 5:12

harp, lute, tambourine, flute, and wine

These musical instruments and the wine imply that the people enjoying these things are celebrating very much.

tambourine

A musical instrument with a head like a drum that can be beaten with the hand. It probably had pieces of metal around the side that sounded when the player shook it. The tambourine was small enough for the player to hold it and shake it with one hand. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

considered

thought seriously about

the doings of his hands

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **doings**, you could express the same idea with the verb “done” or “created.” Alternate translation: “what he has done” or “what he has created” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the doings of his hands

Here the metonym “hands” represents the person who has done something. Alternate translation: “what Yahweh has done” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹² They banquet with harp, lute, tambourine, flute, and wine, but they do not recognize the work of Yahweh, nor have they considered the doings of his hands.

UST

¹² They have big parties and provide lots of wine. At their parties, there are people playing harps and lyres and tambourines and flutes, but they never think about what Yahweh does or appreciate what he has created.

Isaiah 5:13

General Information:

These verses tell what will happen to the people because they have disobeyed God.

my people have gone into captivity

In prophecy things that will happen in the future are often referred to as if they had already happened. This emphasizes that the prophecy will certainly come true. Alternate translation: “enemies from other countries will take my people, Israel, as slaves” (See: [Predictive Past](#))

for lack of understanding

What they do not understand can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “because they do not understand Yahweh or his law” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

13 Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of understanding; their honored leaders go hungry, and their common people have nothing to drink.

UST

13 So my people will be exiled far away because they do not know about me. Those who are now very important and honored will starve, and the other people will die from thirst.

Isaiah 5:14

Sheol has made its appetite greater and has opened its mouth very wide

This phrase speaks of Sheol, which stands here for the grave, to an animal that is ready to eat other animals. It implies that many, many people will die. Alternate translation: “death is like a hungry animal that has opened its mouth wide to eat up many people” (See: [Metaphor](#))

their elite, the people, their leaders, and the revelers and those who are happy among them, descend into Sheol

The prophet speaks of the future as if it were happening now. Alternate translation: “Many people of Israel, their important people and common people, their leaders and those who enjoy wild parties, will go into Sheol” (See: [Predictive Past](#))

ULT

¹⁴ Therefore Sheol has made its appetite greater and has opened its mouth very wide; their elite, the people, their leaders, and the revelers and those who are happy among them, descend into Sheol.

UST

¹⁴ It is as though the place where the dead people are is eagerly looking for more Israelite people, opening its mouth to swallow them, and a huge number of people will be thrown into that place, including their leaders as well as a noisy crowd of people who enjoy living in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 5:15

Man will be forced to bend down, and mankind will be humbled

The phrases used together mean the same thing and are used together for emphasis. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. See how you translated similar words in [Isaiah 2:9](#). Alternate translation: “God will make every person bow down and be humble” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Man will be forced to bend down, and mankind will be humbled; the eyes of the lofty will be cast down.

UST

¹⁵ Yahweh will humble everyone; he will humble everyone who is proud.

Man will be forced to bend down, and mankind will be humbled

Future events are spoken of as if they have already happened. (See: [Predictive Past](#))

Man will be forced to bend down

Bending down often symbolizes being humiliated. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

the eyes of the lofty will be cast down

Looking down is often a sign of being ashamed. See how you translated similar words in [Isaiah 2:11](#). Alternate translation: “the eyes of proud people will look down in shame” or “people who were proud are now ashamed” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the lofty

Here proud, arrogant people are spoken of as if they are high above other people. Alternate translation: “proud” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Isaiah 5:16

Yahweh of hosts will be exalted in his justice

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People will praise Yahweh of hosts because he is just" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

will be exalted

Being honored is spoken of as if it were being lifted high. Alternate translation: "will be greatly honored" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 Yahweh of hosts will be exalted in his justice, and God the Holy One will show himself holy by his righteousness.

UST

16 But everyone will honor Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the Holy One, because he has acted justly. God will show that he is holy by doing righteous deeds.

Isaiah 5:17

the sheep will feed as in their own pasture

Yahweh will destroy the city of Jerusalem, which was called a “vineyard” in [Isaiah 5:1](#). It will become good for nothing except for sheep to eat grass there.

graze

eat grass

in the ruins, lambs will graze as foreigners

That is, the lambs will graze there. The land will be worthless for any other use. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

17 Then the sheep will feed as in their own pasture, and in the ruins, lambs will graze as foreigners. ^[1]

UST

17 Then sheep and lambs will be able to find good grass to eat; they will pass through the ruined places to eat the grass.

Isaiah 5:18

Woe to those who pull along iniquity with useless cords and who pull along sin as if it were with a cart rope

These phrases mean basically the same thing. They speak of people who continue to sin on purpose as if they were using all their strength to pull a heavy cart along. God will punish them for their sin. Alternate translation: “Woe to those who work hard to sin as a person who drags a cart by a rope” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

18 Woe to those who pull along iniquity with useless cords and who pull along sin as if it were with a cart rope.

UST

18 Some people who are working hard to sin, working as hard as if they were dragging behind them the wrong and useless things that they are doing. Terrible things will happen to them!

Isaiah 5:19

those who say

This refers to those who continue to sin (verse 18) and then mockingly challenge God to stop them. Alternate translation: “those mockers who say” (See: [Irony](#))

let the plans of the Holy One of Israel come

God’s plans are spoken of as if they were objects that could come by themselves. Alternate translation: “let the Holy One of Israel accomplish his plans” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the Holy One of Israel

Translate “the Holy One” as in [Isaiah 5:16](#).

ULT

19 Woe to those who say, “Let God hurry, let him act quickly, so we can see {it} happen; and let the plans of the Holy One of Israel come, so that we may know them.”

UST

19 They make fun of God and say to him, “Quickly do something to punish us! We want to see what you will do. You, the Holy One of Israel, should do what you are planning to do, because we want to know what it is.”

Isaiah 5:20

who represent darkness as light, and light as darkness ... bitter as sweet, and sweet as bitter

Those who do these things are the same as those “who call evil good, and good evil.” These things are opposites and people know the difference between them, but some people lie and say that bad things are good. Alternate translation: “They are like people who call darkness light and light darkness. They are like people who call bitter things sweet and sweet things bitter” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who represent darkness as light, and light as darkness; who represent bitter as sweet, and sweet as bitter!

UST

²⁰ Terrible things will happen to those who say that evil is good, and that good is evil, that darkness is light and that light is darkness, that what is bitter is sweet and what is sweet is bitter.

Isaiah 5:21

to those who are wise in their own eyes

Here the metonym “eyes” refers to their thoughts. Alternate translation: “to those who consider themselves to be wise” (See: [Metonymy](#))

prudent in their own understanding

Alternate translation: “think they understand everything”

ULT

²¹ Woe to {those who are} wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own understanding!

UST

²¹ Terrible things will happen to those who think that they are wise and that they are very clever.

Isaiah 5:22

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²² {Woe} to those who are champions at drinking wine, and masters at mixing strong drinks;

UST

²² Terrible things will happen to those who think that they are heroes because they are able to drink lots of wine, and who boast about being able to mix good alcoholic drinks.

Isaiah 5:23

who acquit the wicked for payment

This passage is speaking about corrupt judges in courts of law.

acquit the wicked

Alternate translation: "declare guilty people innocent"

deprive the innocent of his rights

Alternate translation: "do not treat innocent people fairly"

ULT

²³ who acquit the wicked for payment, and deprive the innocent of his rights!

UST

²³ If people offer these corrupt judges money so they will not punish the wicked, they accept that money. These same judges punish innocent people.

Isaiah 5:24

tongue of fire

Alternate translation: “flame of fire” or “flame”

as the tongue of fire devours stubble, and as the dry grass goes down in flame

These phrases mean basically the same thing. God will punish the people described in [Isaiah 5:18-23](#). Alternate translation: “as a fire burns up stubble and grass” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Simile](#))

stubble

The dry pieces of plants that are left in the ground after the stalks have been cut.

their root will rot, and their blossom will blow away like dust

Isaiah speaks of these people as if they were a dying plant. Alternate translation: “they will die like a plant whose roots have rotted and whose blossom has dried up and blown away in the wind” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁴ Therefore as the tongue of fire devours stubble, and as the dry grass goes down in flame, so their root will rot, and their blossom will blow away like dust. This will happen because they have rejected the law of Yahweh of hosts, and because they have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

UST

²⁴ Therefore, just like fires burn up stubble and dry grass shrivels up and quickly burns in flames, it will be as though those people have roots that will rot and have flowers that will wither. That will happen because they rejected the laws of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies; they have despised the messages of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 5:25

the anger of Yahweh is kindled

Isaiah speaks of Yahweh's anger as if it were a fire. Alternate translation: "Yahweh is very angry" (See: [Metaphor](#))

He has reached out with his hand against them and has punished them

The prophet speaks of the future as if it had already happened. He does this to insist that the prophecy certainly will come about. Alternate translation: "he will punish them with his powerful hand" (See: [Predictive Past](#))

has reached out with his hand against them

Here "hand" refers to God's power and control. Alternate translation: "has shown his power against them" (See: [Metonymy](#))

corpses

dead bodies

their corpses are like garbage in the streets

The dead bodies are allowed to lie in the streets as if they were garbage. This implies that many will die but that no one will be there to bury them. The word "garbage" can also be translated as "refuse" or "manure." (See: [Simile](#))

In all these things, his anger does not subside; instead, his hand

Alternate translation: "Even though all these things have happened, he is still angry, and his hand"

his hand is still stretched out

Here "hand" represents God's power and control. Isaiah speaks as if Yahweh were a person about to hit another person with his fist. This is a metaphor for Yahweh punishing Israel. Alternate translation: "he will still be ready to punish them" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ Therefore the anger of Yahweh is kindled against his people. He has reached out with his hand against them and has punished them. The mountains tremble, and their corpses are like garbage in the streets. In all these things, his anger does not subside; instead, his hand [is] still stretched out.

UST

²⁵ That is why Yahweh is extremely angry with his people; it is as though his hand is raised and he is ready to smash them. When he does that, the mountains will shake, and the corpses of people will be scattered in the streets like manure. But even when that happens, Yahweh will still be very angry; he will be ready to punish his people again.

Isaiah 5:26

He will lift up a signal flag for far away nations and will whistle for those at the end of the earth

Isaiah says the same thing in two different ways. God causing the armies of nations that are far away from Judah to come and attack is spoken of as if he would raise a flag and whistle to call them to Judah. Alternate translation: "He will call for the armies of nations that are far away from Judah and tell them to come" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

whistle

a loud, high pitched noise a person makes with their mouth to call a person or animal that is far away

they will come

Alternate translation: "the enemy army will come"

speedily and promptly

These words mean basically the same thing and emphasize how quickly they will come. Alternate translation: "very quickly" (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

²⁶ He will lift up a signal flag for far away nations and will whistle for those at the end of the earth. Look, they will come speedily and promptly.

UST

²⁶ Yahweh will send a signal to summon armies of nations far away; it is as though he will whistle to those soldiers who are in very remote places on the earth. They will come very swiftly toward Jerusalem.

Isaiah 5:27

tire ... stumble ... slumbers ... sleeps

These four words progress from being tired from work to being unable to walk well, to being unable to stay awake, to full sleep, so all four should appear in the translation.

Nor are their belts loose

The soldiers kept their clothes tight so it would be easier to move and fight.

the thongs of their sandals

Alternate translation: "the straps of their sandals"

ULT

²⁷ None tire or stumble among them; none slumbers or sleeps. Nor are their belts loose, or the thongs of their sandals broken.

UST

²⁷ They will not get tired or stumble. They will not stop to rest or to sleep. None of their belts will be loose, and none of them will have sandals with broken straps, so they will all be ready to fight in battles.

Isaiah 5:28

their horses' hooves are like flint

"their hooves are like hard stone." Isaiah compares the hard part of a horse's foot to flint, which is a hard stone that can cause sparks when struck. This could mean: (1) Isaiah compares their hooves to flint so to describe the frightening image of their feet causing sparks as they run or (2) Isaiah compares their hooves to flint to emphasize how strong their hooves are which enables the horse to do whatever their master want them to do. (See: [Simile](#))

their chariot wheels like storms

Isaiah compares the chariot wheels to storms in order to imply that they will destroy everything in their path. Alternate translation: "the wheels of the chariots will spin like a windstorm" (See: [Simile](#))

chariot wheels

These wheels often had sharp blades attached to them that would cut to pieces anyone the chariot passed close to.

ULT

²⁸ Their arrows {are} sharp and all their bows are bent; their horses' hooves are like flint, and their chariot wheels like storms.

UST

²⁸ Their arrows will be sharp, and their bows will be ready to shoot those arrows in a battle. Because their horses pull the chariots fast, sparks will shoot out from their hooves, and the wheels of the chariots will spin like whirlwinds.

Isaiah 5:29

young lions

A young age is a metonym for strength. Alternate translation: “the strongest lions” (See: [Metonymy](#))

They will growl and seize the prey

Isaiah compares the enemy killing the people of Judah to a lion killing a weaker animal. This could mean: (1) lions make a sound not as loud as a roar just before they strike, or (2) the writer is using two words to mean the same thing. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Doublet](#))

prey

animals that another animal wants to catch and kill

with none to rescue

Alternate translation: “and no one will be able to save them”

ULT

29 Their roaring {will be} like a lion; they will roar like young lions. They will growl and seize the prey and drag {it} away, with none to rescue.

UST

29 They will roar like fierce lions that growl and then pounce on the animals they want to kill; they will carry them off, and no one will be able to rescue them.

Isaiah 5:30

will roar ... sea roars

The word “roar” here is translated “growl” in verse 29. Use your language’s word for the sound of waves in a storm or heavy rain or some other frightening natural sound.

even the light will be made dark by the clouds

Here darkness represents suffering and disaster. This metaphor can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “the dark clouds will completely block the light of the sun” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³⁰ On that day they will roar against the prey as the sea roars. If {anyone} looks over the land, he will see darkness and suffering; even the light will be made dark by the clouds.

UST

³⁰ Similarly, your enemies will roar over the people they are about to kill, like the sea roars. On that day, if someone looks across the land, he will see only people who are in darkness and distress; it will be as though even the sunlight is hidden by dark clouds.

Isaiah 6

Isaiah 6 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 6:3-4,7, 9-13.

Special concepts in this chapter

Heaven

This vision described in this chapter is probably a scene in heaven. (See: [heaven](#), [sky](#), [heavens](#), [heavenly](#))

Isaiah's call

This chapter record Isaiah's call to prophetic ministry. It recognizes the holiness of God and Isaiah recognizes his need for holiness. (See: [call](#), [call out](#) and [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [holy](#), [holiness](#), [unholy](#), [sacred](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Inevitability

The way Yahweh speaks in this chapter shows the inevitability of the punishment of Yahweh against the people of Judah. The punishment must now come. It is too late for repentance. (See: [repent](#), [repentance](#))

Isaiah 6:1

he was high and elevated

The words “high” and “elevated” emphasize that the throne was very high and above everything around it. The height of the throne represents how great and powerful the Lord is. (See: [Doublet](#))

filled the temple

“filled the palace.” The word used for temple here is often used to refer to the palace of kings.

ULT

¹ In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne; he was high and elevated, and the hem of his {robe} filled the temple.

UST

¹ During the year that King Uzziah died, Yahweh showed me a vision. In the vision, I saw Yahweh sitting on a throne, high above everyone else. He was wearing a very long robe that covered the floor of the temple.

Isaiah 6:2

Above him were the seraphim

The word “seraphim” is the plural of seraph. This means the Lord was seated on the throne and the seraphim were standing or flying near the Lord ready to serve him.

seraphim

This word suggests that the creatures might have a fiery appearance or resemble snakes. Because we do not know exactly what “seraphim” means, you could translate this as “winged creatures” or “winged living things.” Or, you can borrow the word and use it in your language. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#) and [Copy or Borrow Words](#))

each one had six wings

Alternate translation: “each seraph had six wings” or “each creature had six wings”

with two each covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew

The words “wings” and “seraph” are understood. Alternate translation: “with two wings each seraph covered his face, and with two wings he covered his feet, and with two wings he flew” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

² 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.

UST

² Above him were hovering several winged creatures. Each of them had six wings. They covered their faces with two of their wings, they covered their feet with two of their wings, and they flew using two of their wings.

Isaiah 6:3

Each one called to another and said

Alternate translation: "The seraphim called out to one another and said" or "The winged creatures proclaimed to one another"

Holy, holy, holy, is Yahweh of hosts

Repeating the word "holy" three times indicates God is completely holy. Alternate translation: "Yahweh of hosts is holy beyond all else" or "Yahweh of hosts is completely holy"

The whole earth is full of his glory

This speaks of the earth as if it were a container and glory were the contents in the container. Alternate translation: "Everything on the earth is evidence of God's glory" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ Each {one} called to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy, {is} Yahweh of hosts! The whole earth {is} full of his glory."

UST

³ They were calling to each other, saying, "Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is holy; he is completely holy! The entire earth is filled with his glory."

Isaiah 6:4

The foundations of the thresholds shook at the voices of those who were crying out

Alternate translation: "When the seraphim called out, their voices shook the doorways and their foundations"

the house was filled with smoke

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "smoke filled the temple" or "smoke filled the palace" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁴ The foundations of the thresholds shook at the voices of those who were crying out, and the house was filled with smoke.

UST

⁴ When they spoke, the sound of their cries caused the foundation beneath the doorposts of the temple to shake, and the temple was filled with smoke.

Isaiah 6:5

Woe is me! For I am doomed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I am in great trouble! Terrible things will happen to me" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

of unclean lips

Here "lips" represent what a person speaks. And, people saying things that are unacceptable to God is spoken of as if their lips were physically unclean. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Yahweh, Yahweh of hosts

Yahweh, the ruler of the angel armies"

my eyes have seen

Here "eyes" represents the whole person. Alternate translation: "I have seen" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁵ Then I said, "Woe {is} me! For I am doomed because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, because my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh, Yahweh of hosts!"

UST

⁵ Then I said, "Terrible things will happen to me, because everything that I say is sinful, and I live among people who constantly say sinful things. I will be destroyed because I have seen Yahweh, commander of the angel armies!"

Isaiah 6:6

seraphim

This word suggests that the creatures might have a fiery appearance or resemble snakes. Because we do not know exactly what “seraphim” means, you could translate these as “creatures” or “living things” or “beings.” Or you can borrow the word and use it in your language. See how you translated this word in [Isaiah 6:2](#). (See: [Translate Unknowns](#) and [Copy or Borrow Words](#))

tongs

a tool used for grabbing or holding objects

ULT

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me; he had a glowing coal in his hand, that he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.

UST

⁶ Then one of the winged creatures took a hot coal from the altar, using a pair of tongs. He flew to me

Isaiah 6:7

your guilt has been taken away, and your sin atoned for

These two phrases say basically the same thing. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has taken away your guilt and has forgiven your sins" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

your guilt has been taken away

Yahweh no longer considering a person to be guilty is spoken of as if "guilt" were an object that someone could take away from someone else. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ He touched my mouth {with it} and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt has been taken away, and your sin atoned for."

UST

⁷ and touched my lips with the coal. Then he said, "Look, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is ended, and your sins are forgiven."

Isaiah 6:8

the voice of the Lord say

Here “voice” represents the Lord himself. Alternate translation: “the Lord say” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Whom shall I send

It is implied that Yahweh will send someone to speak his message to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “Whom shall I send to be a messenger to my people” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

who will go for us

It seems “us” refers to Yahweh and the members of his heavenly council to whom he is speaking. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#))

ULT

8 I heard the voice of the Lord say,
“Whom shall I send; who will go for us?”
Then I said, “Here I {am;} send me.”

UST

8 Then I heard Yahweh asking, “Whom shall I send to be a messenger to my people? Who will go and speak for us?” I replied, “I am here. Send me!”

Isaiah 6:9

this people

Alternate translation: "the people of Israel"

Listen, but do not understand; see, but do not perceive

This could mean: (1) the imperatives "do not understand" and "do not perceive" express what God is causing to happen. Alternate translation: "You will listen, but Yahweh will not let you understand; you will look carefully, but Yahweh will not allow you to understand" or (2) the imperatives "Listen" and "see" express the idea of "if." Alternate translation: "Even if you listen you will not understand; even if you look carefully, you will not understand" (See: [Imperatives](#) — [Other Uses](#))

Listen, but do not understand; see, but do not perceive

You can state clearly the understood information. Alternate translation: "Listen to Yahweh's message, but do not understand what it means; look at what Yahweh is doing, but do not realize what it means" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

⁹ He said, "Go and tell this people, 'Listen, but do not understand; see, but do not perceive.'

UST

⁹ Then he said, "You will go and say to the people of Israel, 'Listen carefully to what I say, but you will not understand it. You will look very carefully, but you will not understand.'

Isaiah 6:10

Make the heart of this people insensitive

Here “heart” represents a person’s mind. A person who does not think clearly and is unable to understand and care about what is happening is spoken of as if his heart were insensitive. Alternate translation: “Make these people unable to understand” or “Make the minds of these people dull” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Make the heart of this people

It may be more natural to translate “heart” and “this” as plurals. Alternate translation: “Make the hearts of these people”

Make the heart ... insensitive

This command means that Yahweh will use Isaiah’s message to cause the people to understand even less and to make them less sensitive to what Yahweh is doing.

their ears dull, and blind their eyes

“make it so that they cannot hear, and make it so that they cannot see.” Isaiah making people to not understand Yahweh’s message or what he is doing is spoken of as if Isaiah were making them deaf and blind. (See: [Metaphor](#))

they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears

People being able to understand Yahweh’s message and what he is doing is spoken of as if the people were able physically to see and hear. (See: [Metaphor](#))

understand with their heart

Here “heart” represents as person’s mind. Truly understanding something and caring about what is happening is spoken of as if the people were to understand with their hearts. (See: [Metonymy](#))

then turn

Repenting and starting to obey Yahweh is spoken of as if the people were physically to turn towards him. Alternate translation: “follow me again” or “then start trusting in me again” (See: [Metaphor](#))

be healed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “I would heal them” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

10 Make the heart of this people insensitive, and their ears dull, and blind their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and then turn and be healed.”

UST

10 I will cause you people to be unable to care; and I will cause you people to not be able to hear, and I will cause you people to not be able to see. Otherwise you would see with your eyes and you would recognize what it is you are looking at, and you would hear with your ears and be able to understand what you have heard, and you would care deeply and with understanding, and you would turn to me so I might save you and not punish you.”

Isaiah 6:11

Until cities crash into ruins and are without inhabitants, and the houses are without people

Alternate translation: "Until all the cities and houses are ruined and no one lives there"

the land falls into a desolate waste

Here "falls into" is an idiom that means to become something worse.
Alternate translation: "the land becomes a desolate waste" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹¹ Then I said, "Lord, how long?" He answered, "Until cities crash into ruins and are without inhabitants, and the houses are without people, and the land falls into a desolate waste,

UST

¹¹ Then I said, "How long do you want me to continue to do that?" He replied, "Do it until their cities are ruined by their enemies, until no one is living in their houses, do it until all the crops are stolen from their fields and the fields are ruined.

Isaiah 6:12

**until Yahweh has sent the people far away,
and the solitude of the land is great**

Here Yahweh speaks about himself in the third person. Alternate translation: “until I, Yahweh, have sent all the people far away from their land, so that no one is left” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

¹² and until Yahweh has sent the people far away, and the solitude of the land is great.

UST

¹² Do it until Yahweh has exiled everyone far away, and the whole land of Israel is deserted.

Isaiah 6:13

it will again be destroyed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “armies will again destroy the land of Israel” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

as a terebinth or an oak is cut down and whose trunk remains, the holy seed is in its stump

This simile means that even after Yahweh destroys Israel, he will still set apart people from among the Israelites to serve him. (See: [Simile](#))

terebinth

a kind of oak tree (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

trunk ... stump

A trunk is the thick main stem of a tree. A stump is the part of a tree that remains in the ground after the tree is cut down.

the holy seed

The people who will serve Yahweh after armies destroy Israel are spoken of as if they were set apart as a holy seed. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹³ Even if a tenth of the people remain in it, it {will} again {be} destroyed; as a terebinth or an oak is cut down and whose trunk {remains}, the holy seed {is in} its stump.”

UST

¹³ If even one tenth of the people survive and stay there, their enemies will invade the land again and burn everything. But just like when they cut down an oak tree and leave a stump, and new shoots grow from that, the people who remain in this land will be a group that is set apart for me.”

Isaiah 7

Isaiah 7 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 7:7-9, 18-25.

Special concepts in this chapter

“Young woman”

Some translations choose to translate this as “virgin” and believe it is a reference to the Messiah being born of a virgin woman. This is only one possible translation, therefore most translations have avoided forcing this specific connotation into the meaning of the term. (See: [Christ, Messiah](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Israel

In this chapter, Israel is a reference to the northern kingdom of Israel and not the nation as a whole. They are also called Ephraim in this chapter after its most prominent tribe.

Isaiah 7:1

During the days of Ahaz ... king of Judah

“When Ahaz ... was king of Judah” This was when the events happened. (See: [Idiom](#))

Rezin ... Pekah ... Remaliah

men’s names (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Rezin ... and Pekah ... went up

The author speaks as if the kings were the armies they led. Alternate translation: “Rezin ... and Pekah ... led their armies up” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

to war against it

The author speaks as if the city itself were the people who live in it. Alternate translation: “to war against the people of Jerusalem” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ During the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Aram, and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it, but they could not prevail against it.

UST

¹ Ahaz was the son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah. During the time that Ahaz was the king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel marched with their armies to attack Jerusalem. But they could not conquer it.

Isaiah 7:2

It was reported to the house of David

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the house of David heard the report” or “someone reported to the house of David” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the house of David

The word “house” is a metonym for the family living in the house. Alternate translation: “King Ahaz and his counselors” (See: [Metonymy](#))

that Aram was allied with Ephraim

Here “Aram” and “Ephraim” refer to their kings. Here “Ephraim” represents the whole northern kingdom of Israel. Alternate translation: “that Rezin, the king of Aram was helping Pekah, the king of Israel” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

His heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest shake in the wind

The trembling of their hearts at this news is compared to the way trees shake when the wind blows through them. Alternate translation: “Ahaz and his people were very afraid” (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

² It was reported to the house of David that Aram was allied with Ephraim. His heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest shake in the wind. ^[1]

UST

² Before they attacked, everyone in the palace in Jerusalem heard news that Aram and Israel were now allies. So King Ahaz and the people over whom he ruled were extremely afraid; they were shaking like trees shake in a windstorm.

Isaiah 7:3

General Information:

Isaiah writes about what happened to him as if it had happened to someone else.

Shear-Jashub

Translators may also add a footnote that says, "The name Shear-Jashub means 'a remnant will return.'" The meaning may have given hope to Ahaz. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

at the end of the conduit of the upper pool

Alternate translation: "where the water flows out of the tunnel and enters the upper pool"

conduit

man-made ditch or tunnel through which water flows

road

If your language has a word for a road or path that people have made smooth by filling in the low places and lowering the high places, you can use it here.

Lauderer's Field

This could mean: (1) this is the proper name by which the people called the field or (2) this is the common noun that the people used to talk about the field, "the launderer's field" or "the field where men wash wool" or "the field where women wash clothes." (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Lauderer's Field

A launderer is either: (1) a man who washes wool that someone has cut from the sheep, "Wool Washer Field," or (2) a woman who washes dirty clothes, "Clothes Washer Field." (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

³ Then Yahweh said to Isaiah, "Go out with your son Shear-Jashub to meet Ahaz at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the road to Launderer's Field.

UST

³ Then Yahweh said to me, "Take your son Shear-Jashub, and go to talk with King Ahaz. He is at the end of the aqueduct that brings water into the upper reservoir, near the road to the place where women wash clothes.

Isaiah 7:4

Tell him

Alternate translation: "Tell Ahaz"

do not be afraid or intimidated by these two smoldering firebrands, by the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram, and of Pekah son of Remaliah

God compares Rezin and Pekah to burning sticks whose fire has gone out and are making smoke now. God is emphasizing that they are not real threats to Judah. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "do not let Rezin and Pekah make you afraid; their fierce anger is like a burning stick whose fire has gone out and there is only smoke" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

afraid or intimidated

The words "afraid" and "intimidated" mean the same thing and can be translated as one word. Alternate translation: "afraid" (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁴ Tell him, 'Be careful, remain calm, do not be afraid or intimidated by these two smoldering firebrands, by the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram, and of Pekah son of Remaliah.

UST

⁴ Tell Ahaz to stop worrying. Tell him that he does not need to be afraid of those two kings, Rezin and Pekah. They are very angry with Judah, but they are unable to harm his country any more than completely burned-out coals could harm him.

Isaiah 7:5

Aram, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah

The words “Aram” and “Ephraim” refer to the kings of these lands. Also, “Ephraim” represents the northern kingdom of Israel. Alternate translation: “Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

Remaliah

This is the name of a man. Translate his name as in [Isaiah 7:1](#).

have planned evil against you

Here “you” is singular and refers to Ahaz. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

⁵ Aram, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have planned evil against you; they have said,

UST

⁵ Yes, they are planning against him and saying,

Isaiah 7:6

son of Tabeel

It is unknown who this man is. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

6 “Let us attack Judah and terrify her, and let us break into her and set up our king there, the son of Tabeel.”

UST

6 ‘We will attack Judah and conquer it. Then we will appoint Tabeel’s son to be the king of Judah.’

Isaiah 7:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ The Lord Yahweh says, "It will not take place; it will not happen,

UST

⁷ But this is what Yahweh, the Lord, says: 'It will not happen; They will not conquer Jerusalem!

Isaiah 7:8

the head of Damascus is Rezin

Here “head” is a metonym for the most important part. It is implied that Rezin is only a man, and therefore cannot stop Yahweh’s plan. This can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: “the king of Damascus is Rezin, who is only a man” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

sixty-five years

“65 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

Ephraim will be shattered and will no longer be a people

Here “Ephraim” refers to all of the northern kingdom of Israel. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “an army will destroy Ephraim, and there will no longer be a people of Israel” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁸ because the head of Aram {is} Damascus, and the head of Damascus {is} Rezin. Within sixty-five years, Ephraim will be shattered and will no longer be a people.

UST

⁸ The capital of Aram is Damascus, but Damascus is ruled only by its unimportant King Rezin. And as for Israel, within sixty-five years it will be conquered and completely destroyed.

Isaiah 7:9

the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son

This means Pekah is the king of Samaria and all of Israel. Alternate translation: "the king of Samaria is Pekah, who is a weak man" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

If you do not remain firm in faith, surely you will not remain secure

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "If you continue to believe in me, you will certainly remain safe" (See: [Double Negatives](#))

If you do not remain

Alternate translation: "Unless you remain"

ULT

⁹ The head of Ephraim {is} Samaria, and the head of Samaria {is} Remaliah's son. If you do not remain firm in faith, surely you will not remain secure.'"

UST

⁹ Israel's capital is Samaria, and Samaria is ruled only by its insignificant King Pekah. So you do not need to be afraid of those two countries! But you must trust me, because if you do not trust me firmly, you will be defeated.'"

Isaiah 7:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁰ The Lord spoke again to Ahaz, ^[2]

UST

¹⁰ Later, Yahweh gave me another message to tell to King Ahaz.

Isaiah 7:11

ask for it in the depths or in the height above

Yahweh uses the word “depths” and “height” to mean Ahaz could ask him for anything. (See: [Merism](#))

depths ... height

The abstract nouns “depths” and “height” can be translated with prepositions. “places far below you ... places far above you” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

11 “Ask a sign of Yahweh your God; ask for it in the depths or in the height above.”

UST

11 He said to tell him, “Request me, Yahweh your God, to do something that will enable you to be sure that I will help you. What you request can be in a place that is as high as the sky or as low as the place where the dead people are.”

Isaiah 7:12

will not ask

Alternate translation: "will not ask Yahweh for a sign"

ULT

¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test Yahweh."

UST

¹² But when I told that to the king, he refused. He said, "No, I will not ask Yahweh to do something to prove that he will help us."

Isaiah 7:13

house of David

The word “house” is a metonym for the family living in the house. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 7:2](#). Alternate translation: “King Ahaz, you and your counselors” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Is it not enough for you people to test the patience of people? Must you also test the patience of my God?

These questions emphasize that the king has sinned greatly. Alternate translation: “You test the patience of people! Now you even test the patience of my God!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹³ So Isaiah replied, “Listen, house of David. {Is it} not enough for you people to test the patience of people? Must you also test the patience of my God?”

UST

¹³ Then I said to him, “You people who are descendants of King David, listen! You are causing me to be tired of being patient. Are you also going to cause my God to stop being patient with you?”

Isaiah 7:14

the young woman will conceive

Some ancient versions and some contemporary versions translate, “the virgin will conceive,” while others translate “the young woman will conceive.”

his name Immanuel

Translators may add a footnote that says: “The name Immanuel means ‘God with us.’” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you people a sign: See, the young woman will conceive, bear a son, and will call his name Immanuel. ^[3]

UST

14 Yahweh himself will do something for you to prove that he will help you. Listen to this: A young woman will become pregnant and give birth to a son. She will name him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’

Isaiah 7:15

He will eat curds and honey when he knows to refuse the evil and choose the good

This could mean: (1) "By the time that child is old enough to eat curds and honey, he will be able to reject what is evil and choose what is good." This emphasizes that the child will be very young when he knows to choose what is right instead of wrong or (2) "By the time the child is old enough to reject what is evil and choose what is good, he will be eating curds and honey." The people of Judah considered a child to be responsible for doing what is right when he was 12 years old. This emphasizes that within twelve years the people will be able to eat much curds and honey because most of the people of Israel will be killed or taken as captives. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

curds

milk that people have treated to make it into a soft solid

refuse the evil and choose the good

Here "the evil" and "the good" refer to evil and good things in general. Alternate translation: "refuse to do evil deeds and choose to do good deeds" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

¹⁵ He will eat curds and honey when he knows to refuse the evil and choose the good.

UST

¹⁵ By the time that child is old enough to eat curds and honey, he will be able to reject what is evil and choose what is good.

Isaiah 7:16

refuse the evil and choose the good

Here “the evil” and “the good” refer to evil and good things in general. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 7:15](#). Alternate translation: “refuse to do evil deeds and choose to do good deeds” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

you dread

“you fear.” Here “you” is singular and refers to Ahaz. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

16 For before the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be desolate.

UST

16 And before that child is old enough to do that, the lands of the two kings that you are very afraid of will be deserted.

Isaiah 7:17

your people

This refers to the people of Judah.

ULT

17 Yahweh will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house days unlike any since Ephraim seceded from Judah—he will bring on you the king of Assyria.”

UST

17 But then Yahweh will cause you and your family and your entire nation to experience terrible disasters. Those disasters will be worse than any disasters that have occurred since the country of Israel separated from Judah. Yahweh will cause the army of the king of Assyria to attack you!”

Isaiah 7:18

At that time

before the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good ([Isaiah 7:15](#))

Yahweh will whistle for

Alternate translation: “Yahweh will call” or “Yahweh will summon”

for a fly from the distant streams of Egypt, and for a bee from the land of Assyria

Here the armies of Egypt and Assyria are spoken of as if they are insects that will invade the land of Israel. This can be stated as a simile. Alternate translation: “for the armies of Egypt and Assyria, and their soldiers will be everywhere like flies and bees” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

18 At that time Yahweh will whistle for a fly from the distant streams of Egypt, and for a bee from the land of Assyria.

UST

18 At that time, it will be as though Yahweh will whistle to summon the army from the south of Egypt as well as the army of Assyria. They will come and surround your country like flies and bees.

Isaiah 7:19

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁹ They will all come and settle down into all the gorges, into the clefts of the rocks, on all the thornbushes, and onto all the pastures.

UST

¹⁹ They will all come and settle everywhere—in the narrow valleys and caves in the rock cliffs, on land where there are thornbushes as well as on the fertile land.

Isaiah 7:20

the Lord will shave with a razor that was hired beyond the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria

The word “razor” is a metaphor for the king of Assyria and his army, and Yahweh speaks of the king as if the king were a man who would do Yahweh’s work and then receive money from Yahweh. Alternate translation: “the Lord will call the king of Assyria from beyond the Euphrates River to work for him to shave you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

that was hired

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “that he bought” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the head ... the hair of the legs ... also ... the beard

It was bad to have someone shave the top of the head; it was worse to have someone shave “the hair of the legs”; it was worst of all to have someone shave the beard.

the head ... the hair of the legs ... the beard

Isaiah does not say whose head, hair, and beard the Lord is going to shave, but Ahaz and the reader would understand that this is a man; the man is a metaphor for the people living in the land of Judah. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the head

Here “the head” represents the hair that grows on it. Alternate translation: “the hair on the head” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the hair of the legs

This could mean: (1) this is a polite way to speak of the hair on the lower body or (2) this speaks of the hair on the legs. (See: [Euphemism](#))

it will also sweep

If your language requires a person to be the subject of “will ... sweep,” you can say, “the Lord will also sweep.” Alternate translation: “the razor will also sweep”

ULT

²⁰ At that time the Lord will shave with a razor that was hired beyond the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the legs; it will also sweep away the beard.

UST

²⁰ At that time Yahweh will hire the king of Assyria to come with his army from east of the Euphrates River. They will get rid of everything in your land—the crops and the people. They will destroy everything thoroughly; it will be like a barber shaving not only a man’s hair but his beard and the hair on his legs.

Isaiah 7:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ On that day, a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep,

UST

²¹ When that happens, a farmer will be able to keep alive only one young cow and two goats.

Isaiah 7:22

because of the abundance of milk which they shall give

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **abundance**, you could express the same idea with a clause. Alternate translation: “because they will give so much milk” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²² and because of the abundance of milk which they shall give, he will eat curds, for everyone left in the land will eat curds and honey.

UST

²² However, those animals will give plenty of milk, with the result that the farmer will have curds to eat. And because there will not be many people left in the land, all the people who remain there will have plenty of milk and honey.

Isaiah 7:23

there were a thousand vines ... briers and thorns

“there were 1,000 vines.” That is, when Isaiah wrote, there were vineyards, in some of which were 1,000 vines or more each. He says that these vineyards will become full of briers and thorns. (See: [Numbers](#))

a thousand silver shekels

“1,000 silver shekels.” A shekel is a silver coin worth 4 days wage. Alternate translation: “1,000 silver coins” (See: [Numbers](#) and [Biblical Money](#))

briers and thorns

The words “briers” and “thorns” both refer to useless, thorny plants. It is not necessary to translate both words. Alternate translation: “thorn bushes” or “brier bushes” (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

²³ At that time, where there were a thousand vines {worth} a thousand silver {shekels}, there will be nothing but briers and thorns.

UST

²³ Now there are many areas where there are vineyards that are worth one thousand pieces of silver, but at that time there will be only briers and thorns in those fields.

Isaiah 7:24

because all the land will be briers and thorns

Why the hunters come to these lands can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “because there will be nothing in these lands but briers, thorns, and wild animals” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

24 Men will go there to hunt with bows, because all the land will be briers and thorns.

UST

24 There will be only briers and thorns in the entire land, and wild animals, with the result that men will take their bows and arrows and go there to hunt and kill animals.

Isaiah 7:25

They will stay away from all the hills that were cultivated with the hoe

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People will stay away from the hills where they once prepared the soil to plant crops" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁵ They will stay away from all the hills that were cultivated with the hoe, for fear of the briers and thorns; but it will be a place where cattle and sheep graze.

UST

²⁵ No one will go to where there previously were gardens on fertile hillsides, because briers and thorns will cover those hillsides. They will be areas where only a few cattle and sheep and goats wander around searching for something to eat.

Isaiah 8

Isaiah 8 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 8:6-18, 21-22.

Special concepts in this chapter

Trust in Yahweh

Israel will not trust in Yahweh. Instead, they will trust in their own power, their Gentile allies and the power of false gods. They will be punished because the power of Yahweh is greater than all of these. (See: [trust](#), [trusted](#), [trustworthy](#), [trustworthiness](#) and [god](#), [false god](#), [goddess](#), [idol](#), [idolater](#), [idolatrous](#), [idolatry](#))

Isaiah 8:1

Yahweh said to me

Here the word “me” refers to Isaiah.

ULT

¹ Yahweh said to me, “Take a large tablet and write on it, ‘Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.’

UST

¹ Then Yahweh said to me, “Make a large signboard. And write clearly on it, ‘Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz’ which means ‘quickly plunder and steal everything.’”

Isaiah 8:2

I will summon faithful witnesses to attest for me

This could mean: (1) Yahweh is speaking: "I will call honest men to be witnesses" or (2) Isaiah is speaking: "I called honest men to be witnesses" or (3) Yahweh is commanding Isaiah: "Call honest men to be witnesses."

ULT

² I will summon faithful witnesses to attest for me, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah."

UST

² So I requested Uriah the high priest and Jeberekiah's son Zechariah, men who were both honest witnesses, to watch me as I was doing that.

Isaiah 8:3

I went to the prophetess

It can be stated explicitly that Isaiah is married to the prophetess. Alternate translation: "I slept with my wife, the prophetess" (See: [Euphemism](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³ I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then Yahweh said to me, "Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.

UST

³ Then I slept with my wife, who was a prophetess, and she became pregnant and then gave birth to a son. Then Yahweh said to me, "Give him the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz,

Isaiah 8:4

the riches of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "the king of Assyria will carry away all the treasures of Damascus and Samaria" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁴ For before the child knows to cry, 'My father,' and, 'My mother,' the riches of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria."

UST

⁴ because before he is old enough to say 'papa' or 'mama', the king of Assyria will come with his army and take away all the valuable things in Damascus and in Samaria."

Isaiah 8:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ Yahweh spoke to me again,

UST

⁵ Yahweh spoke to me again and said,
“Tell the people of Judah:

Isaiah 8:6

Because this people has refused the gentle waters of Shiloah

The words “gentle waters” are a metaphor for the law of the Lord. Alternate translation: “Because this people has rejected Yahweh’s law, which is like the gentle waters of Shiloah” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

this people

If your language needs a plural here, you can translate this phrase and the following verbs as “these people have refused ... are happy.” Alternate translation: “this people group”

is happy over Rezin and Remaliah’s son

The full meaning can be made explicit. See how you translated these men’s names in [Isaiah 7:1](#). Alternate translation: “is happy that the armies of Assyria have defeated Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, Remaliah’s son, king of Israel” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁶ “Because this people has refused the gentle waters of Shiloah, and is happy over Rezin and Remaliah’s son,

UST

⁶ I have taken good care of you people, but you have rejected that, thinking that my help was very small, like the small canal through which water flows from the spring of Gihon into Jerusalem. Instead, you have been happy to request help from King Rezin and King Pekah.

Isaiah 8:7

therefore the Lord is

Yahweh speaks of himself as if he were someone else to remind the people of who he is. Alternate translation: “therefore I, the Lord, am” (See: [Pronouns](#))

bring up on them

The verb is “bring up”; the adverb is “on them.”

on them

Alternate translation: “on the people of Judah”

the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory

The river symbolizes the army of Assyria. Alternate translation: “the army from Assyria, which is powerful like a mighty river” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the River

the Euphrates River in Assyria

ULT

⁷ therefore the Lord is about to bring up on them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. It will come up over all its channels and overflow its banks.

UST

⁷ Therefore, I, the Lord, will soon cause the powerful army of the king of Assyria, which will be like a great flood from the Euphrates River, to attack the people of Judah. Their soldiers will be everywhere in your country, like a river that overflows all its banks.

Isaiah 8:8

The River will sweep onward into Judah, flooding and passing on, until it reaches to your neck

The army of Assyria is like a flood of water. Alternate translation: “More and more soldiers will come like a river rising up to your neck” (See: [Metaphor](#))

The River

This refers to the Euphrates River in Assyria. This is a metonym for the Assyrian soldiers, who will come from their homes by the Euphrates River ([Isaiah 8:7](#)). (See: [Metonymy](#))

Its outstretched wings will fill

This could mean: (1) as “the River” in the metaphor rises, its “wings” flow over and cover what had been dry land or (2) Isaiah changes metaphors and now speaks of Yahweh as a bird who is protecting the land, “But his outstretched wings will cover.” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Immanuel

Translators may add a footnote that says: “The name Immanuel means ‘God with us.’” See how you translated this in [Isaiah 7:14](#).

ULT

⁸ The River will sweep onward into Judah, flooding and passing on, until it reaches to your neck. Its outstretched wings will fill the breadth of your land, Immanuel.”

UST

⁸ Those soldiers will go all over Judah, like a river whose water rises as high as a person's neck. Their army will spread over the land quickly, like an eagle, and they will cover your entire land! But I, your God, will be with you!”

Isaiah 8:9

You peoples will be broken to pieces

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will break your armies to pieces" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Listen, all you distant countries

Isaiah speaks as if people in other countries can hear him. Alternate translation: "Listen, all you people in far away places" (See: [Apostrophe](#))

arm yourselves for war and be broken in pieces; arm yourselves and be broken in pieces

This is basically the same thing, stated twice for emphasis. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "you can prepare yourselves for battle, but I will defeat you" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁹ You peoples will be broken to pieces. Listen, all you distant countries: arm yourselves for war and be broken in pieces; arm yourselves and be broken in pieces.

UST

⁹ Listen, all you people in distant countries! You can prepare to attack Judah. You can prepare for battle, and shout your war cries, but your armies will be crushed!

Isaiah 8:10

**Form a plan, but it will not be carried out;
issue the command, but it will not be carried
out**

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “You can prepare to attack Judah, but you will not succeed” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

**it will not be carried out ... it will not be
carried out**

To “carry out” a plan or command is to do what the person who makes the plan or command wants the hearer to do. These clauses can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “you will not be able to do what you plan to do ... your soldiers will not be able to do what their commanders tell them to do” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Form a plan, but it will not be carried out; issue the command, but it will not be carried out, for God {is} with us.

UST

¹⁰ You can prepare for what you will do to attack Judah, but what you plan to do will be useless! You will not succeed, because God is with us!

Isaiah 8:11**Yahweh spoke to me, with his strong hand upon me**

Here “his strong hand upon me” is an idiom that refers to Yahweh’s power. Alternate translation: “Yahweh spoke to me in a very powerful way” (See: [Idiom](#))

warned me not to walk in the way of this people.

This is an indirect quote that ends in 8:17. Alternate translation: “warned me and said, ‘Do not act like this people.’” (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

ULT

11 Yahweh spoke to me, with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people.

UST

11 Yahweh strongly warned me not to act like the other people in Judah did. He said to me,

Isaiah 8:12

Do not call conspiracy anything that this people calls conspiracy

The people imagine there are conspiracies, and it makes them anxious. Alternate translation: "Do not worry like this people who think someone is always trying to harm them" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹² Do not call conspiracy anything that this people calls conspiracy, you will not fear what they fear, and do not be terrified.

UST

¹² "Do not say that everything that people do is conspiring against the government, like other people say, and do not be afraid of the things that other people are afraid of.

Isaiah 8:13

It is Yahweh of hosts whom you will honor as holy; he is the one you must fear, and he is the one you must dread

If you translate this as a direct quote, you can also translate it with Yahweh speaking in the first person: "But you will consider me, Yahweh of Hosts, as holy. And you will fear and be in awe of me" (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#) and [Pronouns](#))

ULT

¹³ It is Yahweh of hosts whom you will honor as holy; he is the one you must fear, and he is the one you must dread.

UST

¹³ I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, am the one you should consider to be holy. I am the one you should fear, the one you must give an account to.

Isaiah 8:14

He will become a sanctuary

The word “sanctuary” is a metaphor for Yahweh keeping his people safe and protecting them. Alternate translation: “He will protect them when they go to him” (See: [Metaphor](#))

he will be a trap and a snare to the people of Jerusalem

The words “trap” and “snare” mean almost the same thing and emphasize that when Yahweh decides to punish the people of Jerusalem they will not be able to escape. Alternate translation: “he will trap the people of Jerusalem so they cannot escape him” (See: [Doublet](#))

trap

a device that catches a bird in a net or basket

snare

a trap that catches and holds an animal’s leg or nose

ULT

14 He will become a sanctuary; but he will be a stone of striking, and a rock of stumbling— for both the houses of Israel, and he will be a trap and a snare to the people of Jerusalem.

UST

14 Yahweh will protect you. But as for the other people in Israel and Judah, Yahweh will be like a stone that causes people to stumble, like a rock that causes them to fall down. And as for the people of Jerusalem, he will be like a trap or a snare.

Isaiah 8:15

Many will stumble over it and fall and be broken, and be ensnared and captured

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Many people will stumble over the stone, and when they fall they will not get up. And many people will step into the trap, and they will not be able to get out" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ensnared and captured

These two words mean basically the same thing and emphasize that they will be caught in the trap. (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Many will stumble over it and fall and be broken, and be ensnared and captured.

UST

¹⁵ Many people will stumble and fall down and never get up again. They will experience great troubles; they will be captured by their enemies."

Isaiah 8:16

Bind up my testimony, seal the official record

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "Close up tightly the scroll with this message written on it" (See: [Parallelism](#))

my testimony ... my disciples

It is unclear to whom the word "my" refers. It could be Isaiah or Yahweh. It is best to leave the pronouns ambiguous if your language will allow it.

ULT

16 Bind up my testimony, seal the official record, and give it to my disciples.

UST

16 So I say to you who are my disciples, seal up this scroll on which I have written the messages that God has given to me, and give his instructions to others who have accompanied me.

Isaiah 8:17

I will wait for Yahweh

Here "I" refers to Isaiah.

who hides his face from the house of Jacob

Yahweh's "face" is a metonym for his blessing or favor. Alternate translation: "who has taken away his blessing from the house of Jacob" or "who no longer looks with favor on the house of Jacob" (See: [Metonymy](#))

house of Jacob

people of Israel

ULT

17 I will wait for Yahweh, who hides his face from the house of Jacob; I will trust in him.

UST

17 I will wait to see what Yahweh will do. He has rejected the descendants of Jacob, but I will confidently expect him to help me.

Isaiah 8:18

I and the sons whom Yahweh has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel

"I and the sons Yahweh has given me are like signs to warn the people of Israel." The sons are Shear-Jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, whose names are a message to the people of Israel. (See: [Isaiah 7:3](#) and [Isaiah 8:1](#))

ULT

¹⁸ See, I and the sons whom Yahweh has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Yahweh of hosts, who lives on Mount Zion.

UST

¹⁸ I and the children that Yahweh has given to me are like signs to warn the people of Israel; we are warnings from Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the one who lives in his temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 8:19

General Information:

Isaiah is speaking.

They will say to you, “Consult with those who speak with the dead and with spirits,” the ones who chirp and mutter incantations. But should a people not consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

Other This could mean: (1) “They will say to you, ‘Consult with the mediums and spiritists, those who chirp and mutter incantations. Should a people not consult their gods? They should consult the dead on behalf of the living for teaching and for testimony.’” or (2) “When they say to you, ‘Consult with the mediums and spiritists, those who chirp and mutter incantations,’ should a people not consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony!”

They will say to you

The word “they” refers to those who do not trust Yahweh. The word “you” is plural and refers to those who trust Yahweh. (See: [Forms of You](#))

the ones who chirp and mutter incantations

The words “chirp” and “mutter” refer to the sounds mediums and spiritists made when trying to speak to dead people. Alternate translation: “they people who whisper and mutter their magic words to try and speak to dead people”

chirp

make sounds like birds

But should a people not consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

These questions are to show that people should consult God instead of foolishly trying to talk to dead people. Alternate translation: “But people should ask Yahweh to guide them. They should not seek answers from those who have died.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁹ They will say to you, “Consult with those who speak with the dead and with spirits,” the ones who chirp and mutter incantations. But should a people not consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

UST

¹⁹ Some people may urge you to consult those who talk with the spirits of dead people or with those who say that they receive messages from those spirits. They whisper and mutter about what we should do in the future. But God is the one whom we should ask to guide us! It is ridiculous for people who are alive to request spirits of dead people to tell us what we should do!

Isaiah 8:20

To the law and to the testimony

This could mean: (1) “Pay attention to God’s instructions and teaching” or (2) “Then you must remember the teaching and testimony I gave.” ([Isaiah 8:16](#)).

the law

This is the same word translated “official record” in [Isaiah 8:16](#).

the testimony

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 8:16](#).

If they do not say such things

Alternate translation: “If they do not speak of the law and the testimony”

it is because they have no light of dawn

Isaiah speaks of people who do not know God as if they were people walking in darkness without any light.

Alternate translation: “it is because they are like a person lost in the dark” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not say such things, it is because they have no light of dawn.

UST

20 Pay attention to God’s instructions and teaching! If people do not say things that agree with what God teaches us, what they say is worthless. It is as though those people are in darkness.

Isaiah 8:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ They will pass through the land greatly distressed and hungry. When they are hungry, they will become angry and curse their king and their God, as they turn their faces upward.

UST

²¹ They will wander through the land, worried and hungry. And when they become very hungry, they will become very angry. They will look up toward heaven and curse God and will also curse their king.

Isaiah 8:22

oppressive gloom

Alternate translation: "terrible sadness"

They will be driven into a land of darkness

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will drive them out into complete darkness" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²² They will look at the earth and see distress, darkness, and oppressive gloom. {They will be} driven into a land of darkness.

UST

²² They will look around the land and see only trouble and darkness and things that cause them to despair. And then they will be thrown into very black darkness.

Isaiah 9

Isaiah 9 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter begins with a prophecy that is a continuation of the prophecy concluding the previous 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 9:1-21. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Messiah

The prophecy in 9:1-7 is about the coming Messiah. Parts of this prophecy were fulfilled when he first came to earth. Other parts are to be fulfilled when he will return in glory to earth. (See: [Christ](#), [Messiah](#) and [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Fulfillment of prophecies

Some of the prophecies in this chapter were fulfilled in Isaiah's lifetime while others are fulfilled in the distant future. Some scholars believe that there can be multiple fulfillments of each of these prophecies, while others see only one complete fulfillment.

Isaiah 9:1

The gloom will be dispelled from her who was in anguish

Isaiah speaks of people who are spiritually lost as if they were walking around in total darkness. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will remove the darkness from her who was in anguish” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

The gloom

This word means “partial or total darkness.” Translate as you translated “gloom” in [Isaiah 8:22](#).

her who was in anguish

“her who was suffering great pain and sadness.” This is probably a metaphor for the people of Judah. (See: [Metaphor](#))

In an earlier time he humiliated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali

“Land” refers to the people who live in an area. Alternate translation: “In the past, the Lord humbled those living in Zebulun and Naphtali” (See: [Metonymy](#))

but in the later time he will make it glorious, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations

Here “it” refers to Galilee which represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: “but in the future, the Lord will honor the people of Galilee of the nations, which is on the road between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Galilee of the nations

Here “nations” represents the people from other nations that live in Galilee. Alternate translation: “Galilee, where many foreigners live” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ The gloom {will be} dispelled from her who {was} in anguish. In an earlier time he humiliated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the later time he will make it glorious, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

UST

¹ However, those in Judah who were distressed will not continue to suffer. Previously, Yahweh humbled the people in the land where the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali live. But in the future he will honor the people who live in the region of Galilee, along the road between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, where many foreigners live.

Isaiah 9:2

walked in darkness ... lived in the land of the shadow of death

Isaiah speaks of the people living sinful lives and suffering because of it as if they had been walking in a dark or living in a land of shadow of death. (See: [Metaphor](#))

a great light ... light has shone

Here “light” represents hope and deliverance. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the land of the shadow of death

The phrase “shadow of death” is an idiom that means absolute darkness. Alternate translation: “the land of deepest darkness” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who have lived in the land of the shadow of death, the light has shone on them. ^[1]

UST

² Some day in the future, it will be as though the people who walked in darkness have seen a bright light. Yes, a bright light will shine on those who live in a land where they now have great troubles.

Isaiah 9:3

You have multiplied the nation; you have increased their joy

The word “you” refers to Yahweh. The word “their” refers to the people of Israel, but Isaiah includes himself as part of Israel. Alternate translation: “Lord, you will greatly increase our people and our joy” (See: [Forms of You](#))

They rejoice before you like the joy at harvest time, as men rejoice when they divide the plunder

The joy that Yahweh will give Israel is described as the same kind of joy people have when they bring in a harvest or divide valuable plunder. Alternate translation: “They will rejoice before you as people rejoice when they gather their crops or when a battle is over and soldiers divide what they took” (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

³ You have multiplied the nation; you have increased their joy. They rejoice before you like the joy at harvest time, as {men} rejoice when they divide the plunder.

UST

³ Yahweh, you will cause us people in Israel to rejoice; we will become very happy. We will rejoice about what you have done like people rejoice when they harvest their crops, or like soldiers rejoice when they divide up among themselves the things that they have captured in battle.

Isaiah 9:4

For the yoke of his burden ... you have shattered as on the day of Midian

Isaiah speaks of the Israelites, who are the Assyrians' slaves, as if they were an ox wearing a yoke. This will happen in the future, but he speaks as if it has already happened. Alternate translation: "For as on the day of Midian you will set the people of Israel free from being slaves to their oppressors like a person removes a yoke from the shoulders of an animal" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Predictive Past](#))

For the yoke of his burden ... his shoulder ... his oppressor

Isaiah speaks of the people of Israel as if they were one man. Alternate translation: "For the yoke of their burden ... their shoulders ... their oppressor" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the beam across his shoulder

The beam is the part of the yoke that goes over the shoulders of the ox.

beam

Another possible meaning is "staff," a long piece of wood that a person uses to beat the oxen so they will work and a symbol of one person's power to rule other people.

the rod of his oppressor

Isaiah speaks of the power the oppressor has over the people of Judah as if it were the piece of wood used by a person to beat oxen so they will work. (See: [Metaphor](#))

as on the day of Midian

The word "day" is an idiom that can refer to an event that takes more than one day to happen. Alternate translation: "as when you defeated the Midianites" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁴ For the yoke of his burden, the beam across his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have shattered as on the day of Midian.

UST

⁴ You will cause us to no longer be slaves of those who captured us; you will lift the heavy burdens from our shoulders. It will be as though you have broken the weapons of those who oppressed us, like you did when you destroyed the army of the Midian people group.

Isaiah 9:5

every boot treading in the tumult and the garments rolled in blood will be burned

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “you will burn the boots of the soldiers and their clothes, which are covered with blood” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

burned, fuel for the fire

This can be made more explicit by translating it as a new sentence. Alternate translation: “burned. You will make the boots and the garments fuel for the fire” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁵ For every boot treading in the tumult and the garments rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire.

UST

⁵ The boots that the enemy soldiers wore and their clothing which has stains of blood on them will all be burned up; they will be fuel for a big fire.

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The word “us” refers to both the speaker and the hearer and so is inclusive. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “For the Lord will give to us a child” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

the rule will be on his shoulder

His authority to rule is spoken of as if it were the robe that is a symbol of his authority. Alternate translation: “he will wear his royal robe on his shoulder” or “he will have authority to rule as king.” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Counselor

one who advises kings

ULT

⁶ For to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given; and the rule will be on his shoulder; and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

UST

⁶ Another reason that we will rejoice is that a special child will be born for us, a woman will give birth to a son, and he will be our ruler. And his names will be ‘Wonderful Counselor,’ ‘Mighty God,’ ‘Our Everlasting Father,’ and ‘King who causes us to have Peace.’

Isaiah 9:7

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end

Alternate translation: "As time passes he will rule over more and more people and enable them to live more and more peacefully"

rules on the throne of David

Sitting on the "throne of David" is a metonym for having the right to rule; only David's descendants could be king over Israel. Alternate translation: "has the right to rule as David's descendant" (See: [Metonymy](#))

his kingdom, to establish it and sustain it with justice and with righteousness

This can be translated as a new sentence. Alternate translation: "his kingdom. He will establish and protect his kingdom, and he will do what is fair and just"

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

ULT

⁷ Of the increase of {his} government and of peace {there will be} no end, as he rules on the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it and sustain it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and for evermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.

UST

⁷ His rule and the peace that he brings will never end. He will rule fairly and justly, like his ancestor King David did. This will happen because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, greatly desires that it happen.

Isaiah 9:8

The Lord sent a word against Jacob, and it fell on Israel

“Send a word” means to speak. Alternate translation: “The Lord has spoken against the people of Israel” (See: [Idiom](#))

Jacob ... Israel

These names refer to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

ULT

⁸ The Lord sent a word against Jacob, and it fell on Israel.

UST

⁸ The Lord has warned the descendants of Jacob; he has said that he will punish Israel.

Isaiah 9:9

Ephraim ... Samaria

These names all refer to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

All the people will know, even Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria

What they will know can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "All the people will know that the Lord has judged them, even those in Ephraim and Samaria" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁹ All the people will know, even Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and with an arrogant heart,

UST

⁹⁻¹⁰ And all the people in Samaria and other places in Israel will know that, but they are now very proud and arrogant. They said, "Our city has been destroyed, but we will take away the broken bricks from the ruins and replace them with carefully cut stones. Our sycamore fig trees have been cut down by our enemies, but we will plant cedar trees in their place."

Isaiah 9:10

The bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with chiseled stone; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place

The full meaning can be made explicit. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "We will replace the common bricks of our destroyed cities with expensive cut stone, and we will plant great cedar trees where ordinary sycamore trees grew" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁰ "The bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with chiseled stone; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place."

UST

⁹⁻¹⁰ And all the people in Samaria and other places in Israel will know that, but they are now very proud and arrogant. They said, "Our city has been destroyed, but we will take away the broken bricks from the ruins and replace them with carefully cut stones. Our sycamore fig trees have been cut down by our enemies, but we will plant cedar trees in their place."

Isaiah 9:11

Therefore Yahweh will raise up against him Rezin, his adversary

Here “Rezin” represents himself and his army. Alternate translation: “Therefore, Yahweh will bring Rezin and his army against the people of Israel” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Rezin

This is the name of a man. See how you translated Rezin in [Isaiah 7:1](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

will stir up his enemies

The phrase “stir up” is an idiom that means to incite them to attack. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will cause Israel’s enemies to attack” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹¹ Therefore Yahweh will raise up against him Rezin, his adversary, and will stir up his enemies,

UST

¹¹ But Yahweh will bring the armies of Assyria, the enemies of King Rezin of Aram, to fight against Israel and incite other nations to attack Israel.

Isaiah 9:12

They will devour Israel with open mouth

“Devour” is how wild animals eat their prey. Alternate translation: “Like a wild beast eating its prey, the army of the enemy will destroy the people of Israel” (See: [Metaphor](#))

In all these things, his anger does not subside; instead, his hand

“Even though all these things have happened, he is still angry, and his hand.” See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:25](#).

his hand is still stretched out

Isaiah speaks as if Yahweh were a person about to hit another person with his fist. This is a metaphor for Yahweh punishing Israel. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:25](#). Alternate translation: “he will still be ready to punish them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² the Arameans on the east, and the Philistines on the west. They will devour Israel with open mouth. In all these things, his anger does not subside; instead, his hand {is} still stretched out.

UST

¹² The army of Aram will come from the east, and the army of Philistia will come from the west, and they will destroy Israel like a wild animal tears another animal apart and devours it. But even after that happened, Yahweh will still be very angry with them. He will be ready to strike them with his fist again.

Isaiah 9:13

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

ULT

13 Yet the people will not turn to him who struck them, nor will they seek Yahweh of hosts.

UST

13 But even though Yahweh will punish his people like that, they still will not return to him and worship him. They still will not request Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, to assist them.

Isaiah 9:14

head and tail

Isaiah explains this metaphor in verse 15. The “head,” the part of an animal a person would want to be, is “the leader and the noble man,” and the “tail,” the dirty part of the animal, is “the prophet who teaches lies.” (See: [Metaphor](#))

palm branch and reed

The “palm branch” grows high on the tree and is a metaphor for people who are important and rule others. The “reed” grows in shallow water and is a metaphor for people who are poor and unimportant and are ruled by others. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 Therefore Yahweh will cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed, in one day.

UST

14 Therefore, in one day Yahweh will get rid of those who are like Israel's head and those who are like its tail; the ones who are like the top of the palm tree and the ones who are like the bottom.

Isaiah 9:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁵ The leader and the noble man {are} the head; and the prophet that teaches lies {is} the tail.

UST

¹⁵ The leaders of Israel are the head, and the prophets who tell lies are the tail.

Isaiah 9:16

Those who lead this people lead them astray

The leaders causing people to disobey is spoken of as if the leaders led them on the wrong path. Alternate translation: "The leaders of Israel have caused the people to disobey God" (See: [Metaphor](#))

those who are led by them are swallowed up

This is a metaphor that can be stated in active form. This could mean: (1) Alternate translation: "those that they lead become confused" or (2) Alternate translation: "Yahweh destroys those that they lead" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

16 Those who lead this people lead {them} astray, and {those who are} led by them are swallowed up.

UST

16 The leaders of the people have misled them; they have caused the people that they are ruling to be confused.

Isaiah 9:17

every mouth speaks foolish things

The word “mouth” refers to the person. Alternate translation: “every person speaks foolish things” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

In all these things, his anger does not subside; instead, his hand

“Even though all these things have happened, he is still angry, and his hand.” See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:25](#).

his hand is still stretched out

Isaiah speaks as if Yahweh were a person about to hit another person with his fist. This is a metaphor for Yahweh punishing Israel. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:25](#). Alternate translation: “he will still be ready to punish them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

17 Therefore the Lord will not rejoice over their young men nor will he have compassion on their fatherless and widows, since every one is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks foolish things. In all these things, his anger does not subside; instead, his hand is still stretched out.

UST

17 For that reason, Yahweh is not pleased with the young men of Israel, and he does not even act mercifully toward the widows and orphans, because they are all ungodly and wicked, and they all say things that are foolish. But Yahweh still is angry with them; he is ready to strike them with his fist again.

Isaiah 9:18

Wickedness burns like a fire; it devours the briers and thorns; it even burns the thickets of the forest

The people's evil deeds are spoken of as if they were a very destructive fire. This fire burns even the briers and thorns, plants that grow in places where people no longer live, and "the thickets of the forest" where no one has ever lived, because it has already destroyed the places where people were living. (See: [Metaphor](#))

briers ... thorns

The words "briers" and "thorns" both refer to useless, thorny plants; they can be translated using one word. See how you translated these words in [Isaiah 7:23](#). Alternate translation: "thorn bushes" (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

¹⁸ Wickedness burns like a fire; it devours the briers and thorns; it even burns the thickets of the forest, which rise in a column of smoke.

UST

¹⁸ When people do wicked things, it is like a brush fire that spreads rapidly. It burns up not only briers and thorns; it starts a big fire in the forests from which clouds of smoke will rise.

Isaiah 9:19

Through the fury of Yahweh of hosts the land is scorched

Translate “Yahweh of hosts” as in [Isaiah 1:9](#). If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Like fire that scorches the land, the Lord’s intense anger will destroy the people of Israel” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Metaphor](#))

No man spares his brother

To “spare” someone means to save them from harm. Alternate translation: “No one does anything to help his own brother escape” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹⁹ Through the fury of Yahweh of hosts the land is scorched, and the people are like fuel for the fire. No man spares his brother.

UST

¹⁹ It is as though the whole land is burned black because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is extremely angry with the Israelite people. They will become like fuel for that great fire, and no one will try to rescue even his own brother from that fire.

Isaiah 9:20

They will grab food on the right hand ... on the left hand

This expression means that the people will grab food wherever they can find it. (See: [Metonymy](#))

Each will even eat the flesh of his own arm

This could mean: (1) people will be so hungry that they will want to eat or will actually eat their own arms or (2) the word “arm” is a metaphor for the person’s neighbor. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁰ They will grab food on the right hand but still be hungry; they will eat food on the left hand but will not be satisfied. Each will even eat the flesh of his own arm. ^[2]

UST

²⁰ The Israelite people will attack their neighbors who live in houses at the right of them to get food, but they will still be hungry. They will kill and eat the flesh of those who live in houses at the left, but their stomachs will still not be full.

Isaiah 9:21

In all these things, his anger does not subside; instead, his hand

“Even though all these things have happened, he is still angry, and his hand.” See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:25](#).

his hand is still stretched out

Isaiah speaks as if Yahweh were a person about to hit another person with his fist. This is a metaphor for Yahweh punishing Israel. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:25](#). Alternate translation: “he will still be ready to punish them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²¹ Manasseh {will devour} Ephraim, and Ephraim, Manasseh; and they together {will} attack Judah. In all these things, his anger does not subside; instead, his hand {is} still stretched out.

UST

²¹ Israelites of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim will attack each other, and then they will both attack the people of Judah. But even after that happens, Yahweh will still be very angry with them; He will be ready to strike them with his fist again.

Isaiah 10

Isaiah 10 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter begins with a prophecy that is a continuation of the prophecy beginning in 8:21. 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 10:1-11, 13-14, 15-19, 27-34. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Yahweh's sovereignty

Yahweh has so much power and authority that he controls all of the nations. He even controls the nations who do not worship him. He uses Assyria to punish the kingdom of Israel.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

There are many rhetorical questions in this chapter. Yahweh uses rhetorical questions to make statements about Israel's sin. The Assyrians use rhetorical questions in order to boast in their pride. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#))

Isaiah 10:1

to those who enact unjust laws and write unfair decrees

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "to those who make laws and decrees that are not fair to everyone" (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹ Woe to those who enact unjust laws and write unfair decrees.

UST

¹ Terrible things will happen to you judges who are unjust and who make unfair laws.

Isaiah 10:2

They deprive the needy of justice, rob the poor of my people of their rights

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "They are unjust to the poor and needy among my people" (See: [Parallelism](#))

the needy

Alternate translation: "poor people"

plunder widows

Alternate translation: "take everything from women whose husbands have died"

make the fatherless their prey

Isaiah compares orphans to animals that other animals hunt and eat. This emphasizes that orphans are powerless and judges can easily harm them. Alternate translation: "harm children who do not have parents like an animal that goes after its prey" (See: [Metaphor](#))

prey

Translated "prey" as in [Isaiah 5:29](#).

ULT

² They deprive the needy of justice, rob the poor of my people of their rights, plunder widows, and make the fatherless their prey!

UST

² You refuse to help poor people, and you do not allow them to get the things that they should get. You allow people to steal things from widows and do unfair things to children without fathers.

Isaiah 10:3

What will you do on judgment day ... away?

Isaiah uses a question to scold those in Judah who harm the poor and weak people. Alternate translation: "You will be able to do nothing on judgment day ... away!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

judgment day

Alternate translation: "the day when Yahweh comes to judge you" or "the day when Yahweh punishes you"

To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth?

Isaiah uses a question to scold those in Judah who harm the poor and weak people. Alternate translation: "You have nowhere to run for help, and you will have nowhere to hide your riches!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

³ What will you do on judgment day when the destruction comes from far away? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth?

UST

³ When I punish you by sending people from distant lands to cause you disasters, to whom will you run to get help? Your valuable possessions will certainly not be safe anywhere.

Isaiah 10:4

Nothing remains, and you crouch

This could mean: (1) "None of your wealth remains as you crouch" or (2) "You can do nothing else but crouch."

you crouch among the prisoners or fall among the killed

Alternate translation: "your enemies will either take you as a prisoner or will kill you"

In all these things, his anger does not subside

"Even though all these things have happened, he is still angry." See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:25](#).

his hand is still stretched out

Isaiah speaks as if Yahweh were a person about to hit another person with his fist. This is a metaphor for Yahweh punishing Israel. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:25](#). Alternate translation: "he will still be ready to punish them" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Nothing remains, and you crouch among the prisoners or fall among the killed. In all these things, his anger does not subside; instead, his hand {is} still stretched out.

UST

⁴ You will be able only to stumble along as your enemies take you away with other prisoners, or else your corpses will lie on the ground with others who have been killed. But even after that happens, Yahweh will still be very angry with you. He will still be ready to strike you again with his fist.

Isaiah 10:5

Woe

This word marks the beginning of God's announcement about a severe punishment against Assyria.

the Assyrian

This refers to the king of Assyria.

the club of my anger, the rod by whom I wield my fury

Both of these phrases mean basically the same thing. Yahweh compares the king of Assyria to a weapon a person holds in his hand and hits other people with. It emphasizes that the king of Assyria and his army are a tool that Yahweh uses to punish Israel. Alternate translation: "who will be like a weapon in my hands that I will use to show my anger" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Woe to the Assyrian, the club of my anger, the rod by whom I wield my fury!

UST

⁵ Yahweh says, "Terrible things will happen to Assyria. It is true that their army is like a rod or a club with which I punish other nations because I am very angry with those nations."

Isaiah 10:6

I send him ... I order him

The word “him” here also refers to the king of Assyria. But it does not mean God is only sending the king; he is sending with him the army of Assyria. Alternate translation: “I send the army of Assyria ... I order them” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

against an arrogant nation and against the people who bear my overflowing wrath

Alternate translation: “to attack a nation full of proud people who have made me very angry”

who bear my overflowing wrath

Yahweh speaks of his wrath as if it were more liquid than a container could hold; “the people” are trying to carry this container, but it is heavy, and Yahweh keeps pouring liquid in even after it starts to spill out. Alternate translation: “at whom I continue to be angry even after I have punished them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

to take the spoil

Alternate translation: “to take everything they have”

to take the prey

to take the people like prey. See how you translated “prey” in [Isaiah 5:29](#).

trample them like mud

This could mean: (1) Yahweh compares the army of Assyria attacking Israel to people stomping through mud who do not care what happens to the mud. Alternate translation: “trample them until they become like mud” or (2) the people are stomping on other people so they are lying in the mud and unable to rise. This is a metaphor for completely defeating them. Alternate translation: “completely defeat them” (See: [Simile](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ I send him against an arrogant nation and against the people who bear my overflowing wrath. I order him to take the spoil, to take the prey, and to trample them like mud in the streets.

UST

⁶ Sometimes I send the Assyrians to attack a godless nation, to fight against other people who have caused me to be angry. I send them to capture people and to seize and take away their possessions, and to trample them like people walk on mud in the streets.

Isaiah 10:7

But this is not what he intends, nor does he think this way

The meaning of “this” and “this way” can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “But the king of Assyria does not intend to do what I tell him, nor does he think that I am using him as my weapon” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

It is in his heart to destroy and eliminate many nations

The words “destroy” and “eliminate” mean basically the same thing. They are used for emphasis. Alternate translation: “He wants to completely destroy many nations” (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁷ But this is not what he intends, nor does he think this way. {It is} in his heart to destroy and eliminate many nations.

UST

⁷ But the king of Assyria does not understand; he does not realize that he is only like a weapon in my hand. He only wants to destroy people, to get rid of many nations.

Isaiah 10:8

Are not all my princes kings?

The king of Assyria uses a question to emphasize what he believes everyone should already know. Alternate translation: "I have made captains of my army kings over lands I have conquered!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁸ For he says, "{Are} not all my princes kings?"

UST

⁸ He says, 'All of my army commanders will soon be kings of these nations that I conquer!'

Isaiah 10:9

Is not Kalno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus?

The king of Assyria uses these questions for emphasis. Alternate translation: "Kalno is no different from Carchemish. Hamath is no different from Arpad. Samaria is no different from Damascus. I have conquered them all!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Kalno ... Carchemish ... Hamath ... Arpad

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

ULT

⁹ {Is} not Kalno like Carchemish? {Is} not Hamath like Arpad? {Is} not Samaria like Damascus?

UST

⁹ We destroyed the city of Kalno as we destroyed the city of Carchemish. We destroyed the city of Hamath as we destroyed the city of Arpad; we destroyed Samaria just like we destroyed Damascus.

Isaiah 10:10

As my hand has overcome

“Hand” here is a reference to military strength. Alternate translation: “As my powerful army has defeated” or “As I have conquered” (See: [Metonymy](#))

my

This refers to the king of Assyria.

whose carved figures were greater

During this time people believed that the greatness of an idol showed how powerful the kingdom that had built it was. The king of Assyria is saying that because the idols in Jerusalem are not as great as the idols of the kingdoms he has defeated, Jerusalem would be less able to defeat him than they were.

ULT

10 As my hand has overcome idolatrous kingdoms, whose carved figures were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,

UST

10 We were able to destroy all those kingdoms that were full of the images of their gods, kingdoms whose gods were stronger than the gods in Jerusalem and Samaria.

Isaiah 10:11

just as I did to Samaria and her worthless idols

The word “Samaria” refers to the people who lived there, and “her” refers to the city of Samaria. Cities and nations were often spoken of as if they were women. Alternate translation: “just as I did to the people of Samaria and their worthless idols” (See: [Metonymy](#))

will I not also do the same to Jerusalem and to her idols?

The king of Assyria used this question to emphasize the certainty that he will conquer the people of Jerusalem. Alternate translation: “I will certainly do the same to Jerusalem and her idols!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹¹ just as I did to Samaria and her worthless idols, will I not also do the same to Jerusalem and to her idols?”

UST

¹¹ So we will defeat Jerusalem and destroy the images of gods that are there, just as we destroyed Samaria and the images that were there!

Isaiah 10:12

When the Lord has finished his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish

Yahweh speaks of himself as if he were someone else. "When I, the Lord, have finished my work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish"

his work on ... and on

his work of punishing. "punishing ... and punishing"

I will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and his prideful looks

Alternate translation: "I will punish the king of Assyria for the arrogant things he said and the look of pride on his face"

ULT

¹² When the Lord has finished his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and his prideful looks.

UST

¹² But I am the Lord, and after I have used Assyria to finish what I want to do to punish the people in Jerusalem, I will punish the king of Assyria because he has been very proud and arrogant.

Isaiah 10:13

For he says

Alternate translation: "For the king of Assyria says"

I have removed ... I have stolen

Here the word "I" refers to the king of Assyria. He was the leader of the Assyrian army and took credit for what the army did at his command. Alternate translation: "my army has removed ... They have stolen" (See: [Metonymy](#))

like a bull

"as strong as a bull." Some ancient texts read, "like a mighty man." (See: [Simile](#))

I have brought down the inhabitants

This could mean: (1) the king of Assyria has shamed the people of the countries he conquered or (2) he has removed the kings of the nations so they no longer rule. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I have brought

Here the word "I" refers to the king of Assyria. He was the leader of the Assyrian army and took credit for what the army did at his command. Alternate translation: "I and my army have brought" or "we have brought" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

13 For he says, "By my strength and by my wisdom I acted. I have understanding, and I have removed the boundaries of the peoples. I have stolen their treasures, and like a bull I have brought down the inhabitants.

UST

13 He says, 'By my own great power I have done these things. I have been able to do them because I am very wise and very intelligent. My army removed the barriers at the borders of nations and carried away all their valuable things. My mighty army has humiliated all their people.

Isaiah 10:14

General Information:

Yahweh is still quoting the king of Assyria ([Isaiah 10:13](#)).

My hand has seized

The hand is a metonym for either the king's power or his army.
Alternate translation: "In my power I have seized" or "My army has seized" (See: [Metonymy](#))

My hand has seized, as from a nest, the wealth of nations

The king of Assyria compares taking the treasures from the nations to a person taking eggs out of a bird's nest. This emphasizes how easy it was for him and his army to conquer these other kingdoms.
Alternate translation: "My army has stolen the wealth from the nations just as easily as a man takes eggs from a nest" (See: [Simile](#))

as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth

The king of Assyria speaks of taking over nations as if he was gathering eggs. Alternate translation: "just as a person takes eggs from a nest when the bird is not there to protect them, my army has taken the treasures of every nation" (See: [Simile](#))

None fluttered their wings or opened their mouth or chirped

This compares the nations to a bird who sits quietly while her eggs are taken. This emphasizes that the nations did nothing while the army of Assyria took all of their possessions. Alternate translation: "And like a bird that does not make a sound or flap her wings when someone steals her eggs, the nations did nothing as we took their treasure" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁴ My hand has seized, as from a nest, the wealth of nations, and as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth. None fluttered their wings or opened their mouth or chirped."

UST

¹⁴ Like someone who reaches into a bird's nest to take away the eggs, we have taken away the treasures of other countries. The people were not like birds that would have flapped their wings or chirp loudly to protest about their eggs being stolen; the people did not object at all to their treasures being stolen.'

Isaiah 10:15

Will the ax boast about itself against the one who wields it? Will the saw praise itself more than the one who cuts with it?

The speaker uses these questions to mock the king of Assyria.
Alternate translation: "An ax cannot boast that it is better than the one who holds it. And a saw does not get more glory than the one who cuts with it." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

the saw

a sharp tool used for cutting wood

It is as if a rod could lift up those who raise it, or as if a wooden club could lift up a person

These phrases mean basically the same thing and are used to strengthen the meaning of the two questions before it. This can be translated as a new sentence. Alternate translation: "And neither can a rod or staff lift the person who picks it up" (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Will the ax boast about itself against the one who wields it? Will the saw praise itself more than the one who cuts with it? It is as if a rod could lift up those who raise it, {or} as if a wooden club could lift up a person.

UST

¹⁵ But I am Yahweh, and I say that an ax certainly cannot boast about being stronger than the person who uses it, and a saw is not greater than the person who uses it. A rod cannot control the one who holds it, and a wooden club cannot lift up a person. So the king of Assyria should not boast that he has done these things with his own wisdom and strength.

Isaiah 10:16

Therefore the Lord Yahweh of hosts will send emaciation among his elite warriors

It is unclear whether Yahweh or Isaiah is speaking. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **emaciation**, you could express the same idea with the verb “make weak.” Alternate translation: “Therefore I, Lord Yahweh of hosts, will make the king’s strongest soldiers weak” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

under his glory there will be kindled a burning like fire

Yahweh compares his punishment to a fire. This emphasizes that his punishment will completely destroy all the splendor and greatness of the kingdom of Assyria. Alternate translation: “I will destroy his greatness as if I were starting a fire to burn everything he is proud of” (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁶ Therefore the Lord Yahweh of hosts will send emaciation among his elite warriors; and under his glory there will be kindled a burning like fire.

UST

¹⁶ I am the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, who will send a plague among the best soldiers of Assyria; it will be like a fire that will kill them and get rid of their glory.

Isaiah 10:17

The light of Israel will become a fire

The phrase “light of Israel” refers to Yahweh. It is unclear whether Yahweh or Isaiah is speaking. Alternate translation: “I, Yahweh, the light of Israel, will become like a fire, able to destroy everyone that does not honor me” (See: [Metaphor](#))

his Holy One a flame

“I, Yahweh, the Holy one of Israel, will become like a flame.” See how you translated “Holy One” in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

it will burn and devour his thorns and briers

“The fire will burn and devour the king of Assyria’s thorns and briers.” The speaker compares the king of Assyria’s army to thorns and briers. This emphasizes how easily God will destroy them. Alternate translation: “I will destroy the Assyrians like a fire burning thorns and briers” (See: [Metaphor](#))

thorns ... briers

The words “briers” and “thorns” both refer to useless, thorny plants; they can be translated using one expression. See how you translated these words in [Isaiah 7:23](#). Alternate translation: “thorn bushes” (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

17 The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame; it will burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day.

UST

17 Yahweh is like a light for the people of Israel, like a fire; the Holy One who rules Israel is like a flame. The soldiers of Assyria are like thorns and briers, and Yahweh will burn them up in one day.

Isaiah 10:18

Yahweh will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful land

This could mean: (1) "Yahweh will destroy the great forests and farmlands in the nation of Assyria" or (2) "Yahweh will destroy the army of Assyria as a fire burns up great forests and farmlands." (See: [Metaphor](#))

both soul and body

This could mean: (1) this emphasizes that God will completely destroy the forests and farmlands. Alternate translation: "completely" or (2) this means God will completely destroy the people of Assyria. The phrase "soul and body" refers to the spiritual part and the physical part of a person. (See: [Merism](#))

it will be like when a sick man's life wastes away

This compares either the forests and farmlands of Assyria or the army of Assyria to a sick man as he lies in bed dying. This emphasizes how something so great can become weak and dying. Alternate translation: "they will be like a sick man who grows weak and dies" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁸ Yahweh will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful land, both soul and body; it will be like when a sick man's life wastes away.

UST

¹⁸ There are glorious forests and fertile farmlands in Assyria, but Yahweh will completely destroy them; they will be like a very sick person who shrivels up and then dies.

Isaiah 10:19

The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few

Alternate translation: "What remains of the trees in the king's forest will be so few"

ULT

¹⁹ The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so {few}, that a child could count them.

UST

¹⁹ There will be very few trees left in those forests; even a child will be able to count them."

Isaiah 10:20

On that day

This refers to the time when God does the things that are described in [Isaiah 10:16-19](#). Alternate translation: “At that time” (See: [Idiom](#))

that has escaped

The meaning can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “that has escaped from the army of Assyria” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

will no longer rely on the one who defeated them

Alternate translation: “will no longer rely on the king of Assyria, who harmed them”

Holy One

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

ULT

²⁰ On that day, the remnant of Israel, the family of Jacob that has escaped, will no longer rely on the one who defeated them, but will indeed depend on Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.

UST

²⁰ In the future there will be only a few people left in Israel; not many descendants of Jacob will still be alive. But they will no longer rely on the king of Assyria, the king of the nation that tried to destroy them. Instead, they will faithfully trust in Yahweh, the Holy One who rules Israel.

Isaiah 10:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ A remnant of Jacob will return to the mighty God.

UST

²¹ Those Israelites will return to their mighty God.

Isaiah 10:22

your people, Israel, are

Here, **your** is singular. Possible meanings are: (1) God is speaking to Isaiah and “your” refers to Isaiah. Alternate translation: “your people Israel are” or (2) Isaiah or God is speaking to the nation of Israel and “your” refers to the nation. Alternate translation: “your people, O Israel, are” (See: [Forms of You](#))

are like the sand of the seashore

This emphasizes that there were a great number of people of Israel. Alternate translation: “are too many to count, like the sand on the seashore” (See: [Simile](#))

Destruction is decreed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh has decreed that he will destroy most of those who live in Israel” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

as overflowing righteousness demands

This can be translated as a new sentence. Alternate translation: “This must be done for the sake of perfect righteousness” or “Yahweh must do this because he is completely righteous”

ULT

22 For though your people, Israel, are like the sand of the seashore, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, as overflowing righteousness demands.

UST

22 Now, the people of Israel are as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore, but only a few of them will return from the countries to which they will be exiled. Yahweh has decided to destroy most of the Israelites, and that is what he must do because he is completely just.

Isaiah 10:23

carry out the destruction determined throughout the land

This can be translated in active form. This could mean: (1) Alternate translation: “destroy everything in the land just as he has determined to do” or (2) Alternate translation: “destroy the people in the land just as he has determined to do.” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

determined

Alternate translation: “decided”

ULT

²³ For the Lord Yahweh of hosts, is about to carry out the destruction determined throughout the land.

UST

²³ Yes, the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has already decided to destroy the entire land of Israel.

Isaiah 10:24

the Assyrian

Isaiah speaks of the king of Assyria and his army as if he were one man. Alternate translation: “the king of Assyria and his army” (See: [Personification](#))

He will strike you with the rod and raise his staff against you

The words “rod” and “staff” refer to pieces of wood that people use as clubs to beat animals and other people. Isaiah speaks of the way the Assyrians will rule over the Israelites as if the Assyrians were beating the Israelites with clubs. Alternate translation: “He will rule over you and make slaves of you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

He will strike

The word “He” refers to “the Assyrian” which represents the king of Assyria and his army. Alternate translation: “He and his army will strike” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

as the Egyptians did

The full meaning can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “as the Egyptians ruled over your ancestors and made them slaves” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

24 Therefore the Lord Yahweh of hosts says, “My people who live in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian. He will strike you with the rod and raise his staff against you, as the Egyptians did.

UST

24 This is what the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: “My people in Jerusalem, do not be afraid of the army of Assyria when they beat you with rods and clubs, like the men of Egypt did to your ancestors long ago.

Isaiah 10:25

my anger will lead to his destruction

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **destruction**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "I will destroy him because I am angry with him" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁵ Do not fear him, for in a very short time my anger against you will end, and my anger will lead to his destruction."

UST

²⁵ Soon I will no longer be angry with you, and then I will be angry with the people of Assyria and destroy them!"

Isaiah 10:26

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

will wield a whip against them

“will beat the Assyrians with a whip.” God will not really use a whip. This refers to God’s power to punish the Assyrians severely. Alternate translation: “will punish the Assyrians severely as if with a whip” (See: [Metaphor](#))

as when he defeated Midian at the rock of Oreb

This refers to when God helped a man named Gideon defeat the army of Midian. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

He will raise his rod over the sea and lift it up as he did in Egypt

This speaks of God rescuing the people from the Assyrians as if they were the Egyptian army. This refers to when God caused the water of the Red Sea to split so the people of Israel could escape from the Egyptian army and so that the Egyptian army would drown in it. Alternate translation: “He will help you escape from the army of Assyria as he helped your ancestors escape the army of Egypt” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁶ Then Yahweh of hosts will wield a whip against them, as when he defeated Midian at the rock of Oreb. He will raise his rod over the sea and lift it up as he did in Egypt.

UST

²⁶ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will strike them with his whip. He will do to them as he did when he defeated the army of the Midian people group, and as he did when he caused the army of Egypt to drown in the Sea of Reeds.

Isaiah 10:27

his burden is lifted from your shoulder and his yoke from off your neck

“Yahweh will lift the burden that Assyria has put on your shoulder, and he will remove the yoke that they have put on your neck.” These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The words “burden” and “yoke” refer to slavery. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will remove the Assyrians who oppress you and will stop them from making you their slaves” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Parallelism](#) and [Metonymy](#))

the yoke will be destroyed because of fatness

This expression suggests that the neck of the animal that is wearing the yoke will become too fat to fit the yoke any longer. This is a metaphor for Israel becoming so strong that the Assyrians can no longer rule them. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “your neck will become so fat that it will break the yoke” or “you will become so strong that you will no longer be the Assyrians’ slaves” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁷ On that day, his burden is lifted from your shoulder and his yoke from off your neck, and the yoke will be destroyed because of fatness. ^[1]

UST

²⁷ One day in the future, Yahweh will cause the army of Assyria to stop oppressing you, his people; he will end your suffering and your being slaves of the people of Assyria; you will become too strong for them.

Isaiah 10:28

has come ... has passed ... has stored

Isaiah speaks of these future events as though they have already happened. (See: [Predictive Past](#))

Aiath ... Migron ... Michmash

These are all cities and villages near Jerusalem that the army of Assyria went through and caused trouble in. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

28 The enemy has come to Aiath and has passed through Migron; at Michmash he has stored his provisions.

UST

28 One day in the future this will be the situation: The army of Assyria has entered northern Judah near Aiath; they have gone through Migron and stored their supplies at Micmash, north of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 10:29

have crossed ... lodge ... trembles ... has fled

Isaiah speaks of these future events as though they have already happened. (See: [Predictive Past](#))

Geba ... Ramah ... Gibeah

These are all cities and villages near Jerusalem that the army of Assyria went through and caused trouble in. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Ramah trembles and Gibeah of Saul has fled

Here “Ramah” and “Gibeah of Saul” refer to the people who lived in those cities. Alternate translation: “The people of Ramah tremble and the people of Gibeah of Saul have fled” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁹ They have crossed over the pass and they lodge at Geba. Ramah trembles and Gibeah of Saul has fled.

UST

²⁹ They have crossed through a mountain pass and set up their tents at Geba. People in Ramah will tremble because they are afraid. The people of Gibeah, where King Saul was born, have all run away.

Isaiah 10:30

daughter of Gallim

The word “daughter” here refers to the people who live in the city.
Alternate translation: “Gallim” or “people of Gallim” (See: [Idiom](#))

Gallim ... Laishah ... Anathoth

These are names of more cities and villages near Jerusalem that the Assyrian army traveled through causing fear among the people. All of these refer to the people who live in these places. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

³⁰ Cry aloud, daughter of Gallim! Give attention, Laishah! You poor Anathoth!

UST

³⁰ You people of Gallim will cry out for help! They will shout to the people of the city of Laish near Jerusalem to warn them! The people of Anathoth will suffer a lot.

Isaiah 10:31

Madmenah ... Gebim

These are names of more cities and villages near Jerusalem that the Assyrian army traveled through causing fear among the people. All of these refer to the people who live in these places. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

³¹ Madmenah is fleeing, and the inhabitants of Gebim run for safety.

UST

³¹ The people of Madmenah north of Jerusalem are all running away, and the people of Gebim close to Jerusalem are trying to hide.

Isaiah 10:32

Nob

This is the name of a village or city near Jerusalem that the Assyrian army traveled through causing fear among the people. It refers to the people who live in this place. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

he will halt at Nob and shake his fist

Here “he” and “his” refer to the king of Assyria and his soldiers. People would shake their fists at people whom they were threatening. Alternate translation: “the army of Assyria will stop at Nob and threaten” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³² This very day he will halt at Nob and shake his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

UST

³² The soldiers of Assyria will stop at the city of Nob outside Jerusalem. They will shake their fists as they threaten the people on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem

The words “mount” and “hill” are metonyms for the people who live on them. The words “mount of the daughter of Zion” mean almost the same thing as the words “hill of Jerusalem.” See how they are translated in [Isaiah 2:14](#). Alternate translation: “the people of Mount Zion and the people living on the hill in Jerusalem” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Doublet](#))

Isaiah 10:33

Behold

This can be translated as “Look” or “Listen” or “Pay attention to what I am about to tell you.”

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

will lop off the boughs ... the lofty will be brought low

Isaiah speaks of the army of Assyria as if it were the tall trees in Lebanon. God will destroy the army like people cutting down the mighty trees of Lebanon. This emphasizes that though the army is strong, God has the power to destroy it. (See: [Metaphor](#))

will lop off the boughs

“will cut off the big branches of the trees.” In order to make it clear that this refers to the army of Assyria, it can be translated as a simile: He will destroy the army of Assyria like strong men cutting off the big branches of trees. (See: [Metaphor](#))

with a terrifying crash

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **crash**, you could express the same idea with the verb “make a noise.” Alternate translation: “and the branches will crash down on the ground and make a terrifying noise” or “and the branches will fall to the ground with a very loud noise” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the tallest trees will be cut down

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “he will cut down the tallest trees” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the tallest trees

This is a metaphor for “the strongest soldiers.” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the lofty will be brought low

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “he will bring down the lofty people” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

lofty

proud

ULT

33 Behold, the Lord Yahweh of hosts will lop off the boughs with a terrifying crash; the tallest trees {will be} cut down, and the lofty will be brought low.

UST

33 But listen to this! Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, with his great power will destroy the mighty army of Assyria. It is as though they are a huge tree that he will cut down.

Isaiah 10:34

He will chop down the thickets ... and Lebanon in his majesty will fall

Isaiah speaks of the army of Assyria as if it were the tall trees in Lebanon. God will destroy the army like people cutting down the mighty trees of Lebanon. This emphasizes that though the army is strong, God has the power to destroy it. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the thickets of the forest

“the dense shrubs in the forest.” This is possibly a metaphor for those people who are not well known. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Lebanon in his majesty will fall

“the forests of Lebanon will no longer be so grand.” This is possibly a metaphor for the Assyrian army. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will defeat the army of Assyria, as mighty as it is” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³⁴ He will chop down the thickets of the forest with an ax, and Lebanon in his majesty will fall.

UST

³⁴ He will destroy the soldiers of Assyria as men use big axes to cut down the tall trees in the forests of Lebanon.

Isaiah 11

Isaiah 11 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Messiah

The prophecies of this chapter focus on the coming Messiah. Some of these prophecies concern the first coming of Jesus, while some reference a future day of restoration. The author transitions between these time periods without telling his reader. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [Christ](#), [Messiah](#) and [restore](#), [restoration](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Ambiguity

It is uncertain what period of time these prophecies refer to or who will fulfill them. The translator should allow this uncertainty and ambiguity to remain. (See: [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Isaiah 11:1

A shoot will sprout from the stump of Jesse ... a branch out of his roots will bear fruit

Isaiah speaks of Jesse and his descendants as if they were a tree that had been cut down. Both of these phrases tell about a descendant of Jesse who would be king. Alternate translation: "As a shoot sprouts out of a tree stump, so a descendant of Jesse will become king over what remains of Israel" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

the stump of Jesse

A stump is what remains of a tree after it is chopped down. The "stump of Jesse" represents what was left of the kingdom that Jesse's son David was once king of. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ A shoot will sprout from the stump of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots will bear fruit.

UST

¹ Like a new branch often grows from the stump of a tree, there will be a descendant of King David who will be a new king.

Isaiah 11:2

The Spirit of Yahweh will rest upon him

Resting upon him represents being with him and helping him. The word “him” refers to the one who would become king. (See:

[Metaphor](#))

the Spirit of wisdom ... the Spirit of instruction ... the Spirit of knowledge ... the fear of Yahweh

Here the word “Spirit” refers to an ability or quality that the Spirit of Yahweh would give him. Alternate translation: “and he will cause him to have wisdom and understanding, instruction and might, knowledge and the fear of Yahweh” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² The Spirit of Yahweh will rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of instruction and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh.

UST

² The Spirit of Yahweh will always be with him. The Spirit will enable him to be wise and to understand many things; The Spirit will enable him to decide what is good to do and will give him great power. The Spirit will enable him to know Yahweh and to revere him.

Isaiah 11:3

Connecting Statement:

Isaiah continues to describe the king.

he will not judge by what his eyes see

The phrase “what his eyes see” refers to seeing things that are not important for judging a person rightly. Alternate translation: “he will not judge a person simply by seeing what the person looks like” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

nor decide by what his ears hear

“and he will not decide by what his ears hear.” The phrase “what his ears hear” refers to hearing what people say about someone. Alternate translation: “and he will not judge a person simply by hearing what others say about him” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³ His delight will be the fear of the Lord; he will not judge by what his eyes see, nor decide by what his ears hear.

UST

³ He will be glad to obey Yahweh. He will not decide whether someone is righteous or not only by seeing what that person looks like, or by listening to what others say about that person.

Isaiah 11:4

the poor ... the humble ... the wicked

These phrases refer to people who have these qualities. Alternate translation: “poor people ... humble people ... wicked people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth ... with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. (See: [Parallelism](#))

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth

The word “earth” here represents the people on earth. Striking them with the rod of his mouth represents judging them, and that judgement will lead to punishment. Alternate translation: “He will judge the people of the earth, and they will be punished” (See: [Metonymy](#))

with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked

The “breath of his lips” represents him judging them. Alternate translation: “he will judge wicked people, and they will be killed” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ Instead, he will judge the poor with righteousness and decide fairly for the humble of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

UST

⁴ He will judge the cases of needy people fairly; and he will act justly toward poor people. He will punish evil people as a result of what he decides; he will get rid of wicked people because of the evil things they have done.

Isaiah 11:5

the belt of his waist ... the belt around his hips

This could mean: (1) the belt is used to secure one's clothes so he can work, or (2) the belt is an undergarment, or (3) the belt is a sash that a king wears to show his authority.

Righteousness will be the belt of his waist

Wearing righteousness like a belt represents being righteous. This could mean: (1) the king's righteousness will enable him to rule. Alternate translation: "His righteousness will be a like a belt around his waist" or (2) the king's righteousness would show his authority to rule. Alternate translation: "He will rule righteously" (See: [Metaphor](#))

faithfulness the belt around his hips

The words "will be" are understood in this phrase. Alternate translation: "faithfulness will be the belt around his hips" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

faithfulness the belt around his hips

Wearing faithfulness like a belt represents being faithful. This could mean: (1) the king's faithfulness will enable him to rule, or (2) the king's faithfulness will show his authority to rule. Alternate translation: "his faithfulness will be a like a belt around his hips" or "he will rule faithfully" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Righteousness will be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his hips.

UST

⁵ He will always act righteously; the good things he does will be like a belt around his waist. He will always speak what is true; the true words he speaks will be like a sash around his waist.

Isaiah 11:6

General Information:

Isaiah describes what the world will be like when the king rules. There will be complete peace in the world. This is shown by the peace that there will be even among animals. Animals that normally kill other animals will not kill them, and they will all be safe together.

The wolf ... the leopard ... the young lion

These phrases refer to these animals in general, not to a specific wolf or leopard. These are all strong animals that attack and eat other animals. Alternate translation: "Wolves ... leopards ... young lions" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

the lamb ... the young goat ... the calf ... the fattened calf

The phrases refer to these animals in general, not to a specific lamb or goat. These are all animals that eat grass and straw. Other animals sometimes attack and eat them. Alternate translation: "lambs ... young goats ... calves ... fattened calves ... Cows ... oxen" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

leopard

a large cat with yellow fur and black spots that kills and eats other animals (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

the calf, the young lion and the fattened calf, together

The phrase "will be" is understood. Alternate translation: "the calf, the lion, and the fattened calf will be together" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

A little child will lead them

A child will take care of them and lead them to good places to drink water and eat grass or hay.

ULT

⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, the calf, the young lion and the fattened calf, together. A little child will lead them.

UST

⁶ When he becomes king, wolves and lambs will live together peacefully; leopards, instead of killing baby goats, will lie down with them. Similarly, fat, healthy calves and lions will eat food together; and a young child will take care of them.

Isaiah 11:7

the bear ... The lion

These phrases refer to these animals in general, not to a specific wolf or leopard. These are all strong animals that attack and eat other animals. Alternate translation: "Wolves ... leopards ... young lions ... bears ... Lions" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

The cow ... the ox

The phrases refer to these animals in general, not to a specific lamb or goat. These are all animals that eat grass and straw. Other animals sometimes attack and eat them. Alternate translation: "lambs ... young goats ... calves ... fattened calves ... Cows ... oxen" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

ULT

⁷ The cow and the bear will graze together, and their young will lie down together. The lion will eat straw like the ox.

UST

⁷ Cows and bears will eat together; bear cubs and calves will lie down together. Lions will not eat other animals; instead, they will eat hay like cows do.

bear

a very large animal with thick hair and sharp claws that kills and eats other animals (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

will graze together

Alternate translation: "will eat grass together"

their young

This refers to the animals' offspring shortly after they are born.

Isaiah 11:8

A baby will play over the hole of the snake

It can be stated clearly that the baby will be safe because the snake will not bite it. Alternate translation: "Babies will play safely over the hole of the snake" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the snake ... the serpent's den

These phrases refer to poisonous snakes in general. Alternate translation: "snakes ... serpents' dens" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

the weaned child

a child who no longer drinks its mother's milk

ULT

⁸ A baby will play over the hole of the snake, and the weaned child will put his hand on the serpent's den.

UST

⁸ Babies will play safely near the holes where cobra snakes live; small children will even put their hands into nests of poisonous snakes, and the snakes will not harm them.

Isaiah 11:9

on all my holy mountain

The “holy mountain” is Mount Zion, in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: “on all of Yahweh’s holy mountain”

the earth will be full of knowledge of Yahweh

The phrase “knowledge of Yahweh” represents people who know Yahweh. Alternate translation: “the earth will be full of those who know Yahweh” or “those who know Yahweh will cover the earth” (See: [Metonymy](#))

as the waters cover the sea

This phrase is used to show how full the earth will be of people who know Yahweh. You may want to help your readers to understand that it does this by using words that are similar to the words in the previous phrase. Alternate translation: “as the seas are full of water” (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

⁹ They will not hurt nor destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of knowledge of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea.

UST

⁹ No creatures will harm or kill other creatures on Mount Zion, my holy hill; and the earth will be filled with people who know me, as the seas are full of water.

Isaiah 11:10

the root of Jesse

This refers to Jesse's and King David's descendant who would become the king that was told about in [Isaiah 1:1](#). Alternate translation: "Jesse's descendant king" or "the king descended from Jesse" (See: [Metonymy](#))

will stand as a banner for the peoples

A banner is a flag that a king would raise as a sign for people to see it and come to him. Alternate translation: "will be like a sign for the peoples" or "will attract the peoples to come to him" (See: [Simile](#))

The nations

Alternate translation: "The people of the nations"

ULT

¹⁰ On that day, the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will seek him out, and his resting place will be glorious.

UST

¹⁰ At that time, a descendant of King David will hold up a flag to signal to the people of all people groups that they should gather around him; they will come to him to get his advice, and the place where he lives will be glorious.

Isaiah 11:11

the Lord will again extend his hand to recover the remnant of his people

The hand is a reference to God's power. Alternate translation: "the Lord will again use his power to bring back the remnant of his people" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Pathros ... Elam ... Hamath

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

ULT

¹¹ On that day, the Lord will again extend his hand to recover the remnant of his people who remain in Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the islands of the sea.

UST

¹¹ At that time, Yahweh will reach out his hand as he did long ago; he will enable those who had been exiled from Israel to return home, from Assyria, from northern Egypt, from southern Egypt, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath, and from all the distant countries near the sea.

Isaiah 11:12

He will set up a banner for the nations

This could mean: (1) "The Lord will set up the king as a banner for the nations" or (2) "The king will set up a banner for the nations" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a banner for the nations

Alternate translation: "a flag for the nations to see" or "a flag to call the nations to himself"

the dispersed of Judah

Alternate translation: "the people of Judah who had been scattered around the world"

from the four corners of the earth

The earth is pictured as if it has four corners, and those corners are its most distant places. This refers to everywhere on earth where those people might be. Alternate translation: "from even the most distant places of the earth" or "from all over the earth" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

12 He will set up a banner for the nations and will gather the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

UST

12 Yahweh will raise his flag among all the people groups, and he will gather together the people of Israel who were exiled long ago. He will gather from very distant places on the earth the people of Judah whom he had scattered to those places.

Isaiah 11:13

He will turn aside the envy of Ephraim

Ephraim here refers to the descendants of the northern kingdom of Israel. The noun “envy” can be expressed as an adjective. Alternate translation: “He will stop the people of Ephraim from being envious” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Judah will no longer be hostile to Ephraim

Judah here refers to the descendants of the southern kingdom. This phrase can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “he will stop the people of Judah from being hostile” or “he will stop the people of Judah from hating” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

13 He will turn aside the envy of Ephraim, and hostilities of Judah will be cut off. Ephraim will not envy Judah, and Judah will no longer be hostile to Ephraim.

UST

13 Then, the people of Israel and the people of Judah will not be jealous of each other any longer, and they will no longer be enemies of each other.

Isaiah 11:14

they will swoop down on the Philistine hills

The people of Israel and Judah are pictured as if they were birds that fly down quickly to attack a person or animal. Alternate translation: "they will go quickly to the Philistine hills to attack the people there" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 Instead they will swoop down on the Philistine hills on the west, and together they will plunder the people of the east. They will attack Edom and Moab, and the people of Ammon will obey them.

UST

14 Their armies will join together to attack the people of Philistia to the west. And together they will attack nations to the east; they will defeat those nations and take away all their valuable possessions. They will capture the areas of Edom and Moab, and they will rule the people of the Ammon people group.

Isaiah 11:15

the gulf of the Sea of Egypt

A “gulf” is a large area of water that land partly surrounds.

With his scorching wind he will wave his hand over the Euphrates River

Waving his hand over something represents his power to change it.
Alternate translation: “By his power he will cause a scorching wind to blow on the Euphrates River” (See: [Metaphor](#))

his scorching wind

This is a strong or hot wind that causes some of the water in rivers to dry up.

so it can be crossed over in sandals

Alternate translation: “so that people can cross over it even while wearing their sandals”

ULT

15 Yahweh will completely destroy the gulf of the Sea of Egypt. With his scorching wind he will wave his hand over the Euphrates River and will divide it into seven streams, so it can be crossed over in sandals.

UST

15 Yahweh will make a dry road through the sea near Egypt. It will be as though he will wave his hand over the Euphrates River and send a strong wind to cause it to divide into seven streams, with the result that people will be able to walk across those streams.

Isaiah 11:16

There will be a highway

A highway is a large road that many people can travel on. "Yahweh will make a road"

in their coming up from the land of Egypt

Alternate translation: "when they came up from the land of Egypt"

ULT

16 There will be a highway for the remnant of his people that return from Assyria, as there was for Israel in their coming up from the land of Egypt.

UST

16 Because he will make a highway for his people who are living in Assyria, they will be able to return to their own land, just like long ago he made a path for the people of Israel so that they could go through the water when they left Egypt.

Isaiah 12

Isaiah 12 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

“That day”

The time of this day is unclear. It may be a time in the near future for Isaiah, or a time in the distant future for him. In the latter case, it would reference the last days. (See: [last day](#), [latter days](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Tense

Extra care must be taken in translating the tense of this chapter. The author talks about the future, but frequently changes to speak in the present tense. Some languages will have difficulty speaking in this way.

Isaiah 12:1

On that day

It can be stated clearly what time is being referred to. Alternate translation: “At that time” or “When the king rules” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

your wrath has turned away

God’s wrath is spoken of as if it were a person that could turn away and leave. It means that God has stopped being angry. Alternate translation: “You are no longer angry with me” (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

¹ On that day you will say, “I will give thanks to you, Yahweh. For though you were angry with me, your wrath has turned away, and you have comforted me.

UST

¹ At that time, you people of Jerusalem will sing this song: “Yahweh, we praise you! Previously, you were angry with us, but you are not angry now and you have comforted us.

Isaiah 12:2

God is my salvation

God causing someone's salvation is spoken of as if God were that salvation. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **salvation**, you could express the same idea with the noun "savior" or the verb "save." Alternate translation: "God causes my salvation" or "God is my savior" or "God is the one who saves me" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

Yahweh is my strength

God causing someone to be strong is spoken of as if Yahweh were their strength. Alternate translation: "Yahweh makes me strong" (See: [Metaphor](#))

song

The word "song" here represents what a person sings about. Alternate translation: "the one I joyfully sing about" (See: [Metaphor](#))

He has become my salvation

Alternate translation: "He has saved me"

ULT

² See, God {is} my salvation; I will trust and will not fear, for Yahweh, yes, Yahweh {is} my strength and song. He has become my salvation."

UST

² Amazingly, you have come to save us, so we will trust in you and not be afraid. Yahweh our God, you enable us to be strong; you are the one about whom we sing; you have rescued us from our enemies."

Isaiah 12:3

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation

Isaiah speaks of people being saved as if they were getting salvation the way people get water out of well. Alternate translation: “you will rejoice when he saves you, as people rejoice when they draw water from a well” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

UST

³ You, his people, will greatly rejoice because he has rescued you, like you enjoy drinking water from a fountain.

Isaiah 12:4

call upon his name

Here “his name” refers to Yahweh. Calling on him represents either praising him or asking him for help. Alternate translation: “praise him loudly” or “call to him to help you” (See: [Metonymy](#))

declare his deeds among the peoples

The noun “deeds” can be expressed with the phrase “what he has done.” Alternate translation: “Tell the peoples about the great things he has done” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

proclaim that his name is exalted

Here “his name” refers to Yahweh. Alternate translation: “proclaim that he is exalted” or “proclaim that he is great” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ On that day you will say, “Give thanks to Yahweh and call upon his name; declare his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted.

UST

⁴ At that time you will say, “We should thank Yahweh! We should praise him! We should tell the people of all the people groups what he has done; we should enable them to know that he is very great!

Isaiah 12:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ Sing to Yahweh, for he has done glorious things; let this be known throughout the earth.

UST

⁵ We should sing to Yahweh, because he has done wonderful things. We should enable everyone in the world to know it!

Isaiah 12:6

for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel

Alternate translation: "because the Holy One of Israel, who lives among you, is mighty" or "because the Holy One of Israel is mighty and he lives among you"

ULT

⁶ Cry aloud and shout for joy, you inhabitants of Zion, for great in your midst {is} the Holy One of Israel."

UST

⁶ You people of Jerusalem, shout joyfully to praise Yahweh, because he is the great Holy One whom we Israelite people worship, and he lives among us!"

Isaiah 13

Isaiah 13 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Prophecies

It is unclear who is addressed by these prophecies. At times, it appears to be the people of Judah, while at other times it seems to reference the last days. This ambiguity should remain in translation. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [last day](#), [latter days](#))

Isaiah 13:1

about Babylon

The name of the city stands for the people of Babylon. Alternate translation: “about the people of Babylon” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Amoz

Amoz was the father of Isaiah. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:1](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹ A declaration about Babylon, that Isaiah son of Amoz received:

UST

¹ I, Isaiah son of Amoz, received from Yahweh this message about the city of Babylon:

Isaiah 13:2

cry aloud to them

The word “them” refers to soldiers from another country.

the gates of the nobles

This could mean: (1) “the gates of Babylon where the nobles live” or (2) “the gates of the nobles’ large houses” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the nobles

Alternate translation: “the respected people” or “the rulers”

ULT

² On the bare mountain set up a signal flag, cry aloud to them, wave your hand for them to go into the gates of the nobles.

UST

² Lift up a flag on the bare top of a hill, to signal that an army should come to attack Babylon. Shout to them and wave your hand to signal to them that they should march through the city gates into the palaces of the proud rulers of Babylon!

Isaiah 13:3

my holy ones

Alternate translation: “the ones I have set apart for myself” or “the army that I have set apart for myself”

I have called my mighty men to execute my anger

Executing God's anger represents punishing people because of God's anger. Alternate translation: “I have called my mighty soldiers to punish the people of Babylon because they have made me angry” (See: [Metonymy](#))

even my proudly exulting ones

“even those who proudly exult.” Why they proudly exult can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “even my people who proudly exult because of the great things I do” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³ I have commanded my holy ones, yes, I have called my mighty men to execute my anger, even my proudly exulting ones.

UST

³ Yahweh says, “I have commanded those who are set apart to do this work for me— I have summoned the warriors whom I have chosen to punish the people of Babylon because I am very angry with them, and those soldiers will be very proud when they do that.”

Isaiah 13:4

The noise of a multitude in the mountains, as of many people

The words “there is” are understood. The phrases “multitude” and “many people” mean the same thing. Alternate translation: “There is the noise of many people in the mountains” or “There is the noise of a great crowd of people in the mountains” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

The noise of a tumult of the kingdoms like many nations gathered together

The words “there is” are understood. The words “kingdoms” and “nations” here refer to the same thing. Alternate translation: “There is the noisy commotion of many kingdoms gathered together” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

is mustering

Alternate translation: “is gathering”

ULT

⁴ The noise of a multitude in the mountains, as of many people! The noise of a tumult of the kingdoms like many nations gathered together! Yahweh of hosts is mustering the army for the battle.

UST

⁴ Listen to the noise on the mountains, which is the noise of a huge army marching! It is the noise made by people of many people groups shouting. Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has summoned this army to gather together.

Isaiah 13:5

from way over the horizon

Alternate translation: “from places far beyond the horizon” or “from very distant places”

his instruments of judgment

The soldiers that God is sending to attack Babylon are spoken of as if they were weapons. “Judgment” represents punishment because God has judged Babylon. Alternate translation: “the army that he will use to punish Babylon” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁵ They come from a far country, from way over the horizon. It is Yahweh with his instruments of judgment, to destroy the whole land.

UST

⁵ They come from countries that are far away, from the most remote places on the earth. They are like weapons that Yahweh will use to punish the people with whom he is very angry, and to destroy the entire country of Babylonia.

Isaiah 13:6

Howl

cry out loud. The word is usually used of an animal making a sound because it is in pain.

the day of Yahweh is near

Something that is about to happen soon is spoken of as if it is coming near. Alternate translation: "the day of Yahweh will happen soon" (See: [Metaphor](#))

it comes with destruction from the Almighty

The word "it" refers to the day of Yahweh. "It comes with destruction" means that destruction will happen on that day. "Destruction from the Almighty" means that the Almighty will destroy them. Alternate translation: "on that day, the Almighty God will destroy them" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁶ Howl, for the day of Yahweh {is} near; it comes with destruction from the Almighty.

UST

⁶ You people of Babylon will scream because you will be terrified, because it will be the time that Yahweh has determined, the time for the all-powerful God to destroy your city.

Isaiah 13:7

all hands hang limp

This shows that all the people are very weak and unable to do anything.

every heart melts

People being terribly afraid is spoken of as if their hearts melt.
Alternate translation: "everyone is terribly afraid" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ Therefore all hands hang limp, and every heart melts.

UST

⁷ Because that will happen, all of your people will be very afraid, with the result that they will be unable even to lift their arms.

Isaiah 13:8

pain and agony will seize them

People suddenly feeling terrible pain and sorrow is spoken of as if the pains and sorrows were people who grab them. Alternate translation: “they will suddenly feel terrible pain and agony” (See: [Personification](#))

like a woman in labor

Being in labor represents giving birth to a baby. Alternate translation: “like a woman giving birth to a baby” or “like the pain of a woman who is giving birth to a baby” (See: [Metaphor](#))

their faces will be aflame

Their faces being hot and red is spoken of as if they were burning. Possible reasons for their faces being hot are: (1) the people are very afraid or (2) the people feel ashamed or (3) the people cry. Alternate translation: “their faces will be hot and red” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ They will be terrified; pain and agony will seize {them}, like a woman in labor. They will look in astonishment at one another; their faces {will be} aflame.

UST

⁸ All of you will be terrified. You will have severe pains like a woman has when she is giving birth to a baby. You will look at each other helplessly, and it will show on your faces that you feel horror.

Isaiah 13:9

the day of Yahweh comes with cruel wrath and overflowing anger

The day coming with wrath and anger means that there will be wrath and anger on that day. The abstract nouns “wrath” and “anger” can be expressed with the adjectives “furious” and “angry.” Alternate translation: “on the day of Yahweh, he will be furious and extremely angry” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

overflowing anger

Anger here is spoken of as if the one who is angry is a container filled with anger. Overflowing anger means that he is extremely angry. (See: [Metaphor](#))

to make the land a desolation

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **desolation**, you could express the same idea with the verb “ruin.” Alternate translation: “to ruin the land” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁹ See, the day of Yahweh comes with cruel wrath and overflowing anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy the sinners from it.

UST

⁹ Listen to this, you people of Babylon: The day that Yahweh has chosen to act is near, the day on which he will furiously and fiercely punish you because he is very angry with you. He will cause your land of Babylonia to be desolate, and he will destroy all the sinners in it.

Isaiah 13:10

The stars of heaven and the constellations

Alternate translation: "The stars in the sky"

will not give their light

Giving light represents "shining." Alternate translation: "will not shine" (See: [Idiom](#))

The sun will be darkened

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will darken the sun" or "The sun will be dark" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁰ The stars of heaven and the constellations will not give their light. The sun will be darkened even from dawn, and the moon will not shine.

UST

¹⁰ When that happens, none of the stars will shine. When the sun rises, it will be dark, and there will be no light from the moon at night.

Isaiah 13:11

Connecting Statement:

Yahweh continues to talk about what he will do on the day of Yahweh.

the world

This refers to people. Alternate translation: “the people of the world” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the wicked ... the proud ... the ruthless

These phrases refer to people who have these qualities. Alternate translation: “wicked people ... proud people ... ruthless people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

the ruthless

Alternate translation: “cruel people”

will bring down the arrogance of the ruthless

Being low often represents being humble. Bringing down people’s arrogance represents making them humble. Alternate translation: “will humble the ruthless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹¹ I will punish the world for {its} evil and the wicked for their iniquity. I will put an end to the arrogance of the proud and will bring down the arrogance of the ruthless.

UST

¹¹ Yahweh says, “I will punish everyone in the world for the evil things that they do; I will punish the wicked people for the sins that they have committed. I will stop arrogant people from being proud, and I will stop cruel people from being so arrogant.”

Isaiah 13:12

I will make men more rare than fine gold

Why there will be so few people can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "I will cause so many people to die that living people will be more rare than fine gold" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

men more rare than fine gold ... mankind harder to find than the pure gold of Ophir

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. (See: [Parallelism](#))

pure gold of Ophir

Ophir was the name of a place where there was pure gold. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹² I will make men more rare than fine gold and mankind harder to find than the pure gold of Ophir.

UST

¹² And because I will cause most people to die, people will be harder to find than gold, harder to find than fine gold from Ophir in Arabia.

Isaiah 13:13

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹³ Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, by the fury of Yahweh of hosts, and on the day of his fierce anger.

UST

¹³ I will shake the sky, and the earth will also move out of its place. That will happen when I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, punish wicked people, when I show them that I am extremely angry with them.

Isaiah 13:14

Like a hunted gazelle or like a sheep with no shepherd

Yahweh speaks of the defenseless people of Israel as if they were a gazelle or a sheep that was being chased by hunters or wild animals. Alternate translation: "Like gazelles that run away swiftly when people hunt them, and like sheep that have no shepherd run away from wild animals" (See: [Translate Unknowns](#) and [Simile](#))

gazelle

an animal that is similar to a deer. People hunt them, and wild animals sometimes attack and kill them. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

like a sheep with no shepherd

Sheep that have no shepherd have no one to protect them from wild animals that attack and kill them.

ULT

¹⁴ Like a hunted gazelle or like a sheep with no shepherd, every man will turn toward his own people and will flee to his own land.

UST

¹⁴ All the foreigners in Babylon will run around like deer that are being hunted, like sheep that do not have a shepherd. They will try to find other people from their countries, and then they will escape from Babylon and return to their own countries.

Isaiah 13:15

Every one who is found will be killed ... every one who is captured will die by the sword

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The enemy will kill with the sword everyone they find" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Every one who is found will be killed, and every one who is captured will die by the sword.

UST

¹⁵ Anyone who is captured in Babylon will be killed by their enemies' swords.

Isaiah 13:16

Their infants also will be dashed in pieces

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “The enemy will also dash their infants to pieces” or “The enemy will beat their infants until they die” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

before their eyes

Here the people are represented by their “eyes” to emphasize what they see. It can be stated clearly that the parents are unable to help their infants. Alternate translation: “in front of them” or “while their parents helplessly watch” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

Their houses will be plundered

This means that everything valuable will be stolen from their houses. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “The enemy will plunder the people’s houses” or “The enemy will steal everything valuable from the people’s houses” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

their wives raped

This means that the enemies will attack the women and force them to have sex with them. The words “will be” are understood. This can also be expressed with an active form. Alternate translation: “their wives will be raped” or “their enemies will rape their wives” (See: [Ellipsis](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

16 Their infants also will be dashed in pieces before their eyes. Their houses will be plundered and their wives raped.

UST

16 Their little children will be dashed to pieces on the rocks while their parents watch; their enemies will steal everything valuable from their houses and will force their wives to sleep with them.

Isaiah 13:17

Connecting Statement:

Yahweh continues speaking.

I am about to stir up the Medes to attack them

Making people want to do something is spoken of as stirring them up. Alternate translation: "I am about to make the Medes want to attack them" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁷ Look, I am about to stir up the Medes to attack them, who will not be concerned about silver, nor do they delight in gold.

UST

¹⁷ Look! I am going to incite the people of Media to attack Babylon. The army of Media will attack Babylon, even if they are offered silver or gold if they promise to not attack it.

Isaiah 13:18

Their bows will strike down

Here “their bows” is a metonym for the soldiers who use the bows.
Alternate translation: “Their soldiers will use bows and arrows to kill”
(See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

18 {Their} bows will strike down the young men; they will have no mercy on infants and they will not look with pity on children.

UST

18 With their arrows, the soldiers of Media will shoot the young men of Babylon; they will not even act mercifully toward infants or children!”

Isaiah 13:19

Connecting Statement:

Yahweh continues speaking.

the most admired of kingdoms

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the kingdom that people most admire” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Then Babylon ... will be overthrown by God

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Then God will destroy Babylon, the most admired of kingdoms, the splendor of Chaldean pride, as he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the splendor of Chaldean pride

The abstract nouns “splendor” and “pride” can be translated with adjectives. The word “splendor” refers to the beautiful appearance of Babylon. Alternate translation: “the beautiful city that the Chaldeans are so proud of” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹⁹ Then Babylon, the most admired of kingdoms, the splendor of Chaldean pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah.

UST

¹⁹ Babylon has been a very beautiful city; all the people of Babylonia have been very proud of Babylon, their capital city; but God will destroy Babylon, like he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Isaiah 13:20

It will not be inhabited or lived in

The two verbs mean basically the same thing. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "No one will live in it" (See: [Doublet](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

from generation to generation

The phrase "generation to generation" refers to all generations of people who will live in the future. Alternate translation: "for ever" or "ever again" (See: [Idiom](#))

The Arab

This refers to Arab people in general, not one person. Alternate translation: "Arabs" or "Arab people" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

ULT

20 It will not be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation. The Arab will not pitch his tent there, nor will shepherds have their flocks rest there.

UST

20 No one will ever live in Babylon again. It will be deserted forever. Nomads will refuse to set up their tents there; shepherds will not bring their flocks of sheep to rest there.

Isaiah 13:21

Connecting Statement:

Yahweh continues speaking about what will happen to Babylon.

will lie there

Alternate translation: "will lie in Babylon"

Their houses

Alternate translation: "The people's houses"

owls

Owls are wild birds that hunt at night. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ostriches

Ostriches are large wild birds that run fast and cannot fly. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

²¹ But wild animals of the desert will lie there. Their houses will be full of owls; and ostriches and wild goats will skip about there.

UST

²¹ Animals that live in the desert will be there; jackals will live in the ruins of the houses. Owls will live in the ruins, and ostriches and wild goats will romp around there.

Isaiah 13:22

Hyenas

Hyenas are large wild animals that look like dogs and eat dead animals. Their loud cry sounds like a person laughing. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

jackals in the beautiful palaces

The words “will cry” are understood. Alternate translation: “jackals will cry in the beautiful palaces” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

jackals

wild dogs (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

Her time is near, and her days will not be delayed

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. “Her time” and “her days” both refer to the time that God has chosen for Babylon to be destroyed. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “The time that all of this will happen to the people of Babylon is near, and nothing will stop it” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²² Hyenas will cry in their fortresses, and jackals in the beautiful palaces. Her time {is} near, and her days will not be delayed.

UST

²² Hyenas will howl in the ruined towers, and jackals will make their dens in the ruins of the palaces that were previously very beautiful. The time when Babylon will be destroyed is very near; Babylon will not exist much longer.

Isaiah 14

Isaiah 14 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 14:4-27, 29-32.

Special concepts in this chapter

Satan

It is believed that this chapter references Satan. It describes Satan as a star fallen from heaven. There are five important statements beginning with the words "I will" which appear to show the essence of Satan's sin. (See: [Satan, devil, evil one, heaven, sky, heavens, heavenly](#) and [sin, sinful, sinner, sinning](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Babylon

This is the name of the kingdom that conquered Judah, but it is also the name representing Satan's kingdom in prophecies. They were not yet a world power when these words were spoken. It should be translated as "Babylon," but translators should be aware of its dual meaning.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Israel

The use of Israel in this chapter is in reference to the nation or people group of Israel. It is this Israel who will be restored and not the kingdom of Israel. (See: [restore, restoration](#))

Isaiah 14:1

Yahweh will have compassion on Jacob

Here “Jacob” refers to the descendants of Jacob. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will have mercy on the descendants of Jacob” (See: [Metonymy](#))

attach themselves to the house of Jacob

The house of Jacob refers to the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites. Alternate translation: “unite with the descendants of Jacob” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ Yahweh will have compassion on Jacob; he will again choose Israel and restore them into their own land. Foreigners will join with them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.

UST

¹ But Yahweh will act mercifully toward the Israelite people; he will choose the people of Israel to be his people again, and he will allow them to return here and live in their own land again. Then people from many other countries will come here and unite with the Israelite people.

Isaiah 14:2

The nations will bring them to their own place

Alternate translation: "The nations will bring the descendants of Jacob back to the land of Israel"

the house of Israel

This refers to the Israelites, the descendants of Israel. Alternate translation: "the descendants of Israel" (See: [Metonymy](#))

They will take captive those who had captured them

Alternate translation: "The Israelite soldiers will take as captives those who had captured Israelites"

ULT

² The nations will bring them to their own place. Then the house of Israel will take them in the land of Yahweh as male and female servants. They will take captive those who had captured them, and they will rule over their oppressors.

UST

² People of other nations will help them to return to their own land, and those who come from other countries will work for the Israelite people. Those who captured people of Israel will be captured by Israelite soldiers, and the people of Israel will rule over the people who previously oppressed them.

Isaiah 14:3

from your suffering and anguish

The word “your” is singular, but it refers to the people of Israel. Also, “suffering” and “anguish” mean basically the same thing and are used together for emphasis. Alternate translation: “from the things that have caused you to suffer greatly” (See: [Forms of You](#) and [Doublet](#))

ULT

³ On the day that Yahweh gives you rest from your suffering and anguish, and from the hard labor which you were required to perform,

UST

³ Some day Yahweh will free you Israelite people from suffering and trouble and from being afraid, and from being cruelly treated as slaves.

Isaiah 14:4

How the oppressor has come to an end

"The oppressor has come to an end." This is an exclamation.

the proud fury ended

The words "how and "has" are understood. Alternate translation: "how the proud fury has ended" or "his pride and fury have ended" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

the proud fury ended

The "proud fury" refers to the king of Babylon being proud and treating other nations cruelly. Alternate translation: "his cruelty has ended" or "he can no longer oppress people" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ you will sing this taunt song against the king of Babylon, "How the oppressor has come to an end, the proud fury ended! ^[1]

UST

⁴ When that happens, you will make fun of the king of Babylon by singing a song like this: "You treated us cruelly, but that has ended! You insulted others and made them suffer, but you can do this no longer!

Isaiah 14:5

Connecting Statement:

This is part of the taunt song that the Israelites will sing to the king of Babylon.

Yahweh has broken the staff of the wicked

The staff of the wicked probably refers to a stick that wicked people would hit other people with. Breaking that stick represents destroying their power to treat people cruelly. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has destroyed the power of the wicked" (See: [Metonymy](#))

the scepter of those rulers

A scepter represents a ruler's power to rule. Breaking the scepter represents destroying the ruler's power. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has destroyed the power of the wicked rulers" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁵ Yahweh has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of those rulers,

UST

⁵ You evil ruler, Yahweh has destroyed your power, and you will oppress people no longer!

Isaiah 14:6

that struck the peoples

“who struck the peoples.” Wicked people struck the peoples with their staff.

with unceasing blows

Alternate translation: “without stopping” or “again and again”

that ruled the nations

Alternate translation: “who conquered other nations”

with an attack that was unrestrained

Alternate translation: “attacking them without stopping”

ULT

⁶ that struck the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger, with an attack that was unrestrained.

UST

⁶ You attacked people many times because you were very angry with them, and you subdued other nations by causing them to suffer without stopping.

Isaiah 14:7

Connecting Statement:

This is part of the taunt song that the Israelites will sing to the king of Babylon.

The whole earth

This refers to everyone on earth. Alternate translation: “everyone on earth” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ The whole earth is at rest {and} is quiet; they begin celebrating with singing.

UST

⁷ But soon everything will be quiet and peaceful on the earth. Everyone will sing again!

Isaiah 14:8

Even the cypress trees rejoice over you with the cedars of Lebanon

Isaiah speaks of the trees as if they were people who could rejoice. This emphasizes that it is such a great thing that God has stopped the king of Babylon that even nature would rejoice if it could. Alternate translation: "It will be as if even the cyprus trees and the cedars of Lebanon rejoice over you" (See: [Personification](#))

rejoice over you

Why they rejoice can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "rejoice that God has made you powerless" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Since you are laid low

Being laid low represents being made powerless and unimportant. Alternate translation: "Since you have become powerless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ Even the cypress trees rejoice over you {with} the cedars of Lebanon; {they say}, 'Since you are laid low, no woodcutter comes up to cut us down.'

UST

⁸ It will be as though even the trees in the forests will joyfully sing this song, the cyprus trees and the cedar trees in Lebanon will sing it: 'You have been overthrown, and now no one comes to chop us down.'

Isaiah 14:9

Sheol below is eager to meet you

Sheol is spoken of as if it were a person who is eager to meet his guests. This implies that the king dies. Alternate translation: "Sheol is like a host eager to meet you" (See: [Personification](#))

It arouses the dead for you, all the kings of the earth

"it wakes up the dead for you, all the kings of the earth." Sheol is spoken of as if it were a person that could wake up those who are in it. Alternate translation: "All the dead kings of the earth in Sheol wake up to greet you" (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

⁹ Sheol below is eager to meet {you} when you go there. It arouses the dead for you, all the kings of the earth, making them rise up from their thrones, all the kings of the nations.

UST

⁹ The dead people are all eagerly waiting for you to go to the place where they are. The spirits of the world leaders will be delighted to welcome you; those who were kings of many nations before they died will stand up to welcome you.

Isaiah 14:10

Connecting Statement:

This is part of the taunt song that the Israelites will sing to the king of Babylon. Here they sing about what the dead kings in Sheol will say to him.

They all will speak and say to you

The word “they” refers to the dead kings in Sheol, and the word “you” refers to the king of Babylon.

ULT

¹⁰ They all will speak and say to you,
'You have become as weak as us. You
have become like us.

UST

¹⁰ They will all shout to you together,
'Now you are as weak as we are!'

Isaiah 14:11

Your pomp has been brought down to Sheol

The dead kings will speak of the king of Babylon having no more splendor as if his splendor had gone down to Sheol. Alternate translation: "Your splendor ended when God sent you here to Sheol" (See: [Metaphor](#))

with the sound of your string instruments

People would make music on string instruments to honor the king. The dead kings will speak of people no longer honoring the king of Babylon with music as if the music went to Sheol. Alternate translation: "along with the sound of people playing music to honor you" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Maggots are spread under you

The maggots under his dead body are spoken of as if they were a mat or bed. Alternate translation: "You lie on a bed of maggots" or "You lie on many maggots" (See: [Metaphor](#))

worms cover you

The worms all over his body are spoken of as if they were covering him like a blanket. Alternate translation: "Worms cover you like a blanket" or "There are worms all over your body" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 Your pomp has been brought down to Sheol {with} the sound of your string instruments. Maggots are spread under you, and worms cover you.'

UST

11 You were very proud and powerful, but all that ended when you died, along with the sounds of harps being played in your palace. Now in your grave maggots will be under you like a sheet, and worms will cover you like a blanket.'

Isaiah 14:12

Connecting Statement:

This is part of the taunt song that the Israelites will sing to the king of Babylon.

How you are fallen from heaven, daystar, son of the morning

The daystar is a bright star that rises just before morning. The people of Israel will refer to the king of Babylon in terms of this star in order to imply that he once was great, but now he was not. Alternate translation: "You were like the bright morning star, but you have fallen from the sky" (See: [Metaphor](#))

How you are cut down to the ground

The people of Israel will speak of the king of Babylon as if he were a tree that was cut down. Alternate translation: "You are defeated like a tree that someone has cut down to the ground" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² How you are fallen from heaven, daystar, son of the morning! {How} you are cut down to the ground, you who conquered the nations!

UST

¹² You have disappeared from the earth like a star that fell from the sky; you were very well known, like the morning star is seen by everyone; you destroyed many nations, but now you have been destroyed.

Isaiah 14:13

I will sit on the mount of assembly

This alludes to the myth that many people in the Ancient Near East knew, that the Canaanite gods met in council on the top of a mountain in the northern part of Syria. Sitting on the mountain represents ruling with the gods. Alternate translation: “I will rule on the mountain where the gods assemble” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

in the far reaches of the north

The mountain in the north was apparently called Zaphon. Some modern versions say “far away on the sides of Zaphon.” Alternate translation: “in the most northern places”

ULT

13 You had said in your heart, ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly, in the far reaches of the north.

UST

13 You proudly said to yourself, ‘I will ascend to heaven, to my throne above God’s stars. I will rule on the mountain where the gods gather together, far in the north.

Isaiah 14:14

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High God.'

UST

¹⁴ I will ascend above the clouds and become like God himself!

Isaiah 14:15

Connecting Statement:

This is part of the taunt song that the Israelites will sing to the king of Babylon.

Yet you are now brought down to Sheol

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "But now God has sent you down to Sheol" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Yet you are now brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the pit.

UST

¹⁵ But you were not able to do that; Instead, you were carried down to your grave, and you went to the place where the dead people are.

Isaiah 14:16

Is this the man

The people will use this question either to mock the king of Babylon, or to express their shock at what has happened to him. Alternate translation: “Surely, this is not the man” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

who made the earth tremble

This could mean: (1) the earth trembled as the king’s army marched to conquer people, or (2) this refers to the people of the earth trembling in fear of him. (See: [Metonymy](#))

shook kingdoms

This could mean: (1) this is a metaphor for “conquered kingdoms” or (2) this is metonymy for “terrified the people of kingdoms.” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

16 Those who see you will gaze at you {and} they will pay attention to you. They will {say,} ‘{Is} this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms,

UST

16 The other dead people there stare at you; they wonder what happened to you. They say, ‘Is this the man who caused the earth to shake and caused the people in many kingdoms to tremble?

Isaiah 14:17

who made the world like a wilderness

Alternate translation: “who made the places where people lived into a wilderness”

ULT

17 who made the world like a wilderness, {who} overthrew its cities and did not let his prisoners go home?’

UST

17 Is this the man who tried to cause the world to become a desert, who conquered its cities and did not allow the people whom he captured to return to their homes?’

Isaiah 14:18

Connecting Statement:

This is the end of the taunt song that the Israelites will sing to the king of Babylon.

all of them lie down in honor

This means that their bodies were buried in an honorable way.
Alternate translation: "all the kings who have died are buried in an honorable way" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

18 All the kings of the nations, all of them lie down in honor, each one in his own tomb.

UST

18 All the kings of the earth who have died were greatly honored when they were buried.

Isaiah 14:19

But you are cast out of your grave

Being thrown out of the grave represents not being buried. Alternate translation: "But you are not buried. Your body is left on the ground" (See: [Metaphor](#))

like a branch thrown away

A branch thrown away represents something worthless. Alternate translation: "like a worthless branch that is tossed aside" (See: [Simile](#))

The dead cover you like a garment

This represents many dead bodies being on top of his body. Alternate translation: "The bodies of dead people completely cover your body" or "The bodies of dead soldiers are piled on top of your body" (See: [Simile](#))

those pierced by the sword

This describes "the dead" spoken of at the beginning of this sentence. Being pierced by the sword represents being killed in battle. Alternate translation: "those who were killed in battle" (See: [Metonymy](#))

who go down to the stones of the pit

The pit refers either to hell, or to a large hole in the ground where many dead bodies are simply dumped.

ULT

19 But you are cast out of your grave like a branch thrown away. The dead cover you {like} a garment, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the pit.

UST

19 Someone will cast you aside, but not into a grave, like a branch that they throw away. The dead cover you like a garment, those pierced by the sword, who go down to be among the stones where the dead rest.

Isaiah 14:20

You will not join them in burial

The word “them” refers to the other kings who died and were buried properly. Joining them in burial represents being buried as they were. Alternate translation: “you will never be buried as other kings were buried” (See: [Metaphor](#))

The offspring of evildoers will never be mentioned again

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “no one will ever speak again about the descendants of evildoers” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

20 You will not join them in burial, because you have destroyed your land {and} killed your people. The offspring of evildoers will never be mentioned again.”

UST

20 Your dead body will not be buried with them because you have destroyed your land and have caused your own people to be killed. The descendants of wicked people like you will never be spoken of again.”

Isaiah 14:21

Prepare your slaughter for his children

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **slaughter**, you could express the same idea with the verb “kill.” Alternate translation: “Get ready to kill the children of the king of Babylon” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

for the iniquity of their ancestors

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **iniquity**, you could express the same idea with the verb “sinned greatly.” Alternate translation: “because their forefathers have sinned greatly” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

so they will not rise up

Here “rise up” represents either becoming powerful or attacking.

Alternate translation: “so they will not become powerful” or “so they will not attack” (See: [Metonymy](#))

possess the earth

This represents taking control of the people on the earth, in this case by conquering them. Alternate translation: “take control of the peoples on the earth” or “conquer the peoples on the earth” (See: [Metaphor](#))

fill the whole world with cities

This represents causing the world to have many cities on it. Alternate translation: “build cities all over the world” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

21 Prepare your slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their ancestors, so they will not rise up and possess the earth and fill the whole world with cities.

UST

21 People will say, “Slaughter this man’s children because of the sins that their ancestors committed! Do not allow them to become rulers, and conquer all the nations in the world, and fill the world with the cities that they rule!”

Isaiah 14:22

this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Alternate translation: “this is what Yahweh of hosts has declared” or “this is what I, Yahweh of hosts, have declared” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

ULT

²² “I will rise up against them”—this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts. “I will cut off from Babylon name, descendant, and posterity”—this is Yahweh’s declaration.

UST

²² This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: “I myself will cause Babylon to be conquered. I will get rid of Babylon and its people and their descendants.

Isaiah 14:23

I will also make her

The word “her” refers to the city of Babylon. Cities were often spoken of as if they were women. Alternate translation: “I will also make it” (See: [Personification](#))

a possession of owls

This represents wild animals living in the city because there are no people there. Alternate translation: “a place where owls live” or “a place where wild animals live” (See: [Metaphor](#))

into pools of water

Causing there to be swamps or ponds of stagnant water where the city was is spoken of as making the city into those things. Alternate translation: “into a place where there are stagnant ponds” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

23 “I will also make her into a possession of owls, and into pools of water, and I will sweep her with the broom of destruction”—this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts.

UST

23 I will cause Babylon to be a place where owls live, a place full of swamps; I will destroy it completely as though I were sweeping it with a broom. That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say.”

Isaiah 14:24

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

**as I have intended, so it will come about; and
as I have purposed, so it will be**

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: “the things that I have planned will surely happen” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

²⁴ Yahweh of hosts has sworn, “Surely, as I have intended, so it will come about; and as I have purposed, {so} it will be:

UST

²⁴ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has also solemnly promised this: “The things that I have planned will surely happen.

Isaiah 14:25

I will break the Assyrian in my land

Breaking represents defeating. Alternate translation: “I will defeat the Assyrian in my land” or “I will cause the Assyrian in my land to be defeated” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the Assyrian

This represents the Assyrian king and his army. Alternate translation: “the king of Assyria and his army” or “the Assyrian army” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

trample him underfoot

This represents completely defeating him. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Then his yoke will be lifted from off them and his burden from off their shoulder

This can be expressed with an active verb. Alternate translation: “Then I will lift his yoke from them and his burden from their shoulder” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Then his yoke will be lifted from off them and his burden from off their shoulder

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Lifting the yoke and burden represents setting people free from slavery. Alternate translation: “Then I will set the Israelites free from slavery to Assyria like removing a heavy burden from their shoulder” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

his yoke ... his burden

The word “his” refers to Assyria.

from off them ... from off their shoulder

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

ULT

²⁵ I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on my mountains trample him underfoot. Then his yoke will be lifted from off them and his burden from off their shoulder.

UST

²⁵ When the army of Assyria is in my land of Israel, I will crush them. It will be as though I had trampled them on my mountains. My people will no longer be the slaves of the people of Assyria; It will be as though I had taken away the burdens that were on their shoulders.

Isaiah 14:26

General Information:

This may be Isaiah speaking or it may be Yahweh speaking.

This is the plan that is intended for the whole earth

The idea of “is intended” can be expressed with an active verb.
Alternate translation: “This is the plan that God intends for the whole earth” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

this is the hand that is raised over all the nations

God being ready to punish the nations is spoken of as if he raised his hand in order to hit them. The word “hand” may also represent his power. Alternate translation: “this is Yahweh’s power to punish all the nations” or “this is how Yahweh will punish the nations” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁶ This {is} the plan that is intended for the whole earth, and this is the hand that is raised over all the nations.

UST

²⁶ There is a plan for everyone on the earth, a plan to show the power of Yahweh to punish all the nations.

Isaiah 14:27

who will stop him?

This question emphasizes that no one can stop Yahweh. Alternate translation: “there is no one who can stop him.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

His hand is raised

This represents Yahweh being ready to punish the nations. Alternate translation: “He is ready to punish them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

who will turn it back?

This question is used to say that no one can turn back God’s hand. Turning back his hand represents stopping him from punishing the nations. Alternate translation: “no one can turn it back.” or “no one can stop him from punishing them.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁷ For Yahweh of hosts has planned this; who will stop him? His hand {is} raised, and who will turn it back?

UST

²⁷ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has spoken, and no one can change his mind. When Yahweh raises his fist to strike Assyria, no one will be able to stop him.”

Isaiah 14:28

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁸ In the year that king Ahaz died this declaration came:

UST

²⁸ I received this message from Yahweh during the year that King Ahaz died:

Isaiah 14:29

the rod that struck you is broken

The rod that struck Philistia represents a king who sent his army to attack them. Being broken represents either being dead or being defeated. Alternate translation: “the king that sent his army against you is dead” or “the army that attacked you is defeated” (See: [Metaphor](#))

For out of the serpent’s root will grow out an adder ... his offspring will be a fiery flying serpent

These two phrases are both the image of a serpent’s offspring being even more harmful than the serpent. They represent a king’s successor being more powerful and cruel than the first king. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

an adder

a kind of poisonous snake

a fiery flying serpent

Here the word “fiery” probably refers to the serpent’s poisonous bite, and the word “flying” refers to its quick movements. Alternate translation: “a quickly moving poisonous snake” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁹ Do not rejoice, all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken. For out of the serpent’s root will grow out an adder, and his offspring {will be} a fiery flying serpent.

UST

²⁹ Do not rejoice, all you people of Philistia, that the enemy army that attacked you has been defeated and that their king is dead. He was as dangerous as a snake, but there will be another king, who will be more dangerous than a cobra; he will be like a quick-moving poisonous snake.

Isaiah 14:30

The firstborn of the poor

This represents the poorest people. Alternate translation: “The poorest people” or “The poorest of my people” (See: [Metaphor](#))

I will kill your root with famine that will put to death all your survivors

Here “your root” refers to the people of Philistia. Alternate translation: “I will kill your people with famine that will put to death all your survivors” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³⁰ The firstborn of the poor will graze their sheep in my pastures, and the needy will lie down in safety. I will kill your root with famine that will put to death all your survivors.

UST

³⁰ Those of my people who are very poor will take care of their flocks of sheep, and the needy people will lie down safely, but I will cause you people of Philistia who are still alive to die from famine.

Isaiah 14:31

Howl, gate; cry, city

Here “gate” and “city” represent the people at the city gates and in the cities. “Howl, you people at the city gates; cry, you people in the cities” (See: [Metonymy](#))

you will melt away

Melting away represents becoming weak because of fear. Alternate translation: “you will grow weak with fear” (See: [Metaphor](#))

For out of the north comes a cloud of smoke

This implies that a large army is coming from the north. Alternate translation: “For from the north comes a large army with a cloud of smoke” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

a cloud of smoke

This could mean: (1) this represents a cloud of dust that the army stirs up as they travel on dry dirt roads. Alternate translation: “a cloud of dust” or (2) there is a lot of smoke because of all the things that the army destroys and burns. Alternate translation: “much smoke” (See: [Metaphor](#))

there is no straggler in his ranks

Alternate translation: “no one in his ranks walks slowly behind the others”

ULT

31 Howl, gate; cry, city; all of you will melt away, Philistia. For out of the north comes a cloud of smoke, and there is no straggler in his ranks.

UST

31 So, you people of Philistia, wail at the gates of your cities! You should be extremely afraid, because a very powerful army will come from the north to attack you; their chariots will stir up the dust like a cloud of smoke. Each of their soldiers is ready to fight.

Isaiah 14:32

How will they respond to the messengers of that nation?

The author uses this question to introduce his instruction about how the Israelites should speak to the messengers. Alternate translation: "This is how we will answer the messengers of Philistia." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Yahweh has founded Zion

Alternate translation: "Yahweh started Zion"

in her

Alternate translation: "in Jerusalem" or "there"

the afflicted of his people

Alternate translation: "those of his people who have been afflicted"

ULT

³² How will they respond to the messengers of that nation? "Yahweh has founded Zion, and in her the afflicted of his people will find refuge."

UST

³² If messengers from Philistia come to us Israelite people, this is what we must tell them: "Yahweh has created Jerusalem, not Philistia, and his people who are oppressed will be safe inside the walls of Jerusalem."

Isaiah 15

Isaiah 15 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

This chapter shifts from discussing Judah to the nation of Moab. Moab is punished by Yahweh, even though he is not a god they worship. (See: [God](#))

Isaiah 15:1

General Information:

Often in prophecy events that will happen in future are described as happening now or in the past. This emphasizes that the event will certainly happen. (See: [Predictive Past](#))

A declaration

Alternate translation: “This is what Yahweh declares” or “This is a message from Yahweh”

Ar ... Kir

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

Ar of Moab is laid waste and destroyed

The words “laid waste” and “destroyed” mean the same thing and emphasize that the city was completely ruined. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Enemy armies will completely destroy Ar of Moab” (See: [Doublet](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹ A declaration about Moab. Indeed, in one night Ar of Moab is laid waste {and} destroyed; indeed, in one night Kir of Moab is laid waste {and} destroyed.

UST

¹ Isaiah received this message from Yahweh about the Moab people group: In one night two important cities in Moab, Ar and Kir, will be destroyed.

Isaiah 15:2

Dibon ... Nebo ... Medeba

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

went up to the heights to weep

Here “up to the heights” refers to a temple or altar that was built on high ground like a hill or mountain side. Alternate translation: “went up to the temple on the hilltop to weep” (See: [Idiom](#))

Moab laments over Nebo and over Medeba

These place names refer to the people who live there. Alternate translation: “the people of Moab will weep because of what happened to the cities of Nebo and Medeba” (See: [Metonymy](#))

All their heads are shaved bare and all their beards are cut off

They do this to show their extreme sadness. AT” “They will all shave their heads and cut off their beards and grieve” (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

² They have gone up to the temple, the people of Dibon went up to the heights to weep; Moab laments over Nebo and over Medeba. All their heads are shaved bare {and} all their beards are cut off.

UST

² The people of Dibon, the capital city, will go to their temple to mourn; they will go to their high places set on the hilltops, and there they will weep. They will wail because of what happened to Nebo and Medeba in the south; they will all shave the hair of their heads, and the men will cut off their beards to show that they are grieving.

Isaiah 15:3

they wear sackcloth

They do this to show their extreme sadness. Alternate translation: “they wear sackcloth and mourn” (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

³ In their streets they wear sackcloth; on their housetops and in the square everyone wails, melting in tears.

UST

³ In the streets people will wear rough sackcloth, and on their flat rooftops and in the city plazas all people will wail with tears streaming down their faces.

Isaiah 15:4

Heshbon ... Elealeh ... Jahaz

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

Heshbon and Elealeh call out

These city names represent the people of these cities. "The people of Heshbon and Elealeh call out" (See: [Metonymy](#))

they tremble within themselves

Physical trembling is a symptom of fear and represents fear.
Alternate translation: "they will be completely filled with fear" or
"they tremble with fear" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ Heshbon and Elealeh call out for help; their sound is heard as far as Jahaz. So the armed men of Moab call out for help; they tremble within themselves.

UST

⁴ The people of the city of Heshbon and the towns of Elealeh in the north of Moab will cry out; people as far away as the town of Jahaz in the south will hear them wailing. Therefore the soldiers of Moab will tremble and cry out, and they will be very afraid.

Isaiah 15:5

My heart cries out for Moab

Here God is represented by his “heart” which emphasizes his emotions. God speaks of his great sadness as if his heart cried out. Alternate translation: “I am extremely sad about what is happening to Moab” (See: [Synecdoche](#) or [Metaphor](#))

her fugitives flee

“the fugitives from Moab will flee.” A fugitive is a person who runs away so that his enemy will not capture him.

Zoar ... Eglath Shelishiyah ... Luhith ... Horonaim

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

over their destruction

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **destruction**, you could express the same idea with the verb “destroyed.” Alternate translation: “because their city is destroyed” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁵ My heart cries out for Moab; her fugitives {flee} to Zoar and to Eglath Shelishiyah. They go up the ascent of Luhith weeping; on the road to Horonaim they loudly wail over their destruction.

UST

⁵ Yahweh feels very sorry for the people of Moab; they will flee to the towns of Zoar and Eglath Shelishiyah in the far south. They will cry as they walk up to the town of Luhith. All along the road to the town of Horonaim people will mourn because their country has been destroyed.

Isaiah 15:6

Nimrim

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

ULT

⁶ The waters of Nimrim are a desolation; the grass is withered; the vegetation has dried up; there is no more green grass.

UST

⁶ The water in the Valley of Nimrim will dry up. The grass there will be withered; the green plants will all be gone, and there will be nothing left that is green.

Isaiah 15:7

The abundance

Alternate translation: "Everything"

brook of the poplars

This may refer to the river at the southern border of Moab.

ULT

⁷ The abundance they have grown and stored they carry away over the brook of the poplars.

UST

⁷ The people will pick up their possessions and carry them across the brook of the Willows.

Isaiah 15:8

The cry has gone around the territory of Moab

People's crying out and others hearing it is spoken of as if the cry had gone out. Alternate translation: "People all over the territory of Moab cry out" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the wailing as far as Eglaim and Beer Elim

The words "has gone" are understood. People's wailing and others hearing it is spoken of as if the wailing had gone as far away as these two places. Alternate translation: "the wailing has gone as far as Eglaim and Beer Elim" or "people even as far away as Eglaim and Beer Elim wail"

Eglaim ... Beer Elim

These are names of cities and towns. Dimon was the principal city of the country of Moab. Several modern versions have "Dibon" instead of "Dimon." (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁸ The cry has gone around the territory of Moab; the wailing as far as Eglaim and Beer Elim.

UST

⁸ Throughout the country of Moab, people will be crying; people as far away as Eglaim in the south and Beer Elim in the north will hear them wailing.

Isaiah 15:9

Dimon

This is the name of a city or town. Dimon was the principal city of the country of Moab. Several modern versions have “Dibon” instead of “Dimon.” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

but I will bring even more upon Dimon

Here “I” refers to Yahweh. Also, “Dimon” refers to the people who live there. Alternate translation: “but I will cause even more trouble for the people of Dimon” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ For the waters of Dimon are full of blood; but I will bring even more upon Dimon. A lion will attack those who escape from Moab and also those remaining in the land.

UST

⁹ The stream near Dimon will become red from the blood of people who have been killed, but I will cause the people of Moab to experience even more trouble: lions will attack those who are trying to escape from Moab and will also attack the people who remain in that country.

Isaiah 16

Isaiah 16 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter and is a prophecy against the nation of Moab. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

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 16:1-12.

Isaiah 16:1

Send rams to the ruler of the land

The Moabites will send rams to the king of Judah so that he might protect them from the enemy army. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

Selah

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

the daughter of Zion

The “daughter” of a city means the people of the city. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:8](#). Alternate translation: “the people of Zion” or “the people who live in Zion” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹ Send rams to the ruler of the land from Selah in the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion.

UST

¹ The rulers of Moab will say to each other, “We must send some lambs from the city of Sela as a gift to the ruler of Judah to persuade him to not allow his army to attack us anymore. We should send them through the desert to the king in Jerusalem.”

Isaiah 16:2

As wandering birds, as a scattered nest, so the women of Moab are at the fords of the Arnon River

All the people of Moab, which includes the women, are forced to flee from their homes. Alternate translation: "Like birds without a home, the women of Moab will flee across the river to another land" (See: [Simile](#))

As wandering birds, as a scattered nest

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

² As wandering birds, as a scattered nest, {so} the women of Moab are at the fords of the Arnon River.

UST

² The women of Moab will be left alone at the fords of the Arnon River; they will be like birds that have been pushed out of their nests.

Isaiah 16:3

provide some shade like night in the middle of the day

The heat of the middle of the day represents the Moabites' suffering from their enemies, and shade represents protection from their enemies. Comparing the shade to night shows that they want strong protection. Alternate translation: "protect us completely from our enemies as a large shadow protects people from the hot sun" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

³ "Give instruction, execute justice; provide some shade like night in the middle of the day; hide the fugitives; do not betray the fugitives.

UST

³ They will cry out, "Help us! Tell us what we should do! Protect us completely, we who are running away from our enemies, and do not betray us.

Isaiah 16:4

Let them live among you, the refugees from Moab

“Allow the refugees from Moab to live with you.” Here “you” refers to the people of Judah.

be a hiding place for them from the destroyer

Providing a hiding place is spoken of as being a hiding place.
Alternate translation: “give them a place to hide from those who are trying to destroy them” or “hide them from those who want to destroy them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Let them live among you, the refugees from Moab; be a hiding place for them from the destroyer.” For the oppression will stop, and destruction will cease, those who trample will disappear from the land.

UST

⁴ Allow those of us who are fleeing from Moab to stay with you; hide us from our enemies who want to destroy us! Some day there will be no one to oppress us, and our enemies will stop destroying our land.”

Isaiah 16:5

A throne will be established in covenant faithfulness

Here “throne” refers to the power to rule as king. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **faithfulness**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “faithful.” If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will be faithful to the covenant and he will appoint a king” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

one from David’s tent will faithfully sit there

Here “David’s tent” represents David’s family, including his descendants. Sitting on the throne represents ruling. Alternate translation: “a descendant of David will rule faithfully” (See: [Metonymy](#))

as he seeks justice

Seeking justice represents wanting to do what is just. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ A throne will be established in covenant faithfulness; and one from David’s tent will faithfully sit there. He will judge as he seeks justice and does righteousness.

UST

⁵ Then Yahweh will appoint someone to be king who will be a descendant of King David. As this man rules, he will be merciful and truthful. He will always do what is fair and quickly do what is righteous.

Isaiah 16:6

We have heard of Moab's pride, his arrogance, his boasting, and his anger

The words "Moab's" and "his" refer to the people of Moab. Alternate translation: "We have heard that the people of Moab are proud and arrogant, boastful and angry" (See: [Metonymy](#))

We have heard

Possible meanings are that: (1) Isaiah is speaking and "We" refers to him and the people of Judah, or (2) God is speaking and "We" refers to God.

But his boastings are empty words

Alternate translation: "But what they say about themselves means nothing" or "But what they boast about is not true"

ULT

⁶ We have heard of Moab's pride, his arrogance, his boasting, and his anger. {But} his boastings are empty words.

UST

⁶ We people of Judah have heard about the people of Moab; we have heard that they are very proud and conceited; they are insolent, but what they say about themselves is not true.

Isaiah 16:7

So Moab wails for Moab—they all wail

“Moab” represents the people of Moab. “So all the people of Moab will cry out loud over what has happened to their cities” (See: [Metonymy](#))

for the raisin cakes of Kir Hareseth

Alternate translation: “because there are no raisin cakes in Kir Hareseth”

raisin cakes

The Hebrew word used here means either “raisin cakes” or “men.”

Kir Hareseth

“Kir Hareseth” is the name of a city. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁷ So Moab wails for Moab—they all wail!
Mourn, you who are utterly destroyed,
for the raisin cakes of Kir Hareseth.

UST

⁷ Some day all the people in Moab will weep. They will all mourn, because there will be no more raisin cakes in the city of Kir Hareseth. But more than the cakes, they mourn for the people who lived there, who were all killed.

Isaiah 16:8

Heshbon

Translate the name of this city as you did in [Isaiah 15:4](#).

Sibmah ... Jazer

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

The rulers of the nations have trampled the choice vines

The land of Moab was known for its vineyards. Here God describes the land of Moab as one large vineyard. This emphasizes that the rulers, which refers to the armies, completely destroyed everything in Moab. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁸ The fields of Heshbon have dried up as well as the vines of Sibmah. The rulers of the nations have trampled the choice vines that reached to Jazer and spread into the desert. Its shoots spread abroad; they went over to the sea.

UST

⁸ The crops in the fields of Heshbon will wither, and the vineyards of Sibmah will wither also. The armies of other nations will destroy Moab, which is like a beautiful grapevine whose branches spread north to Jazer, and east to the desert. Its branches spread very far west, to the west side of the Dead Sea.

Isaiah 16:9

Indeed I will weep

In 16:9-10 the word “I” refers to Yahweh.

I will water you with my tears

God speaks of his deep sorrow for these places as if he would cry much and his many tears would fall on them. Alternate translation: “I will cry much for you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Jazer ... Sibmah

Translate the names of these cities as you did in [Isaiah 16:8](#).

Heshbon ... Elealeh

Translate the names of these cities as you did in [Isaiah 15:4](#).

For on your fields of summer fruits and harvest I have ended the shouts of joy

The “shouts of joy” represent people shouting for joy about the harvest of their fruit trees. Alternate translation: “Because of what I will do, you will no longer shout for joy when you harvest your fields of summer fruit” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ Indeed I will weep along with Jazer for the vineyard of Sibmah. I will water you with my tears, Heshbon, and Elealeh. For on your fields of summer fruits and harvest I have ended the shouts of joy.

UST

⁹ So I will weep for Jazer and for the grapevines of Sibmah. I will shed tears for all of you. I will cry because people will no longer shout joyfully, like they usually do when they gather the fruit that ripens in the summer and the other crops.

Isaiah 16:10

I have put an end to the shouts of the one who treads

Here “the shouts” refers to the joy of the people who tread the grapes to produce the wine. Alternate translation: “therefore the people who tread the grapes do not shout with joy” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Gladness and joy are taken away from the fruit tree groves; and there is no singing, or shouts in the vineyards. No one treads out wine in the presses, for I have put an end to the shouts of the one who treads.

UST

¹⁰ People will no longer be glad at harvest time. No one will sing in the vineyards; no one will shout joyfully. No one will tread on grapes to get grape juice for wine; there will be nothing to shout about joyfully.

Isaiah 16:11

So my heart sighs like a harp for Moab

The phrase “my heart” represents Yahweh and his sad feelings. He compares his sigh to the sound of a sad song played on a harp. Alternate translation: “So I sigh like a sad song on a harp” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Simile](#))

Moab

This refer to the people of Moab. (See: [Metonymy](#))

my inward being for Kir Hareseth

The phrase “my inward being” represents Yahweh. The word “sighs” is understood from the previous phrase. See how you translated Kir Hareseth in [Isaiah 16:7](#). Alternate translation: “my inward being sighs for Kir Hareseth” or “I am very sad for the people of Kir Hareseth” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

Kir Hareseth

This is a metonym for the people of the city. Alternate translation: “the people of Kir Hareseth” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

11 So my heart sighs like a harp for Moab, and my inward being for Kir Hareseth.

UST

11 I cry in my inner being for Moab; my groaning is like a sad song played on a harp. I am sad in my inner being for Kir Hareseth.

Isaiah 16:12

Moab ... himself ... his

All of these words refer to the people of Moab. (See: [Metonymy](#))

his prayers will accomplish nothing

Alternate translation: "his prayers will not be answered"

ULT

¹² When Moab wears himself out on the high place and enters his temple to pray, his prayers will accomplish nothing.

UST

¹² The people of Moab will go and pray at their high places, but that will not help them. They will cry out to their gods in their temples, but no one will be able to rescue them.

Isaiah 16:13

This is the word

“This is the message.” This refers to all he said in 15:1-16:12.

concerning Moab

The word “Moab” refers to the people of Moab. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹³ This {is} the word that Yahweh spoke concerning Moab previously.

UST

¹³ Yahweh has already spoken those things about Moab.

Isaiah 16:14

the glory of Moab will disappear

Alternate translation: "The country of Moab will no longer be glorious"

ULT

¹⁴ Again Yahweh speaks, "Within three years, the glory of Moab will disappear; in spite of his many people, the remnant {will be} very few and insignificant."

UST

¹⁴ But now he says that exactly three years from now, he will destroy all the things that the people of Moab have been proud of. Even though they have a huge number of people in Moab now, only a few people will remain alive, and they will be weak.

Isaiah 17

Isaiah 17 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

The ULT sets the lines in 17:1-6, 9-14 farther to the right on the page than the rest of the text because they are part of a long quotation.

Special concepts in this chapter

Damascus

This chapter prophesies destruction against the people of Damascus. Damascus was the capital of Aram. The people of Damascus worship gods other than Yahweh and have fought Yahweh's people. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#), [god](#), [false god](#), [goddess](#), [idol](#), [idolater](#), [idolatrous](#), [idolatry](#) and [people of God](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Ephraim

This chapter prophesied destruction against the kingdom of Israel. They are also called Ephraim in this chapter. Both the northern kingdom of Israel and Aram were conquered at about the same time in history.

Isaiah 17:1

about Damascus

Damascus is the name of a city. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 7:8](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹ A declaration about Damascus.

UST

¹ Isaiah received this message from Yahweh about Damascus, the capital of Aram: "Listen carefully! Damascus will no longer be a city; it will be only a heap of ruins!"

Isaiah 17:2

The cities of Aroer will be abandoned

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. "All the people will abandon the cities of Aroer" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

no one will frighten them

The word "them" refers to the sheep.

ULT

² The cities of Aroer {will be} abandoned. They will be places for flocks to lie down, and no one will frighten {them}.

UST

² The towns near the city of Aroer will be abandoned. Flocks of sheep will eat grass in the streets and lie down there, and there will be no one to chase them away.

Isaiah 17:3

Fortified cities will disappear from Ephraim

Ephraim was the largest tribe in Israel. Here it represents the entire northern kingdom of Israel. Alternate translation: “Strong cities will disappear from Israel” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

will disappear

This does not mean that they will vanish, but that the cities will be destroyed.

the kingdom from Damascus

The words “will disappear” are understood from the previous phrase. Damascus was where the king of Aram ruled from. The kingdom disappearing represents the king no longer having royal power. Alternate translation: “the kingdom will disappear from Damascus” or “there will be no royal power in Damascus” (See: [Ellipsis](#) and [Metonymy](#))

this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Translate as in [Isaiah 14:22](#). Alternate translation: “this is what Yahweh of hosts has declared” or “this is what I, Yahweh of hosts, have declared” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

³ Fortified cities will disappear from Ephraim, the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Aram—they will be like the glory of the people of Israel—this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts.

UST

³ The cities in Israel will not have walls around them to protect them. The power of the kingdom of Damascus will be ended, and the few people who will remain in Aram will be disgraced like the people in Israel were disgraced.” That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

Isaiah 17:4

It will come about

This phrase is used here to mark an important event that will happen. If your language has a way for doing this, you could consider using it here.

the glory of Jacob will become thin, and the fatness of his flesh will become lean

Here “Jacob” refers to the kingdom of Israel. Israel would no longer be glorious. Rather it would be weak and poor. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ It will come about on that day {that} the glory of Jacob will become thin, and the fatness of his flesh will become lean.

UST

⁴ “At that time, Israel will become insignificant. It will be like a fat person who has become very thin.

Isaiah 17:5

It will be as when a harvester gathers the standing grain ... in the Valley of Rephaim

There will be nothing left in the land after God punishes the people of Israel. (See: [Simile](#))

the Valley of Rephaim

This is a valley where people normally grew and harvested much food. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁵ It will be as when a harvester gathers the standing grain, and his arm reaps the heads of grain. It will be as when one gleans heads of grain in the Valley of Rephaim.

UST

⁵ The entire land will be like a field where the harvesters have cut all the grain; there will be nothing left, like the fields in the Valley of Rephaim after all the crops have been harvested.

Isaiah 17:6

Gleanings will be left

The word “Gleanings” here represents the people who will still live in Israel. Alternate translation: “But there will be a few people left in Israel” (See: [Metaphor](#))

as when the olive tree is shaken

People harvested olive trees by shaking them so that the olives would fall out. Alternate translation: “like the few olives that remain on the olive trees after people harvest them” (See: [Simile](#))

four or five

The word “olives” is understood from the phrase before this. Alternate translation: “four or five olives” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

this is the declaration of Yahweh, the God of Israel

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Alternate translation: “this is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, has declared” or “this is what I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, have declared” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

⁶ Gleanings will be left, however, as when the olive tree is shaken: two {or} three olives in the top of the uppermost bough, four {or} five in the highest branches of a fruitful tree—this is the declaration of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

UST

⁶ Only a few of the Israelite people will remain, like the few olives that remain on the top of a tree after the workers have shaken all the other olives to the ground. There will be only two or three olives in the top branches, or four or five olives on the other branches.” That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

Isaiah 17:7

men will look toward their Maker ... will look to the Holy One of Israel

Looking toward God here represents hoping that he will help them. Alternate translation: “men will hope that their Maker, the Holy One of Israel, will help them” (See: [Idiom](#))

men will look

The word “men” represents people in general. Alternate translation: “people will look” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

their eyes will look

Here “eyes” represents the people who look. Alternate translation: “they will look” or “the people will look” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

ULT

⁷ On that day men will look toward their Maker, and their eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel.

UST

⁷ Then at that time, you people of Israel will trust in God, your creator, the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 17:8

They will not look to the altars

Looking to the altars represents worshiping idols with the hope that the idols will help them. Alternate translation: “They will not worship idols at their altars” or “The people of Israel will not go to their altars and ask their idols to help them” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the work of their hands

Here the people are represented by their “hands” to emphasize that they made the altars or idols. Alternate translation: “that they made with their hands” or “which they themselves built” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

what their fingers have made ... the Asherah poles or the sun images

The second phrase identifies the things that the people made.

Speaking of the fingers here emphasizes that the people made them, so these things are not real gods. Alternate translation: “the Asherah poles or the sun images, which they themselves made” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁸ They will not look to the altars, the work of their hands, nor will they look to what their fingers have made, the Asherah poles or the sun images.

UST

⁸ You will no longer seek to get help from your idols or worship the idols that you have made with your own hands. You will never again bow down in front of the poles where you worshiped the goddess Asherah. You will never again worship at the high places that you have built to burn incense to idols.

Isaiah 17:9

that were forsaken because of the people of Israel

It can be made explicit who left these lands. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “that the Hivites and Amorites left after the people of Israel came” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁹ On that day their strong cities will be like the abandoned wooded slopes on the hill summits, that were forsaken because of the people of Israel and that will become a desolation.

UST

⁹ The largest cities in Israel will be abandoned, like the land that the Hiv and Amor people groups abandoned when the Israelites attacked them long ago. No people will live there.

Isaiah 17:10

For you have forgotten

Here “you” refers to the people of Israel. The word “forgotten” does not mean they have no memory of God. It means they no longer obey him. Alternate translation: “For you no longer obey”

the God of your salvation

Alternate translation: “the God who saves you”

have ignored the rock of your strength

This compares God to a large rock which people could climb on to get away from their enemies or hide behind. Alternate translation: “have ignored God, who is like a rock that protects you” or “have ignored the one who protects you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁰ For you have forgotten the God of your salvation, and have ignored the rock of your strength. So you plant pleasant plants, and set out vine branches received from a stranger,

UST

¹⁰ That will happen because you have stopped worshiping God, who is like a huge rock on top of which you can be safe. You have forgotten that he is the one who can hide you. So now you plant very nice grapevines and even unusual ones that come from other countries.

Isaiah 17:11

the harvest will fail

Alternate translation: “there will not be much fruit for you to harvest”

ULT

11 on the day you plant and hedge and cultivate. Soon your seed will grow, {but} the harvest {will} fail on a day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

UST

11 But even if they sprout leaves on the day you plant them, and even if they produce blossoms on that same morning, at harvest time, there will not be any grapes for you to pick. All that you will get is much of agony and suffering.

Isaiah 17:12

The uproar of many peoples, that roar like the roaring of the seas

An uproar is a very loud noise. Alternate translation: "The sound of many people, that is very loud like the seas" (See: [Simile](#))

the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters

The enemy armies appear to be a powerful force that no one can stop. Alternate translation: "the nations come rushing in like the mighty waters" (See: [Simile](#))

the rushing of nations

The word "nations" refers to the armies of those nations. Alternate translation: "the rushing of the enemy armies" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹² Woe! The uproar of many peoples, that roar like the roaring of the seas, and the rushing of nations, {that} rush like the rushing of mighty waters!

UST

¹² Listen! The armies of many nations will roar like the sea roars. It will sound like noise of crashing waves.

Isaiah 17:13

before the wind like chaff on the mountains ... like weeds whirling before a storm

These two phrases mean the same thing. The enemy armies seem powerful but God will easily stop them and send them away. Alternate translation: "like chaff on the mountains that the wind blows away ... like weeds that whirl and blow away as a storm approaches" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

¹³ The nations will roar like the rushing of many waters, but he will rebuke them and they will flee far away, they will be chased before the wind like chaff on the mountains, and like weeds whirling before a storm.

UST

¹³ But even though their loud roaring will be like the sound of crashing waves, when Yahweh rebukes them, they will run far away. They will flee like chaff on the hills scatters when the wind blows, like tumbleweeds scatter when a windstorm blows.

Isaiah 17:14

This is the portion of those

What happens to them is spoken of as if it is a portion that they inherit. Alternate translation: “This is what happens to those” (See: [Metaphor](#))

loot us ... rob us

The word “us” refers to Isaiah and the people of Judah.

ULT

14 In the evening, see, terror! Before the morning they will be gone! This {is} the portion of those who loot us, the lot of those who rob us.

UST

14 And even though you people of Israel will be terrified, in the morning your enemies will all be gone. That is what will happen to those who invade our land and steal our possessions.

Isaiah 18

Isaiah 18 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Cush

This chapter records prophecies against the nation of Cush. They are being punished by Yahweh. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphors

This chapter uses many metaphors to describe the destruction coming to the people of Cush. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Isaiah 18:1

Woe to the land of the rustling of wings, which is along the rivers of Cush

Here, the phrase **the rustling of wings** could mean (1) the boats that have sails are spoken of as having wings. Alternate translation: “Woe to those who live in the land beyond the rivers of Cush, whose many ships look like insects on the water” or (2) the rustling of wings refers to the noise of insects that have wings, perhaps locusts. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ Woe to the land of the {rustling} of wings, which {is} along the rivers of Cush;

UST

¹ Terrible things will happen to you people of Ethiopia! In your land there are many boats at the upper part of the Nile River.

Isaiah 18:2

by the sea

The Nile River was very wide, and people in Egypt and Cush referred to it as “the sea.” Alternate translation: “on the great river” or “along the Nile River” (See: [Metaphor](#))

vessels of papyrus

Papyrus is a tall plant that grows along the side of the Nile River. People bound together papyrus bundles to make boats. Alternate translation: “papyrus boats” or “boats made of reeds” or (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

a nation tall and smooth ... a people feared far and near ... a nation strong and trampling down, whose land the rivers divide

These phrases all describe the people of one nation.

a nation tall and smooth

The word “nation” here refers to the people of that nation. Alternate translation: “a nation whose people are tall and have smooth skin” (See: [Metonymy](#))

a people feared far and near

The words “far” and “near” are used together to mean “everywhere.” Alternate translation: “a people who are feared everywhere” or “a people that everyone in the earth fears” (See: [Merism](#))

a nation strong and trampling down

Trampling down represents conquering other nations. Alternate translation: “a nation that is strong and conquers other nations” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the rivers divide

This probably refers to many rivers that flow through the nation so they divide it into different parts.

ULT

² who send ambassadors by the sea, in vessels of papyrus on the waters. Go, you swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, to a people feared far and near, a nation strong and trampling down, whose land the rivers divide.

UST

² Your rulers send ambassadors that sail quickly down the river in papyrus boats. Tell your messengers to go quickly! Go to people who are tall and who have smooth skins. People everywhere are afraid of those people, because they conquer and destroy other nations; they are people who live in a land that rivers divide.

Isaiah 18:3

Connecting Statement:

Verse 3 tells what the messengers in [Isaiah 18:2](#) must say to the people of the world.

All you inhabitants of the world ... you who live on the earth

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "All you people on the earth" (See: [Parallelism](#))

when a signal is lifted up on the mountains, look; and when the trumpet is blown, listen

The signal and trumpet were to call people to battle. The commands to look and listen are commands to pay attention and prepare for battle. Alternate translation: "pay attention when the signal is lifted up on the mountains and the trumpet is blown"

when a signal is lifted up on the mountains, look

The signal was a flag used to call people to battle. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "pay attention when you see the battle flag on the mountains" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

when the trumpet is blown, listen

The trumpets were used to call people to battle. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "pay attention when you hear the sound of the battle trumpets" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ All you inhabitants of the world and you who live on the earth, when a signal is lifted up on the mountains, look; and when the trumpet is blown, listen.

UST

³ You messengers must tell to the people of the world, to all people everywhere, "Look when the battle flag is lifted on top of the mountain, and listen when the ram's horn blows to signal that the battle is about to begin."

Isaiah 18:4

General Information:

God uses a parable about a farmer in a vineyard in order to describe how he will punish a certain nation. That nation is either Ethiopia or Ethiopia's enemy.

This is what Yahweh said to me

"Yahweh said to me." Here the word "me" refers to Isaiah.

I will quietly observe from my home

What God will observe can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "I will quietly observe that nation from my home" or "From my home, I will quietly watch what the people of that nation do" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

like the simmering heat in sunshine, like a cloud of mist in the heat of harvest

These phrases show how quietly God will watch the nation. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

⁴ This is what Yahweh said to me, "I will quietly observe from my home, like the simmering heat in sunshine, like a cloud of mist in the heat of harvest.

UST

⁴ Listen because Yahweh has told me this: "I will watch quietly from where I live. I will watch quietly like the heat that shimmers as it rises on a summer day. I will work effectively like the cloud of mist that settles during the heat of harvest.

Isaiah 18:5

Before the harvest

This is a harvest of grapes. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “Before the grape harvest” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

when the blossoming is over

It can be stated clearly that this refers to blossoms on grape vines. Alternate translation: “when flowers have finished growing on the grape vines” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

he will cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks

Yahweh will cut off the branches before the grapes can ripen. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will cut off the branches with knives before their produce fruit” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

pruning hooks

A pruning hook is a knife that people use to cut branches off of vines or other plants.

he will cut down and take away the spreading branches

Yahweh will throw away the branches in judgment.

ULT

⁵ Before the harvest, when the blossoming is over, and the flower is ripening into a grape, he will cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, {and} he will cut down and take away the spreading branches.

UST

⁵ Before the harvest, the farmer sees the grapevines making blossoms and the flowers growing into grapes, and he knows that the time is right to cut off the new growth and spreading branches that keep the tree from growing strong. In the same way I know when the time is right to take action against that nation, and I will send an army to attack it.

Isaiah 18:6

They will be left together

God seems to change from telling the parable to speaking more directly about the nation. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "Those who are killed will be left together" or "Like branches that are cut off and thrown away, the bodies of those who are killed will be left on the ground" (See: [Parables](#))

The birds will summer on them

"The birds will eat them during the summer." The word "birds" refers to birds that eat the flesh of dead bodies.

all the animals of the earth

Alternate translation: "all kinds of wild animals"

will winter on them

Alternate translation: "will eat them in the winter"

ULT

⁶ They will be left together for the birds of the mountains and for the animals of the earth. The birds will summer on them, and all the animals of the earth will winter on them."

UST

⁶ All the soldiers in that nation's army will be killed, and their corpses will lie in the fields for vultures to eat their flesh in the summer. Then wild animals will chew on their bones all during the winter."

Isaiah 18:7

a people tall and smooth ... a people feared far and near ... a nation strong and trampling down, whose land the rivers divide

These phrases all describe the people of one nation. See how you translated these phrases in [Isaiah 18:2](#).

a people tall and smooth

Alternate translation: “a people who are tall and have smooth skin”

a people feared far and near

The words “far” and “near” are used together to mean “everywhere.”

Alternate translation: “a people who are feared everywhere” or “a people that everyone in the earth fears” (See: [Merism](#))

a nation strong and trampling down

Trampling down represents conquering other nations. Alternate translation: “a nation that is strong and conquers other nations” (See: [Metonymy](#))

to the place of the name of Yahweh of hosts, to Mount Zion

The word “name” refers to Yahweh. Alternate translation: “to Mount Zion, where Yahweh of hosts dwells” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ At that time tribute will be brought to Yahweh of hosts from a people tall and smooth, from a people feared far and near, a nation strong and trampling down, whose land the rivers divide, to the place of the name of Yahweh of hosts, to Mount Zion.

UST

⁷ At that time, the people of the nation that rivers divide will take gifts to Yahweh in Jerusalem. Those people are tall and have smooth skins; people everywhere are afraid of those people, because they conquer and destroy other nations, will take gifts to Jerusalem, the city where Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, lives.

Isaiah 19

Isaiah 19 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 19:1-18.

Special concepts in this chapter

Egypt

This chapter prophesied destruction against the nation of Egypt. Their destruction will come from internal division instead of being conquered by another nation. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Imagery

Some of the imagery used in this chapter may be connected to the worship of specific false gods. One important god the people of Canaan worshiped was Baal, the god of rain or storms. One of the important gods the Egyptians worshiped was Ra, the god of the sun. (See: [god](#), [false god](#), [goddess](#), [idol](#), [idolater](#), [idolatrous](#), [idolatry](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“In that day”

This changes the reference from the time when Assyria comes to dominate the world and looks to a more distant future day.

Isaiah 19:1

See

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

Yahweh rides on a swift cloud

Yahweh seems to be pictured here as riding on a cloud as if he was riding in a chariot. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the idols of Egypt quake before him

The idols are described as having feelings of fear as Yahweh approaches. Alternate translation: “the idols of Egypt tremble in fear before Yahweh” (See: [Personification](#))

the hearts of the Egyptians melt within themselves

The heart melting represents losing their courage. Alternate translation: “the Egyptians have no more courage” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ A declaration about Egypt. See, Yahweh rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt; the idols of Egypt quake before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within themselves.

UST

¹ Isaiah received this message from Yahweh about Egypt: Listen to this! I, Yahweh, am coming toward Egypt, riding on a fast-moving cloud. The idols in Egypt will tremble when I appear, and the people of Egypt will be extremely afraid.

Isaiah 19:2

a man against his neighbor

The words “will fight” are understood from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: “a man will fight against his neighbor” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

city will be against city

The word “city” represents the people of the city. Alternate translation: “people of one city will fight against people of another city” or “people from different cities will fight against one another” (See: [Metonymy](#))

kingdom against kingdom

The words “will be” or “will fight” are understood from the previous phrases. Alternate translation: “kingdom will be against kingdom” or “kingdom will fight against kingdom” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

kingdom against kingdom

The word “kingdom” refers to a smaller kingdom within Egypt. It may also be called a province. It represents the people of that kingdom or province. Alternate translation: “the people of one province will be against the people of another province” or “people from different provinces will fight against one another” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² “I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians: A man will fight against his brother, and a man against his neighbor; city will be against city, and kingdom against kingdom.

UST

² I will cause the people of Egypt to fight against each other: men will fight against their brothers, neighbors will fight against each other, people of one city will fight against the people of another city, people of one province will fight against the people of another province.

Isaiah 19:3

The spirit of Egypt will be weakened from within. I will destroy his advice

The nation of Egypt is spoken of here as if it was a person. (See: [Personification](#))

The spirit of Egypt will be weakened from within

This can be expressed in active form. Alternate translation: "I will weaken the spirit of Egypt from within" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

I will destroy his advice, though they sought the advice of ... spiritualists

Alternate translation: "They sought the advice of ... spiritualists, but that will do them no good. It will not stop me from destroying his advice"

I will destroy his advice

This could mean: (1) Yahweh will cause the advice that he gives to be ineffective or (2) Yahweh will cause him to be unable to give any advice. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **advice**, you could express the same idea with the verb "advise." Alternate translation: "I will confuse those who advise the king" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

mediums ... spiritualists

These are people who claim to speak with those who have died.

ULT

³ The spirit of Egypt will be weakened from within. I will destroy his advice, though they sought the advice of idols, dead men's spirits, mediums, and spiritualists.

UST

³ The people of Egypt will become very discouraged, and I will cause their plans to not be successful. They will plead with idols and sorcerers and those who talk with spirits of dead people to tell them what they should do.

Isaiah 19:4

I will give the Egyptians into the hand of a harsh master

Here “hand” refers to power or control. Alternate translation: “I will give the Egyptians over to the control of a harsh master” (See: [Metonymy](#))

this is the declaration of the Lord Yahweh of hosts

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Translate as in [Isaiah 3:15](#). Alternate translation: “this is what the Lord Yahweh of hosts has declared” or “this is what I, the Lord Yahweh of hosts, have declared” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

⁴ I will give the Egyptians into the hand of a harsh master, and a strong king will rule over them— this is the declaration of the Lord Yahweh of hosts.”

UST

⁴ Then I will enable someone who will treat them very cruelly to become their king. That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say.

Isaiah 19:5

The waters of the sea will dry up, and the river will dry up and become empty

Egyptians referred to the Nile River as “the sea.” These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: “The Nile River will completely dry up” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁵ The waters of the sea will dry up, and the river will dry up and become empty.

UST

⁵ Some day the water in the Nile River will dry up, and the riverbed will become very dry.

Isaiah 19:6

become foul

Alternate translation: “become foul-smelling” or “stink”

will dwindle

Alternate translation: “become smaller and smaller”

the reeds and flags will wither away

Here, **reeds** and **flags** refer to two similar kinds of water plants.

Alternate translation: “the plants along the river will die and decay”

ULT

⁶ The rivers will become foul; the streams of Egypt will dwindle and dry up; the reeds and flags will wither away.

UST

⁶ The branches of the river will all dry up. The canals along the river will stink because of the withering and rotting reeds and bulrushes.

Isaiah 19:7

every sown field beside the Nile

Alternate translation: “the fields near the Nile where people have planted crops”

ULT

⁷ The reeds along the Nile, at the mouth of the Nile, and every sown field beside the Nile will become parched, will be driven away, and will be no more.

UST

⁷ All the plants along the river and all the crops in the fields bordering the river will dry up; then they will blow away and disappear.

Isaiah 19:8

The fishermen will wail and mourn, and all who cast a hook into the Nile will mourn, and those who spread nets on the waters will grieve

These three phrases mean basically the same thing. If necessary, the reason they will grieve can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "The fishermen who catch fish with hooks or nets will cry in despair because the fish in the Nile have died" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Parallelism](#))

cast a hook into the Nile

In order to catch fish, some people put a little food on a hook, tie the hook to a string, and throw the hook into the water. When a fish tries to eat the food, its mouth gets stuck on the hook, and the person pulls the fish out of the water. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

cast

throw

spread nets on the waters

In order to catch fish, some people toss a net on the water. When fish get caught in it, they pull the net with the fish out of the water. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

⁸ The fishermen will wail and mourn, and all who cast a hook into the Nile will mourn, and those who spread nets on the waters will grieve.

UST

⁸ The fishermen will throw into the river lines with hooks on them and nets, and then they will groan and be very discouraged; they will be sad because there will be no fish in the river.

Isaiah 19:9

The workers in combed flax

Alternate translation: "Those who work with combed flax"

combed flax

Flax is a plant that grows along the Nile River. People comb its fibers in order to separate them, and use them to make thread for linen cloth. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

will turn pale

Alternate translation: "will be ashamed"

ULT

⁹ The workers in combed flax and those who weave white cloth will turn pale.

UST

⁹ Those who weave cloth from flax will not know what to do because there will be no thread for them to weave.

Isaiah 19:10

The cloth workers of Egypt

Alternate translation: "The people of Egypt who make cloth"

will be crushed

Being crushed represents being discouraged. Alternate translation: "will be discouraged" (See: [Metaphor](#))

work for hire

Alternate translation: "work for pay"

will be grieved within themselves

Alternate translation: "will feel very sad"

ULT

10 The cloth workers of Egypt will be crushed; all who work for hire will be grieved within themselves.

UST

10 They will all despair and be very discouraged.

Isaiah 19:11

**The princes of Zoan are completely foolish.
The advice of the wisest advisors of Pharaoh
has become senseless**

These two phrases are similar in meaning. Either the princes of Zoan are also the wisest advisors of Pharaoh, or they are another group of people that also are shown to be foolish. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Zoan

This is a city in northern Egypt. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

How can you say to Pharaoh ... kings?

Isaiah uses a question to mock those in Egypt who claim to be wise. Alternate translation: "You foolishly say to Pharaoh ... kings." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹¹ The princes of Zoan {are} completely foolish. The advice of the wisest advisors of Pharaoh has become senseless. How can you say to Pharaoh, "I {am} the son of wise men, a son of ancient kings?"

UST

¹¹ The officials in the city of Zoan in northern Egypt are foolish. The advice that they gave to the king was worthless. Why do they continue to tell the king that they are wise, that they are descendants of wise kings who lived long ago?

Isaiah 19:12

Where then are your wise men?

Isaiah uses a question to mock the wise men. The word “your” refers to Pharaoh. Alternate translation: “You do not have any wise men.” or “Your wise men are fools.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Let them tell you and make known what Yahweh of hosts plans concerning Egypt

Isaiah is implying that wise men should be able to understand God’s plans, but Isaiah does not really believe they are wise. Alternate translation: “If they were really wise, they would be able to tell you what Yahweh of hosts plans concerning Egypt” (See: [Irony](#))

ULT

¹² Where then {are} your wise men? Let them tell you and make known what Yahweh of hosts plans concerning Egypt.

UST

¹² King, where are your wise advisors now? If you had any wise advisors, they could tell you what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has planned to do to Egypt!

Isaiah 19:13

they have made Egypt go astray, who are the cornerstones of her tribes

The princes of Zoan and Memphis are spoken of as if they are the cornerstones of buildings because they are an important part of the community. Alternate translation: “the leaders have made Egypt go astray” (See: [Metaphor](#))

princes of Zoan

Zoan is a city in northern Egypt. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 19:11](#).

Memphis

This is a city in the northern part of Egypt. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

made Egypt go astray

The word “Egypt” represents the people of Egypt. Going astray represents doing what is wrong. Alternate translation: “made the people of Egypt go astray” or “made the people of Egypt do what is wrong” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹³ The princes of Zoan have become fools, the princes of Memphis are deceived; they have made Egypt go astray, {who are} the cornerstones of her tribes. ^[1]

UST

¹³ Yes, the officials of Zoan have become foolish, and the leaders in the city of Memphis in northern Egypt have deceived themselves. All the leaders of the people have caused their people to do wrong things.

Isaiah 19:14

Yahweh has mixed a spirit of distortion into her midst

Isaiah speaks of Yahweh's judgment as if Egypt was a cup of wine. He speaks of Yahweh causing the leaders' thoughts to be distorted as if their distorted thoughts were a liquid that Yahweh mixed in with the wine. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has judged them by distorting their thoughts" or "Yahweh has judged Egypt by distorting its leaders' thoughts, as intoxicating drinks confuse people's thoughts" (See: [Metaphor](#))

distortion

Alternate translation: "perverseness" or "confusion"

into her midst

Here "her" refers to Egypt. Nations are sometimes spoken of as if they were women. Alternate translation: "within Egypt" (See: [Personification](#))

they have led Egypt astray

Here, "they" refers to the leaders described in the previous verses. The word "Egypt" represents the people of Egypt. Alternate translation: "the princes have led the people of Egypt astray" (See: [Metonymy](#))

have led Egypt astray

Leading people astray represents influencing them to do what is wrong. (See: [Metaphor](#))

like a drunk staggering in his vomit

Isaiah speaks of the people of Egypt doing what is wrong as if they were made to wander about like a drunken person. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

14 Yahweh has mixed a spirit of distortion into her midst, and they have led Egypt astray in all she does, like a drunk staggering in his vomit.

UST

14 Yahweh has caused them to be very foolish, with the result that in everything that they do, it is as though the people of Egypt stagger like a drunken person staggers and slips in his own vomit.

Isaiah 19:15

whether head or tail

The “head,” the part of an animal a person would want to be, represents the leader. The “tail” is the opposite and represents people who follow. Alternate translation: “whether leader or follower” (See: [Metaphor](#))

palm branch or reed

The “palm branch” grows high on the tree and represents people who are wealthy and important. The “reed” grows in shallow water and represents people who are poor and unimportant. See how you translated similar phrases in [Isaiah 9:14](#). Alternate translation: “whether they are important or unimportant” or “whether rich or poor” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

15 There is nothing anyone can do for Egypt, whether head or tail, palm branch or reed.

UST

15 There is no one in Egypt, rich or poor, important or unimportant, who will be able to help them.

Isaiah 19:16

Egyptians will be like women

This emphasizes that the people of Egypt will be afraid and helpless when God punishes them. (See: [Simile](#))

because of the upraised hand of Yahweh of hosts that he raises over them

Here “hand” refers to God’s power, and raising the hand against them represents punishing them. Alternate translation: “because Yahweh of hosts has raised his powerful hand to punish them” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 In that day, the Egyptians will be like women. They will tremble and fear because of the upraised hand of Yahweh of hosts that he raises over them.

UST

16 At that time, the people of Egypt will be as helpless as women. They will tremble, being terrified because they know that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has raised his fist, intending to strike them.

Isaiah 19:17

The land of Judah will become a cause of staggering to Egypt

The “land of Judah” and “Egypt” refer to the people in those places. The Egyptians will stagger because they are afraid. Alternate translation: “The people of Judah will cause the Egyptians to stagger” or “The people of Judah will cause the Egyptians to be terribly afraid” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Whenever anyone reminds them of her, they will be afraid

Here, “them” and “they” refer to the Egyptians and “her” refers to the people of Judah. Alternate translation: “Whenever anyone reminds the Egyptians of the people of Judah, the Egyptians will be afraid”

ULT

¹⁷ The land of Judah will become a cause of staggering to Egypt. Whenever anyone reminds them of her, they will be afraid, because of the plan of Yahweh, that he is planning against them.

UST

¹⁷ The people of Egypt will be afraid of the people of Judah, and anyone who mentions Judah to them will cause them to be terrified, because that will remind them of what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is planning to do to them.

Isaiah 19:18

there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak

This refers to the people of those cities. Alternate translation: “the people in five Egyptian cities will speak” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the language of Canaan

This refers to Hebrew, the language of the people of God living in the land of Canaan. Here Canaan represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: “the language of the people of Canaan” (See: [Metonymy](#))

swear allegiance

Alternate translation: “promise to be loyal”

One of these will be called

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. “People will call one of these cities” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

called The City of the Sun

It is not clear whether the Hebrew word translated “Sun” here means “sun” or “destruction.” It is also not clear what the name tells us about the city. Alternate translation: “the city called Sun City” or “the city called Destruction City” (See: [Textual Variants](#))

ULT

18 In that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to Yahweh of hosts. One of these will be called The City of the Sun.
[\[2\]](#)

UST

18 At that time, people in five cities in Egypt will solemnly declare that they will serve Yahweh. They will learn to speak the Hebrew language. One of those cities will be called “City of the Sun.”

Isaiah 19:19

a stone pillar at the border to Yahweh

The phrase “the border” refers to the border of Egypt. Alternate translation: “a stone pillar to Yahweh at the border of Egypt” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

19 In that day there will be an altar to Yahweh in the middle of the land of Egypt, and a stone pillar at the border to Yahweh.

UST

19 At that time, there will be an altar for worshiping Yahweh in the center of Egypt, and there will be a pillar to honor Yahweh at the border between Egypt and Israel.

Isaiah 19:20

It will be as a sign and a witness to Yahweh of hosts in the land of Egypt

The abstract nouns “sign” and “witness” can be expressed with the verbs “show” and “prove.” Alternate translation: “The altar will show and prove that Yahweh of hosts is in the land of Egypt” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

to Yahweh of hosts in the land of Egypt

Yahweh being in the land of Egypt represents the people of Egypt worshipping him. Alternate translation: “that the people in the land of Egypt worship Yahweh of hosts” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

When they cry

Alternate translation: “When the Egyptians cry”

because of oppressors

Alternate translation: “because people are treating them harshly” or “because others are causing them to suffer”

he will send them a savior and a defender

Alternate translation: “Yahweh will send someone to save and defend the Egyptians”

he will deliver them

Who Yahweh will deliver them from can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will deliver the Egyptians from their oppressors” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁰ It will be as a sign and a witness to Yahweh of hosts in the land of Egypt. When they cry to Yahweh because of oppressors, he will send them a savior and a defender, and he will deliver them.

UST

²⁰ That will be a sign to indicate that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is worshiped in the land of Egypt. And when the people cry out to Yahweh to help them because others are oppressing them, he will send to them someone who will defend and rescue them.

Isaiah 19:21

Yahweh will become known to Egypt

Here “Egypt” refers to the people of Egypt. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will make the people of Egypt know him” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

will acknowledge Yahweh

Alternate translation: “will accept the truth about Yahweh” or “will agree to the truth about Yahweh”

They will worship

The object of their worship can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “They will worship Yahweh” (See: [Assumed Knowledge](#) and [Implicit Information](#))

will make vows to Yahweh and fulfill them

Alternate translation: “will make promises to Yahweh and keep them” or “they will make promises to Yahweh and they will do what they have promised to do”

ULT

²¹ Yahweh will become known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will acknowledge Yahweh on that day. They will worship with sacrifices and offerings, and will make vows to Yahweh and fulfill {them}.

UST

²¹ Yahweh will enable the people of Egypt to know who he is. At that time they will admit that he is God. They will worship him and bring to him offerings of grain and other sacrifices. They will solemnly promise to do things for Yahweh, and they will do what they promise.

Isaiah 19:22

Yahweh will afflict Egypt

Here, “Egypt” refers to the people of Egypt. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will afflict the people of Egypt” (See: [Metonymy](#))

afflict

Alternate translation: “strike” or “punish”

afflicting and healing

The word “them” is understood in this phrase. Alternate translation: “afflicting them and healing them” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

afflicting and healing

How this phrase relates to the phrase before it can be made clear with the words “after” and “also.” Alternate translation: “and after he afflicts them, he will also heal them”

ULT

²² Yahweh will afflict Egypt, afflicting and healing. They will return to Yahweh; he will hear their prayer and will heal {them}.

UST

²² After Yahweh has punished Egypt, he will cause their troubles to end. The people of Egypt will turn to Yahweh, and he will listen when they plead to him for help, and he will cause their troubles to cease.

Isaiah 19:23

there will be a highway

A highway is a large road on which many people can travel.

the Assyrian will come

“the Assyrian” refers to a person from Assyria, but represents anyone from Assyria who comes to Egypt. Alternate translation: “Assyrians will come” (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

the Egyptian to Assyria

The words “will come” are understood. Alternate translation: “the Egyptian will come to Assyria” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

the Egyptian

This refers to a person from Egypt, but represents anyone from Egypt who comes to Assyria. Alternate translation: “Egyptians” (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians

The object of their worship can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “the Egyptians and Assyrians will worship Yahweh” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²³ In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come to Egypt, and the Egyptian to Assyria; and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

UST

²³ At that time, there will be a highway between Egypt and Assyria. As a result, the people of Egypt will be able to travel easily to Assyria, and the people of Assyria will be able to travel easily to Egypt. And the people of both countries will worship Yahweh.

Isaiah 19:24

Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria

The names of the three nations represent the people of those nations. Alternate translation: “the Israelites will be the third with the Egyptians and Assyrians” (See: [Metonymy](#))

be the third with

This could mean: (1) “join together with” or (2) “be the third blessing with” or (3) “be equal to.” (See: [Ordinal Numbers](#))

ULT

²⁴ In that day, Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth;

UST

²⁴ And Israel will be their ally. All three nations will be friendly to each other, and the people of Israel will be a blessing to the people of the entire world.

Isaiah 19:25

Blessed be Egypt, my people; Assyria, the work of my hands; and Israel, my inheritance

The names of the three nations refer to the people of those nations. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I have blessed you, people of Egypt, because you are my people; and I have blessed you, people of Assyria, because I created you; and I have blessed you, people of Israel, because I securely possess you" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

the work of my hands

Here "hands" refers to God's power and action. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁵ Yahweh of hosts will bless them and say, "Blessed {be} Egypt, my people; Assyria, the work of my hands; and Israel, my inheritance."

UST

²⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will bless them; he will say, "You people of Egypt are now my people. You people of Assyria, I have established your country. You people of Israel are the people whom I have chosen to belong to me."

Isaiah 20

Isaiah 20 General Notes

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Naked and barefoot

This is an image used in this chapter to describe Assyria's victory over Egypt and Ethiopia. While they will be defeated, they will not be totally destroyed. Instead, they will be left with nothing. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Isaiah 20:1

Tartan

the name of the chief commander of the armies of Assyria (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Sargon

the name of the king of Assyria

he fought against Ashdod and took it

Ashdod refers to the army of Ashdod. Alternate translation: “he fought against the army of Ashdod and defeated it” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, he fought against Ashdod and took it.

UST

¹ One year King Sargon of Assyria sent the chief commander of his army to take his soldiers to capture the city of Ashdod in Philistia. At that time,

Isaiah 20:2

walking naked and barefoot

“walking around without clothes and without sandals.” Here the word “naked” probably refers to wearing only his undergarments.

ULT

² At that time Yahweh spoke by Isaiah son of Amoz and said, “Go and remove the sackcloth from your waist, and take your sandals off your feet.” He did so, walking naked and barefoot.

UST

² Yahweh told Isaiah, “Take off the rough sackcloth that you have been wearing and take off your sandals.” So Isaiah did that, and then he walked around naked and barefoot for three years.

Isaiah 20:3

an omen

Alternate translation: "a warning"

ULT

³ Yahweh said, "Just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years, it is a sign and an omen concerning Egypt and concerning Cush —

UST

³ Then Yahweh said this to the people of Judah: "My servant Isaiah has been walking around naked and barefoot for the past three years. That is to show the terrible disasters that I will cause the people of Egypt and Ethiopia to experience.

Isaiah 20:4

the king of Assyria will lead away the captives

The king orders his army to do this task. Alternate translation: “the king of Assyria will have his army lead away the captives” (See: [Metonymy](#))

will lead away the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Cush

It can be stated clearly that they will first attack and capture people. Alternate translation: “will attack Egypt and Cush and capture their people and lead them away” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

to the shame of Egypt

Egypt refers to the people of Egypt. Alternate translation: “which will bring shame on the people of Egypt” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ in this way the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

UST

⁴ What will happen is that the army of the king of Assyria will invade those countries and capture many of the people and take them away as their prisoners. They will force all of them, including both the young ones and the old ones, to walk naked and barefoot. They will also force them to have no clothes around their buttocks, which will cause the people of Egypt to be ashamed.

Isaiah 20:5**dismayed and ashamed**

Alternate translation: "afraid and put to shame"

because of Cush their hope and of Egypt their glory

Hope and glory refer to their trust in the military power of these countries. Alternate translation: "because they had trusted in the power of the armies of Cush and Egypt" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁵ They will be dismayed and ashamed, because of Cush their hope and of Egypt their glory.

UST

⁵ Then the people of other countries who trusted that the armies of Egypt and Ethiopia would be able to help them will be very dismayed and afraid.

Isaiah 20:6

The inhabitants of these coasts

the people who lived in the lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea

where we fled for help to be rescued

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "where we fled to so they would rescue us" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

now, how can we escape?

The author uses this question to emphasize how hopeless their situation was. Alternate translation: "now there is no way for us to escape!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁶ The inhabitants of these coasts will say on that day, 'Indeed, this {was} our source of hope, where we fled for help to be rescued from the king of Assyria, and now, how can we escape?'"

UST

⁶ They will say, 'We thought that the armies of Egypt and Ethiopia would help us and defend us, but they have been destroyed, so there is no way that we can escape from being destroyed by the army of the king of Assyria!'"

Isaiah 21

Isaiah 21 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 21:1-10, 13-17.

Special concepts in this chapter

Cush

Dumah and Seir are places in Edom. Part of this chapter is a prophecy against Cush. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophecy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

The desert by the sea

This is a metaphor for an unknown nation. Scholars are divided over the proper identity of this nation, but it is probably Babylon. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Mystery

The fulfillment of this chapter is very mysterious. It is unknown who is truly being addressed and how this is to be fulfilled in history. The translator should not attempt to give the reader insight into this prophecy's fulfillment. (See: [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Isaiah 21:1

A declaration

Alternate translation: "This is what Yahweh declares" or "This is Yahweh's message"

about the desert by the sea

This refers to the people who live in Babylon as being a desert, even though God has not made it into a desert yet. This event will certainly happen. Alternate translation: "about the people who live in a land that soon will be a desert" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Predictive Past](#))

Like stormwinds sweeping through the Negev

Isaiah compares the army that will attack the people to a storm with strong winds. They will be quick and powerful. (See: [Simile](#))

from the wilderness

Here "wilderness" refers to the wilderness of Judea. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

from a terrible land

The army is from a people that cause great fear.

ULT

¹ A declaration about the desert by the sea. Like stormwinds sweeping through the Negev it comes passing through from the wilderness, from a terrible land.

UST

¹ Yahweh gave this message about a land soon to become a desert: An army will soon come from the southern Judean wilderness to invade that land; they are an army that causes their enemies to be terrified, an army that will come sweeping through the wilderness from a terrible land.

Isaiah 21:2

A distressing vision has been given to me

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh showed me a troubling vision” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the treacherous man deals treacherously

Alternate translation: “those who deceive will deceive”

the destroyer destroys

Alternate translation: “those who destroy will destroy”

Go up and attack, Elam; besiege, Media

In the vision given to Isaiah, Yahweh speaks to the armies of Elam and Media as if they are there listening to him. (See: [Apostrophe](#))

Go up and attack, Elam; besiege, Media

It is understood that they are to attack the Babylonians. Alternate translation: “Go up and attack the Babylonians, you soldiers of Elam; go and besiege the Babylonians, you soldiers of Media” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

Elam ... Media

Here “Elam” and “Media” represent the soldiers from these places. (See: [Metonymy](#))

I will stop all her groaning

Here “her” represents all the people who are suffering because of the Babylonians. Yahweh will cause them to stop groaning when he sends the armies of Elam and Media to destroy the Babylonians. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² A distressing vision has been given to me: the treacherous man deals treacherously, and the destroyer destroys. Go up and attack, Elam; besiege, Media; I will stop all her groaning.

UST

² Yahweh showed me a terrifying vision: In the vision I saw an army that will betray people and steal their possessions after they conquer them. Yahweh said, “You armies from Elam and Media, surround Babylon and prepare to attack it! I will cause the groaning and suffering that Babylon caused to cease!”

Isaiah 21:3

my loins are filled with pain

The vision that Isaiah sees is so troubling it causes him physical pain. Here he describes the pain and cramping in the middle part of his body.

pains like the pains of a woman in labor have taken hold of me

Isaiah compares his pain to the pain of a woman giving birth. This emphasizes the great pain he is feeling. (See: [Simile](#))

I am bowed down by what I heard

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “What I heard has caused me to bend over in pain” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

I am disturbed by what I saw

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “what I saw has greatly troubled me” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ Therefore my loins are filled with pain; pains like the pains of a woman in labor have taken hold of me; I am bowed down by {what I} heard; I am disturbed by {what I} saw.

UST

³ Because of that, my body is full of pain; my pain is like the pain that women who are giving birth experience. When I hear about and see what God is planning to do, I am shocked.

Isaiah 21:4

My heart pounds; I shake with fear

Alternate translation: "My heart beats fast and I am shaking"

ULT

⁴ My heart pounds; I shake with fear. Twilight was my desire, but it brought me terror.

UST

⁴ My heart shakes within me, and I tremble with fear. Early evening is my favorite time of day, but now terror has taken over and I am afraid.

Isaiah 21:5

They prepare

Here “They” refers to the leaders of Babylon.

prepare the table

Here “table” represents the food that people will eat at the feast.
(See: [Metonymy](#))

arise, princes

Here “princes” refers in general to men with authority and not necessarily to sons of kings.

anoint your shields with oil

Soldiers would put oil on their leather shields so they would stay soft and not crack during battle. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁵ They prepare the table, they spread rugs and eat and drink; arise, princes, anoint your shields with oil.

UST

⁵ In the vision I saw that the leaders of Babylonia were preparing a great feast. They had spread rugs for people to sit on; everyone was eating and drinking. But you should get up and prepare your shields, you princes of Babylon, because you are about to be attacked!

Isaiah 21:6

post a watchman

Alternate translation: "tell a watchman to stand on the wall of Jerusalem"

ULT

⁶ For this is what the Lord said to me, "Go, post a watchman; he must report what he sees.

UST

⁶ Then Yahweh said to me, "Put a watchman on the wall of Jerusalem, and tell him to shout what he sees.

Isaiah 21:7

a chariot, a pair of horsemen

Alternate translation: "a soldier riding in a chariot, a pair of horses pulling it"

ULT

⁷ When he sees a chariot, a pair of horsemen, riders on donkeys, and riders on camels, then he must pay attention and be very alert."

UST

⁷ Tell him to watch for chariots pulled by pairs of horses, and men riding camels and donkeys, coming from Babylon. Tell the watchman to watch and listen carefully!"

Isaiah 21:8

Lord, on the watchtower I stand

Here “Lord” refers to the person with authority that commanded the watchman to stand on the wall of Jerusalem.

ULT

⁸ The watchman cries out, ^[1] “Lord, on the watchtower I stand all day, every day, and at my post I stand all night long.”

UST

⁸ So I did that, and one day the watchman called out, “Day after day I have stood on this watchtower, and I have continued to watch during the day and during the night.”

Isaiah 21:9

Babylon has fallen, fallen

Babylon being completely defeated by their enemies is spoken of as if Babylon has fallen. Here “Babylon” is a metonym that represents the people of Babylon. Alternate translation: “The people of Babylon are completely defeated” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

fallen, fallen

The word “fallen” is repeated to emphasize that the people of Babylon were completely defeated by their enemies.

ULT

⁹ Here comes a chariot {with} a man and a pair of horsemen. He calls out, “Babylon has fallen, fallen, and all the carved figures of its gods are broken to the ground.”

UST

⁹ A man comes riding in a chariot pulled by two horses. I called out to him, and he answered, ‘Babylon has been destroyed! All the idols in Babylon lie in pieces on the ground!’”

Isaiah 21:10

My threshed and winnowed ones, children of my threshing floor

The people of Israel suffering because of the Babylonians is spoken of as if the people were grain that was threshed and winnowed. (See: [Metaphor](#))

My threshed

The word “my” refers to Isaiah.

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

ULT

¹⁰ My threshed and winnowed ones, children of my threshing floor! What I have heard from Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, I have declared to you.

UST

¹⁰ My people in Judah, the army of Babylon has caused you to suffer greatly as though you were grain that was threshed and winnowed. But now I have told you what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom we Israelites worship, told me about Babylon.

Isaiah 21:11

A declaration

Alternate translation: "This is what Yahweh declares" or "This is a message from Yahweh"

about Dumah

This is another name for Edom. Here "Dumah" represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: "about the people of Dumah" or "about the people of Edom" (See: [How to Translate Names](#) and [Metonymy](#))

One calls to me

Here "me" refers to Isaiah.

Seir

This is the name of mountains west of Edom. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?

This is repeated to emphasize that the person asking the question is worried and nervous. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

11 A declaration about Dumah. One calls to me from Seir, "Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?"

UST

11 Yahweh gave this message about Edom: Someone from Edom has been calling to me saying, "Watchman, how long will it be before the night is over?"

Isaiah 21:12

If you want to ask, then ask; and come back again

Alternate translation: "Ask me now what you want to know, but also come back later and ask again"

ULT

¹² The watchman said, "The morning comes and also the night. If you want to ask, then ask; and come back again."

UST

¹² The watchman, replied, "It will soon be morning, but after that, it will soon be night again. If you want to ask your question, then ask it now, and then come back again."

Isaiah 21:13

A declaration

Alternate translation: "This is what Yahweh declares" or "This is the message of Yahweh"

about Arabia

Arabia refers to the population of Arabia. Alternate translation: "about the people of Arabia" (See: [Metonymy](#))

In the wilderness of Arabia

Arabia does not have a forest. Alternate translation: "Far off from the road in Arabia" or "Out in the bushes of Arabia" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

caravans

a group of people traveling together

Dedanites

This is a people group that lived in Arabia. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

13 A declaration about Arabia. In the wilderness of Arabia you spend the night, you caravans of Dedanites.

UST

13 Yahweh gave this message about Arabia: Give this message to people traveling in caravans from the town of Dedan in northwest Arabia, travelers who camp in the scrub there. Tell them to bring water for those who are thirsty.

Isaiah 21:14

land of Tema

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

fugitives

A fugitive is a person who runs away so that his enemy will not capture him. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 15:5](#).

with bread

Here “bread” represents food in general. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

14 Bring water for the thirsty;
inhabitants of the land of Tema, meet
the fugitives with bread.

UST

14 And you people who live in the city of
Tema in northwest Arabia, must bring
food for the refugees who are fleeing
from their enemies.

Isaiah 21:15

from the sword, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow

Here “sword” and “bow” represents the soldiers who attack the inhabitants of Tema. Alternate translation: “from their enemies who attack them with swords and bows” (See: [Metonymy](#))

from the weight of war

The terror and suffering that is experienced during war is spoken of as if war were a heavy weight on people. Alternate translation: “from the horrors of war” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁵ For they have fled from the sword, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, and from the weight of war.

UST

¹⁵ They are fleeing in order not to be killed by their enemies' swords and not to be shot in battles by arrows.

Isaiah 21:16

as a laborer hired for a year would see it

“as a hired laborer would count the days of a year.” A hired worker is careful to count the days so that he works exactly the amount of time he is paid to work. This means Kedar will be defeated in exactly one year. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

of Kedar

This is a region in Arabia. Kedar represents the population of Kedar. Alternate translation: “of the people of Kedar” (See: [How to Translate Names](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

16 For this is what the Lord said to me, “Within a year, as a laborer hired for a year would see it, all the glory of Kedar will end.

UST

16 Yahweh said to me, “Exactly one year from now, all the greatness of the region of Kedar in Arabia will end.

Isaiah 21:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

17 Only a few of the archers, the warriors of Kedar will remain," for Yahweh, the God of Israel, has spoken.

UST

17 Only a few of their soldiers who know well how to shoot arrows will remain alive. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Isaiah 22

Isaiah 22 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Repentance

On this day of judgment, Judah should be repenting of their sin. Instead, they are celebrating it. Although Judah avoids Yahweh's punishment through the Assyrians, their punishment will still come. (See: [judge, judgment](#) and [repent, repentance](#) and [sin, sinful, sinner, sinning](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“Valley of Visions”

This is a metaphor used in this prophecy against the nation of Judah. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess](#))

Isaiah 22:1

A declaration

Alternate translation: "This is what Yahweh declares" or "This is Yahweh's message"

about the Valley of Vision

Here "Valley" refers to those who live in the valley, that is, Jerusalem.
Alternate translation: "about those who live in the Valley of Vision" or "about those who live in Jerusalem" (See: [Metonymy](#))

What is the reason that you have all gone up to the housetops?

Isaiah uses a question to scold the people of Judah. Alternate translation: "You should not go and stand on the tops of your houses." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹ A declaration about the Valley of Vision: What is the reason that you have all gone up to the housetops?

UST

¹ Yahweh gave this message about Jerusalem, about the valley where Yahweh showed me this vision. Why is everyone foolishly running up to their flat rooftops?

Isaiah 22:2

a town full of revelry

Alternate translation: “a town full of people celebrating”

Your dead were not killed with the sword

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Enemy soldiers did not kill your people” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

with the sword

Here “sword” represents the soldiers who fight in battle. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² Is it so you may hear a city full of noises, a town full of revelry? Your dead {were} not killed with the sword, and they did not die in battle.

UST

² Everyone in the city seems to be shouting. There are a lot of corpses in the city, but they were not killed by their enemies' swords. They did not die in battles; instead, they died from diseases and hunger.

Isaiah 22:3

but they were captured without using a bow

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “but the enemy captured your rulers who were not even carrying a bow” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

all of them were captured together

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the enemy captured all of them together” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ All your rulers fled away together, but they were captured without using a bow; all of them were captured together, though they had fled far away.

UST

³ All the leaders of the city fled. But then they were captured because they did not have bows and arrows to defend themselves. Your soldiers tried to flee while the enemy army was still far away, but they also were captured.

Isaiah 22:4

Therefore I said

Here "I" refers to Isaiah.

of the daughter of my people

Here "daughter" represents the people and may imply Isaiah's feeling of love for them. Alternate translation: "of my people whom I love" or "of my people" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴ Therefore I said, "Do not look at me, I will weep bitterly; do not try to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people."

UST

⁴ That is why I said, "Allow me to cry alone; do not try to comfort me about my people being slaughtered."

Isaiah 22:5

For there is a day

Alternate translation: "For there will be a time"

of tumult, treading down, and confusion for the Lord Yahweh of hosts

Alternate translation: "when the Lord Yahweh of hosts will cause panic, treading down, and confusion"

treading down

This could mean: (1) this refers to soldiers marching or (2) people in general are running in panic and not sure where to go.

in the Valley of Vision

This refers to Jerusalem. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 22:1](#).

people crying out to the mountains

This could mean: (1) "people in the mountains will hear their cries" or (2) "the people's cries will echo off the mountains"

ULT

⁵ For {there is} a day of tumult, treading down, and confusion for the Lord Yahweh of hosts, in the Valley of Vision, a breaking down of the walls, and people crying out to the mountains.

UST

⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has chosen a time when there will be a great uproar, soldiers marching, and people being terrified in the valley where I received this vision. It will be a time when our city walls will be battered down and the people's cries for help will be heard in the mountains.

Isaiah 22:6

Elam takes up the quiver

The quiver is a bag to carry arrows and represents the archer's weapons. Alternate translation: "The soldiers of Elam take their bows and arrows" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Kir lays the shield bare

Here "Kir" represents the soldiers. Alternate translation: "the soldiers of Kir will take their shields out of their covers" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Kir

Kir is a city in Media. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁶ Elam takes up the quiver, with chariots of men {and} horsemen, and Kir lays the shield bare.

UST

⁶ The armies from Elam and Kir in Media will attack, driving chariots and carrying shields.

Isaiah 22:7

your choicest valleys

Here “your” refers to the people of Jerusalem. Isaiah does include himself as one of the people of Jerusalem. Alternate translation: “our best valleys”

ULT

⁷ It will come about {that} your choicest valleys will be full of chariots, and the horsemen will take their positions at the gate.

UST

⁷ Our beautiful valleys will be filled with our enemies' chariots, and the men who drive the chariots will stand outside our city gates.

Isaiah 22:8

He took away the protection of Judah

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **protection**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will take away everything that has protected the people of Judah" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

you looked in that day to the weapons

Here the phrase "to look to" means to trust in something. Alternate translation: "to defend yourselves you will get the weapons" (See: [Idiom](#))

Palace of the Forest

This was a part of the temple in Jerusalem where they stored their weapons.

ULT

⁸ He took away the protection of Judah; and you looked in that day to the weapons in the Palace of the Forest.

UST

⁸ God will cause the walls that protect the cities in Judah to fall down. You people of Jerusalem will run to get the weapons that are stored in the building called "the Hall of the Forest."

Isaiah 22:9

you collected the water of the lower pool

The people will store water so that they will have enough to drink while their enemies surround the city. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁹ You saw the breaches of the city of David, that they were many, and you collected the water of the lower pool.

UST

⁹ You will see that there are many breaks in the walls of Jerusalem. You will store water in the lower pool in the city.

Isaiah 22:10

You counted the houses

Here “counted” means they inspected the houses to find material to help them rebuild the city wall.

ULT

10 You counted the houses of Jerusalem, and you tore down the houses to fortify the wall.

UST

10 You will inspect the houses in Jerusalem, and some of them you will tear down to use the stones to repair the city wall.

Isaiah 22:11

You made a reservoir

Alternate translation: "You made a storage place"

between the two walls

It is unclear what two walls Isaiah meant. The main point is that they built the reservoir within the city walls.

the city's maker

This could mean: (1) this refers to the original human builder of the city or (2) this refers to Yahweh.

ULT

11 You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not consider the city's maker, who had planned it long ago.

UST

11 Between the walls of the city you will build a reservoir to store water from the old pool. But you will never request help from the one who made the city; you have never depended on Yahweh, who planned this city long ago.

Isaiah 22:12

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

for shaved heads

This was a sign of mourning and repenting. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

¹² The Lord Yahweh of hosts called on that day for weeping, for mourning, for shaved heads, and the wearing of sackcloth.

UST

¹² Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, told you to weep and mourn; he told you to shave your heads and to wear rough sackcloth to show that you were sorry for the sins that you had committed.

Isaiah 22:13

let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die

Here “eat and drink” represents having a party and over indulging in food and wine. Alternate translation: “we may as well have fun now by eating and drinking all we want, for we will die soon” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

13 But look, instead, celebration and gladness, killing cattle and slaughtering sheep, eating meat and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die.

UST

13 But instead of doing that, you were happy and celebrated; you slaughtered cattle and sheep in order to cook their meat and eat it and drink wine. You said, “Let us eat and drink all that we want to, because it is possible that we will die tomorrow!”

Isaiah 22:14

This was revealed in my ears by Yahweh of hosts

Here “ears” represents Isaiah as a whole. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh of hosts revealed this to me” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven you, even when you die

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Surely I will not forgive you for these sinful things you have done, even when you die” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

even when you die

This could mean: (1) Yahweh will never forgive them, even after they die or (2) Yahweh will not forgive them until they die.

ULT

¹⁴ This was revealed in my ears by Yahweh of hosts: “Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven you, even when you die,” says the Lord Yahweh of hosts.

UST

¹⁴ So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, revealed this to me: “I will never forgive my people for sinning like this!”

Isaiah 22:15

Shebna

This is the name of the manager of the king's palace in Jerusalem.
(See: [How to Translate Names](#))

who is over the house

Here "house" represents those in the king's palace. Alternate translation: "who is in charge of all those who work in the palace"
(See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

15 The Lord Yahweh of hosts, says this,
"Go to this administrator, to Shebna,
who {is} over the house, {and say},

UST

15 Yahweh, commander of the angel
armies, said this to me: "Go to Shebna,
the official who supervises the workers
in the palace, and give this message to
him:

Isaiah 22:16

What are you doing here and who gave you permission ... in the rock?

Yahweh uses this question to scold Shebna. Alternate translation: "You have no right ... in the rock!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

cut out a tomb ... hewing out a grave ... carving out a resting place

These three phrases all refer to making a burial tomb. (See: [Parallelism](#))

on the heights

The most important people in Israel had tombs in the highest places. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹⁶ 'What are you doing here and who gave you permission to cut out a tomb for yourself, hewing out a grave on the heights and carving out a resting place in the rock?'"

UST

¹⁶ 'Who do you think you are? Who gave you the authority to build a beautiful tomb where you will be buried, chiseling it out of the rocky cliff high above this valley?'"

Isaiah 22:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁷ See, Yahweh is about to throw you, a {mighty} man, about to throw you down; he will grasp you tightly.

UST

¹⁷ You think that you are a great man, but Yahweh is about to hurl you away. It will be as though he had seized you,

Isaiah 22:18

He will surely wind you round and round, and toss you like a ball into a vast country

The enemy soldiers coming and taking Shebna as a captive to a foreign land is spoken of as if Yahweh were throwing him like a ball into another land. (See: [Metaphor](#))

you will be the shame of your master's house

Here "house" represents the people who work in the king's palace. Alternate translation: "you will cause shame for all those in your master's palace" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁸ He will surely wind you round and round, and toss you like a ball into a vast country. There you will die, and there your glorious chariots will be; you {will be} the shame of your master's house!

UST

¹⁸ rolled you into a ball, and throw you away in a large distant land. You will die and be buried there, and your beautiful chariots will stay there in the hands of your enemies. And because of what happens to you, your master, the king, will be very ashamed.

Isaiah 22:19

I will thrust you from your office and from your station. You will be pulled down

Yahweh causing Shebna to no longer work in the king's palace is spoken of as if Yahweh will throw him to the ground. (See: [Metaphor](#))

You will be pulled down

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will bring you down from your honored position" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁹ "I will thrust you from your office and from your station. You will be pulled down.

UST

¹⁹ Yahweh says, "I will force you to quit working in the palace; you will be forced out from your important position.

Isaiah 22:20

It will come about on that day

Alternate translation: "It will happen at that time"

Eliakim ... Hilkiyah

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

ULT

²⁰ It will come about on that day that I will call my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiyah.

UST

²⁰ Then I will summon Hilkiyah's son Eliakim, who has served me well, to replace you.

Isaiah 22:21

I will clothe him with your tunic and put on him your sash

Yahweh causing Eliakim to take Shebna's place in the king's palace is spoken of as if Yahweh will dress Eliakim in Shebna's clothes that represent his authority in the king's palace. (See: [Metaphor](#))

your tunic ... your sash

Here the tunic and sash represent authority in the king's palace. (See: [Metonymy](#))

sash

This is a piece of cloth that people wear around the waist or across the chest. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 3:20](#).

into his hand

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

He will be a father

Eliakim caring for and protecting the people of Judah is spoken of as if he would be their father. Alternate translation: "He will be like a father" (See: [Metaphor](#))

to the house of Judah

Here "house" represents the people. Alternate translation: "to the people of Judah" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²¹ I will clothe him with your tunic and put on him your sash, and I will transfer your authority into his hand. He will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

UST

²¹ I will make him wear your robe and fasten your sash around him, and I will give to him the authority that you had. He will be like a father to the people of Jerusalem and all the other towns in Judah.

Isaiah 22:22

I will place the key of the house of David on his shoulder ... none will open

Here “key” represents authority. This speaks of Eliakim having authority that no one can oppose as if he had the key to the palace and no one else could lock or unlock the door. Alternate translation: “I will put him in charge of those who work in the king’s palace, and when he makes a decision no one will be able to oppose him” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²² I will place the key of the house of David on his shoulder; he will open, and none will shut; he will shut, and none will open.

UST

²² I will give to him authority over what happens in the palace where King David lived; when he decides something, no one will be able to oppose it; when he refuses to do something, no one will be able to force him to do it.

Isaiah 22:23

I will fasten him, a peg in a secure place

Yahweh causing Eliakim's authority to be strong and secure in the king's palace is spoken of as if Eliakim were a peg and Yahweh will set him firmly in the palace wall. (See: [Metaphor](#))

he will become a seat of glory for his father's house

Here "seat of glory" represents a place of honor. Alternate translation: "Eliakim will bring honor to his family" (See: [Metonymy](#))

his father's house

Here "house" represents family. Alternate translation: "his father's family" or "his family" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²³ I will fasten him, a peg in a secure place, and he will become a seat of glory for his father's house.

UST

²³ I will cause his family to be greatly respected, because I will put him firmly in his position as supervisor of the workers in the palace, like a nail that is firmly hammered into a wall.

Isaiah 22:24

They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house

Yahweh causing Eliakim's whole family to be honored because of Eliakim is spoken of as if Eliakim were a peg in the wall and his family were something that hangs on the peg. Alternate translation: "They will give honor to his whole family because of him" (See: [Metaphor](#))

every small container from the cups to all the jugs

This continues to speak of Eliakim as a peg. His offspring will be like cups that hang on the peg. This means his descendants will be honored because of him. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the cups to all the jugs

A cup is a small container that holds water. A jug is a larger container that holds water.

ULT

²⁴ They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and descendants, every small container from the cups to all the jugs.

UST

²⁴ Others will enable him to have much responsibility, with the result that all the members of his family, even the most insignificant ones, will be honored.

Isaiah 22:25

the peg driven in a firm place ... will be cut off

Yahweh causing Shebna to lose his authority in the king's palace is spoken of as if Shebna were a peg in the wall that breaks off and falls to the ground. This emphasizes that Shebna thought his authority was secure but God will remove him. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the weight that was on it will be cut off

Here “weight” represents Shebna’s power and authority. It is spoken of as if it were an object hanging on the peg that represents Shebna. Yahweh causing Shebna to lose his power and authority is spoken of as if someone were to cut off the object that was hanging on the peg. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ On that day—this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts—the peg driven in a firm place will give way, break off, and fall, and the weight that was on it will be cut off—for Yahweh has spoken.

UST

²⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, also says, “Shebna is like a peg that is firmly fastened to the wall. But there will be a time when I will remove him from his position; he will lose his power, and everything that he promoted will fail.” That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.

Isaiah 23

Isaiah 23 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Phoenicia

This chapter prophesies destruction against several cities in Phoenicia as well as in Tarshish. The exact location of Tarshish is unknown. Because of the locations mentioned in this chapter, it appears that the Assyrians will conquer many of the nations on the Mediterranean Sea. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Isaiah 23:1

A declaration about Tyre

Alternate translation: "This is what Yahweh declares about Tyre"

Howl, you ships of Tarshish

Here "ships" represents the men on the ships. Isaiah speaks to the men on the ships of Tarshish as if they could hear him. Alternate translation: "Cry out in despair you men on the ships of Tarshish" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Apostrophe](#))

harbor

an area of the sea that is near land and safe for ships

from the land of Cyprus it has been revealed to them

This phrase can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the men heard about Tyre when they were in the land of Cyprus" (See: [How to Translate Names](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹ A declaration about Tyre: Howl, you ships of Tarshish; for there is neither home nor harbor; from the land of Cyprus it has been revealed to them. ^[1]

UST

¹ I, Isaiah, received this message from Yahweh for you, the people in the city of Tyre: You sailors on ships from Tarshish, weep, because the harbor of Tyre and all the houses in the city have been destroyed. The reports that you heard in the Island of Cyprus about Tyre are true.

Isaiah 23:2

Be silent, you inhabitants of the coast

Isaiah speaks to the people who live on the coast as if they could hear him. (See: [Apostrophe](#))

Be silent

This is an idiom. Here silence is meant to signal shock and amazement. Alternate translation: “Be shocked” (See: [Idiom](#))

of the coast

The “coast” is the land near or around the sea or ocean. Here it refers to the people who live in Phoenicia which borders the Mediterranean sea.

the merchant of Sidon, who travels over the sea, has filled you

Here “merchant” means “many merchants.” Alternate translation: “the merchants of Sidon, who travel over the sea, have made you rich” (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

ULT

² Be silent, you inhabitants of the coast; the merchant of Sidon, who travels over the sea, has filled you. ^[2]

UST

² You people who live along the coast, you merchants of the city of Sidon, mourn silently. Your sailors went across the seas to make you rich, there in Tyre.

Isaiah 23:3

Upon the great waters was the grain of Shihor

Shihor was the name of a valley near the Nile River in Egypt known for its production of grain. Alternate translation: “The men traveled on the large sea to transport the grain from Shihor in Egypt” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

the harvest of the Nile was her produce

The “harvest of the Nile” refers to the grain that was harvested near the Nile River and transported on the river and then to Phoenicia. (See: [Possession](#))

her produce

Alternate translation: “its produce.” It was common to refer to the river as “her.”

it became the commerce of the nations

Commerce is the activity of buying and selling goods. Here “nations” represents the people. Alternate translation: “you were where people from other nations came to buy and sell goods” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³ Upon the great waters was the grain of Shihor, the harvest of the Nile was her produce; and it became the commerce of the nations.

UST

³ They sailed across deep seas to buy grain in Egypt, grain from the Valley of Shihor. This wealth came down the Nile River, and you, Tyre, were the place where the people of all nations traded.

Isaiah 23:4

for the sea has spoken, the mighty one of the sea ... nor brought up young women

This could mean: (1) Yahweh describes the city of Tyre as a mother who speaks about the people who live in the city as her children, or (2) Yahweh is describing the Mediterranean Sea as speaking. The people of Tyre considered the sea their god and father. In either meaning the speaker mourns because its children are destroyed. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

⁴ Be ashamed, Sidon; for the sea has spoken, the mighty one of the sea. He says, "I have not labored nor given birth, {nor} have I raised young men nor brought up young women."

UST

⁴ But now you people in Sidon should be ashamed, because you trusted in Tyre, which has been a strong fortress on an island in the sea. Tyre is like a woman who is saying, "Now it is as though I have not given birth to any children, or raised any sons or daughters."

Isaiah 23:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ When the report {comes to} Egypt,
they will be grieved concerning Tyre.

UST

⁵ When the people of Egypt hear what
has happened to Tyre, they will grieve
very much.

Isaiah 23:6

Cross over to Tarshish

“Make your way to Tarshish.” Tarshish was the farthest land the people of Tyre traveled to do business. It will be the only place of safety for those who escape from Tyre.

ULT

⁶ Cross over to Tarshish; wail, you inhabitants of the coast.

UST

⁶ Sail to Tarshish and tell them what happened; weep, you people who live along the coast.

Isaiah 23:7

**Has this happened to you, the joyful city,
whose origin is from ancient times ... to
settle?**

Yahweh uses a question to mock Tyre. This rhetorical questions can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "This has indeed happened to you who were full of joy in the ancient city of Tyre ... to settle." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

the joyful city

Here "city" represents the people. Alternate translation: "the joyful people who live in the city of Tyre" (See: [Metonymy](#))

whose feet carried her far away to foreign places to settle

Here "feet" represents the whole person. Alternate translation: "who went to distant places to live and make money" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

her far away

Here "her" refers to the city of Tyre which represents the people of Tyre. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ Has this happened to you, the joyful {city,} whose origin {is} from ancient times, whose feet carried her far away to foreign places to settle?

UST

⁷ The people in the very old city of Tyre were previously joyful. Traders from Tyre established colonies in many distant nations.

Isaiah 23:8

Who has planned this against Tyre ... of the earth?

Isaiah uses a question to mock Tyre. The word “this” refers to God’s plans to destroy Tyre which Isaiah described in 23:1-7. Also, “Tyre” refers to the people who live in Tyre. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “It was Yahweh who has planned to destroy the people of Tyre ... of the earth.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Metonymy](#))

the giver of crowns

Here “crown” refers to the power a person has as a ruler over people. Alternate translation: “who gives people power to rule over others” (See: [Metonymy](#))

whose merchants are princes

The merchants are compared to princes to emphasize how much power they had when they went to different lands. Alternate translation: “whose merchants are like princes” (See: [Metaphor](#))

whose traders are the honored ones of the earth

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “whose traders the people of the earth give the highest honors” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁸ Who has planned this against Tyre, the giver of crowns, whose merchants {are} princes, whose traders {are} the honored ones of the earth?

UST

⁸ People from Tyre appointed kings over other places; their traders were wealthy; they were as powerful and wealthy as kings. Who caused the people of Tyre to experience this disaster?

Isaiah 23:9

to dishonor her pride and all her glory

Alternate translation: "to dishonor them because they were proud of their own glory"

her pride ... her glory ... her honored ones

Here "her" refers to the city of Tyre which represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: "their pride ... their glory ... their honored one" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ Yahweh of hosts has planned it to dishonor her pride and all her glory, to shame all her honored ones of the earth.

UST

⁹ It was Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, who did it; he did it in order to cause you people in Tyre to not be proud anymore, to humiliate you men who are honored all over the world.

Isaiah 23:10

Plow your land, as one plows the Nile, daughter of Tarshish. There is no longer a marketplace in Tyre

This could mean: (1) Isaiah is telling the people of Tarshish to start planting crops since they can no longer trade with Tyre or (2) Isaiah is telling the people of Tarshish they are free from Tyre's control. Alternate translation: "Pass through your land like a river, daughter of Tarshish. The people of Tyre no longer have any power" (See: [Simile](#))

daughter of Tarshish

The "daughter" of a city represents the people of the city. Alternate translation: "the people of Tarshish" or "the people who live in Tarshish" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Plow your land, as one plows the Nile, daughter of Tarshish. {There is} no longer a marketplace in Tyre. ^[3]

UST

¹⁰ You people of Tarshish, you must grow crops in your land instead of trading; spread out over your land like the Nile River spreads over the land of Egypt when it floods, because there is no harbor in Tyre for your ships now.

Isaiah 23:11

Yahweh has reached out with his hand over the sea, and he has shaken the kingdoms

Yahweh using his power to control the sea and the people of mighty kingdoms is spoken of as if Yahweh reached out his hand and shook kingdoms. (See: [Metaphor](#))

has reached out with his hand over the sea

Here “hand” refers to God’s power and control. Alternate translation: “has shown his power over the sea” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹¹ Yahweh has reached out with his hand over the sea, and he has shaken the kingdoms; he has given a command concerning Phoenicia, to destroy the strongholds.

UST

¹¹ It is as though Yahweh stretched out his hand over the sea and shook the kingdoms of the earth. He commanded that in Phoenicia all its fortresses must be destroyed.

Isaiah 23:12

oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon

Here “virgin daughter” represents the people of Sidon. Alternate translation: “people of Sidon, because other people will oppress you” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

12 He said, “You will not rejoice again, oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon; arise, pass over to Cyprus; but neither there you will have rest.”

UST

12 He said to the people of Sidon, “You will never rejoice again, because you will be crushed; even if you flee to the island of Cyprus, you will not escape from troubles; you will have no peace.”

Isaiah 23:13

See the land of the Chaldeans

Here, **Chaldeans** here is another name for Babylonians. Alternate translation: “See what happened to the land of the Babylonians” or “See what has happened to Babylonia”

siege towers

Soldiers built towers or dirt ramps to attack over the walls of a city.

ULT

13 See the land of the Chaldeans. This people has ceased to be; the Assyrians have made it a wilderness for wild animals. They set up their siege towers; they demolished its palaces; they made it a heap of ruins.

UST

13 Think about what happened in Babylonia: the people who were in that land have disappeared. The armies of Assyria have caused that land to become a place where wild animals from the desert live. They built dirt ramps to the top of the walls of the city of Babylon; then they entered the city and tore down the palaces and caused the city to become a heap of rubble.

Isaiah 23:14

Howl, you ships of Tarshish

Here “ships” represents the men on the ships. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 23:1](#). (See: [Metonymy](#))

for your refuge has been destroyed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “for enemies have destroyed your refuge” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁴ Howl, you ships of Tarshish; for your refuge has been destroyed.

UST

¹⁴ So wail, you sailors on the ships of Tarshish, because the harbor in Tyre where your ships stop is destroyed!

Isaiah 23:15

In that day

Alternate translation: "At that time" or "Then"

Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years

Since people will no longer go to Tyre to buy or sell goods, it will be like they have forgotten about the city. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "for seventy years it will be like the people have forgotten about Tyre" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

for seventy years

"for 70 years" (See: [Numbers](#))

like the days of a king

Alternate translation: "like the years of a king" or "which is about as long as a king lives"

like in the song of the prostitute

This speaks about the people of Tyre as if they were a prostitute. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

15 In that day, Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, like the days of a king. After the end of seventy years there will happen in Tyre something like in the song of the prostitute.

UST

15 For seventy years, which is as long as kings usually live, people will forget about Tyre. But then it will be rebuilt. What will happen there will be like what happened to a prostitute in this song:

Isaiah 23:16

Take a harp, go about the city, you forgotten prostitute ... so that you may be remembered

This speaks about the people of Tyre as if they were a prostitute (verse 15). Just as a prostitute who is no longer popular may sing in the streets to regain her former lovers, the people of Tyre will try to get people from other nations to return to them to continue trading so that the people of Tyre will be rich and powerful again. (See: [Metaphor](#))

so that you may be remembered

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “so that people remember you” or “so that people return to you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁶ Take a harp, go about the city, you forgotten prostitute; play it well, sing many songs, so that you may be remembered.

UST

¹⁶ You harlot, whom people had forgotten, play your harp well, and sing many songs, in order that people will remember you again.

Isaiah 23:17

It will come about that

This phrase is used here to mark an important event that will happen. If your language has a way for doing this, you could consider using it here.

seventy years

“70 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

Yahweh will help Tyre

Here “Tyre” represents the people who live in Tyre. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will help the people of Tyre” (See: [Metonymy](#))

she will start making money again by doing the work of a prostitute ... of the earth

Isaiah compares the people of Tyre with a prostitute. Just as the prostitute sells herself for money to any man, the people of Tyre will again buy and sell to all kingdoms. Alternate translation: “And like a prostitute they will buy and sell will all the kingdoms of the earth” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

17 It will come about that after seventy years, Yahweh will help Tyre, and she will start making money again by doing the work of a prostitute, and she will offer her services to all the kingdoms of the earth.

UST

17 It is true that after seventy years Yahweh will restore Tyre. Their merchants will again earn a lot of money by buying things from and selling things to many other nations.

Isaiah 23:18

They will not be stored up or kept

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The merchants will not store away their money" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

those who live in Yahweh's presence

Alternate translation: "those who obey and serve Yahweh"

to supply them with abundant food

Alternate translation: "so they will have enough food to eat"

ULT

¹⁸ Her profits and earnings will be set apart to Yahweh. They will not be stored up or kept in the treasury, for her profits will be given to those who live in Yahweh's presence and will be used to supply them with abundant food and so they can have the best quality clothing.

UST

¹⁸ But their profits will be given to Yahweh. The merchants will not hoard their money; instead, they will give it to Yahweh's people, for they will live in his presence, in order that they can buy food and nice clothes.

Isaiah 24

Isaiah 24 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

While it appears that this chapter is a continuation of the prophecy from the previous chapter, it actually looks at the whole of the Assyrian conquest as Yahweh's punishment on the world. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Covenant

The mention of an “everlasting covenant” in this chapter is probably not to a specific covenant with Abraham or Moses. Instead, it is an expectation that mankind would obey Yahweh. Some consider this to be a covenant Yahweh made with Adam. (See: [eternity](#), [everlasting](#), [eternal](#), [forever](#) and [covenant](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Reign of Yahweh

This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. This chapter pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator should not add explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore](#), [restoration](#) and [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [Christ](#), [Messiah](#))

Isaiah 24:1

to empty the earth

Alternate translation: “to make the earth desolate” or “to destroy everything on the earth”

ULT

¹ Look, Yahweh is about to empty the earth, to devastate it, mar its surface, and scatter its inhabitants.

UST

¹ Some day Yahweh is going to destroy the earth. He will devastate it and cause it to become a desert, and he will scatter its people.

Isaiah 24:2

It will come about that

This phrase marks an important event. If your language has a way for doing this, you could consider using it here.

as with ... so with

What Yahweh will do is not stated here, but it is understood. This shows that God will treat all people the same way. Alternate translation: "as Yahweh scatters ... so he will scatter"(See: [Ellipsis](#))

the priest ... the giver of interest

In 24:2 Isaiah lists several classes of people. They can be expressed as plural nouns as in the UST. Alternate translation: "the priests ... those who give interest" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

the receiver of interest

"the one who owes money." The word "interest" means the extra money someone has to pay so that he may borrow money.

the giver of interest

Alternate translation: "the one who is owed money"

ULT

² It will come about that, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the creditor, so with the debtor; as with the receiver of interest, so with the giver of interest.

UST

² He will scatter everyone: priests and common people, servants and their masters, maids and their mistresses, buyers and sellers, lenders and borrowers, people who owe money and people who are owed money.

Isaiah 24:3

The earth will be completely devastated and completely stripped

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will completely devastate the earth and he will remove everything with value" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Yahweh has spoken this word

Alternate translation: "Yahweh has said he would"

The earth

everything that is on the earth (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³ The earth will be completely devastated and completely stripped; for Yahweh has spoken this word.

UST

³ Nothing that is worth anything will be left on earth; everything valuable will be destroyed. That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.

Isaiah 24:4

The earth dries up and withers, the world shrivels up and fades away

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "Everything on earth will dry up and die" (See: [Parallelism](#))

The earth ... the world

Both of these represent everything that is on the earth. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ The earth dries up and withers, the world shrivels up {and} fades away, the prominent people of the earth waste away.

UST

⁴ Everything on the earth will dry up and die; its important people will become weak and unimportant.

Isaiah 24:5

The earth is polluted by its inhabitants

The people sinning and making the earth unacceptable to God is spoken of as if the people made the earth physically unclean. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The people have polluted the earth" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, and broken the everlasting covenant

Alternate translation: "they have not obeyed God's laws and statutes, and they have broken God's eternal covenant"

ULT

⁵ The earth is polluted by its inhabitants because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, and broken the everlasting covenant.

UST

⁵ The earth has become unacceptable to Yahweh because the people who live on it have disobeyed his laws; they have rejected the covenant that he intends to last forever.

Isaiah 24:6

a curse devours the earth

Yahweh cursing the earth and destroying it is spoken of as if a curse were either a wild animal that completely eats the earth or a fire that completely burns up the earth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

its inhabitants are found guilty

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will declare that the people are guilty" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

6 Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants are found guilty. The inhabitants of the earth burn up, and few people {are} left.

UST

6 Therefore, Yahweh will curse the earth; the people who live on it must be punished because of the sins that they have committed. They will be destroyed by fire, and only a few people will remain alive.

Isaiah 24:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ The new wine dries up, the vine withers, all the merry-hearted groan.

UST

⁷ The grapevines will wither, and there will be no grapes to make wine. All the people who were previously happy will now groan and mourn.

Isaiah 24:8

tambourines ... lyre

These are musical instruments. See how you translated these in [Isaiah 5:12](#).

ULT

8 The happy sound of the tambourines stops, and the revelry of those who rejoice; the joy of the lyre ceases.

UST

8 People will no longer play cheerful songs with tambourines, people will no longer play joyfully on their harps, and people will no longer shout noisily during their celebrations.

Isaiah 24:9

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁹ They no longer drink wine and sing,
and the beer is bitter to those who drink
it.

UST

⁹ People will no longer sing while they
drink wine, and all their alcoholic drinks
will taste bitter.

Isaiah 24:10

The city of chaos has been broken down

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will break down the city of chaos” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

The city of chaos

This could mean: (1) the city was in chaos before the Lord breaks it down; the people did not obey God, the government was corrupt, and the city was full of drinking and parties, or (2) the city will be in chaos after God breaks it down. The walls and buildings that were once built strong and tall are now in ruins on the ground. With either meaning it does not mean one city. It refers to cities in general.

every house is closed up and empty

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the people will close up their houses and leave them empty” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁰ The city of chaos has been broken down; every house is closed up and empty.

UST

¹⁰ Towns and cities will be desolate; every house will be locked to prevent thieves from entering, for no one will live in them.

Isaiah 24:11

because of the wine

Alternate translation: "because there is no wine"

all joy is darkened, the gladness of the land has disappeared

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "all joy will be gone from the earth" (See: [Parallelism](#))

gladness of the land

Here "land" represents the people of the earth. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

11 {There is} a crying in the streets because of the wine; all joy is darkened, the gladness of the land has disappeared.

UST

11 Mobs will gather in the streets, wanting wine; no one on the earth will be happy anymore.

Isaiah 24:12

In the city is left a desolation

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **desolation**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as "desolate" or "empty." Alternate translation: "The city is desolate" or "The city is left empty" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

In the city

This is not a specific city but cities in general. (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

ULT

¹² In the city is left a desolation, and the gate is broken into a ruin.

UST

¹² Cities will be ruined, and all their gates will be battered into pieces.

Isaiah 24:13

as when an olive tree is beaten, as the gleanings when the grape harvest is done

This compares the nations after Yahweh devastates the land to trees and vines after their fruit has been picked. This means there will be very few people left in the land. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹³ For this is how {it will be} on the whole earth among the nations, as when an olive tree is beaten, as the gleanings when the grape harvest is done.

UST

¹³ It will be like that all over the earth: there will only be a few people still alive, like what happens when workers beat all the olives off a tree and there are only a few left, or when they harvest the grapes and there are only a few left on the vines.

Isaiah 24:14

They will lift up their voices and shout the majesty of Yahweh

The phrase “lift up their voices” is an idiom that means to speak loudly. Alternate translation: “They will sing and shout about the majesty of Yahweh” (See: [Idiom](#))

They will

Here “They” refers to those who are still alive after Yahweh devastates the earth.

and will joyfully shout from the sea

Here “the sea” refers to the Mediterranean Sea which is west of Israel. Alternate translation: “and those in the west towards the sea will shout with joy” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹⁴ They will lift up their voices and shout the majesty of Yahweh, and will joyfully shout from the sea.

UST

¹⁴ Those in the west will sing with great happiness; they will declare that Yahweh is very great.

Isaiah 24:15

Therefore in the east glorify Yahweh

The phrase “in the east” represents the people living east of Israel. Isaiah is commanding these people as if they were there with him. But, he is talking to the people in the future after God devastates the earth. Alternate translation: “Therefore everyone from distant lands in the east will glorify Yahweh” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Apostrophe](#) and [Predictive Past](#))

in the isles of the sea give glory

Isaiah is commanding the people who live on the islands in the Mediterranean sea as if they were there with him. But, he is talking to the people in the future after God devastates the earth. Alternate translation: “everyone in the islands will give glory” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Apostrophe](#) and [Predictive Past](#))

to the name of Yahweh

Here “name” represents Yahweh. Alternate translation: “to Yahweh” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

15 Therefore in the east glorify Yahweh, and in the isles of the sea give glory to the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

UST

15 Those in the east of Israel will also praise Yahweh; those along the coastlines of the sea will praise Yahweh, the God the people Israel worship.

Isaiah 24:16

we have heard

Here “we” refers to Isaiah and the people of Israel. Isaiah is describing something in the future as if it has already happened. Alternate translation: “we will hear” (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#) and [Predictive Past](#))

I have wasted away, I have wasted away

Isaiah repeats this phrase to emphasize his anguish. He was very concerned because he saw people who deceived others and did not do what they promised to do. Alternate translation: “I have become very weak” (See: [Parallelism](#))

The treacherous have dealt treacherously; yes, the treacherous have dealt very treacherously

Isaiah repeats this phrase to emphasize his anguish. Alternate translation: “Indeed, those who deceive are now deceiving others” or “Indeed, the deceivers have acted deceitfully” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

16 From the farthest part of the earth we have heard songs, “Glory to the righteous one!” But I said, “I have wasted away, I have wasted away, woe is me! The treacherous have dealt treacherously; yes, the treacherous have dealt very treacherously.”

UST

16 We will hear people in the most distant places on the earth singing praise to Yahweh, the truly righteous one. But now, I am very sad. Weep for me, because I have become thin and weak. Terrible things are happening! Treacherous people still betray others everywhere.

Isaiah 24:17

Terror, the pit, and the snare are upon you, inhabitants of the earth

Alternate translation: "You people of the earth will experience terror, the pit, and the snare"

the pit, and the snare

Here "pit" and "snare" represent all the different bad things that will happen to people. People will run away to escape one bad thing but they will just experience another bad thing. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹⁷ Terror, the pit, and the snare {are}
upon you, inhabitants of the earth.

UST

¹⁷ You people all over the earth, you will
be terrified, and you will fall into deep
pits and traps.

Isaiah 24:18

caught in the snare

Here the “snare” represents all the different bad things that will happen to people. People will run away to escape one bad thing but they will just experience another bad thing. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the sound of terror

Alternate translation: “the terrifying sound”

will be caught in the snare

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the snare will catch him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

The windows of the heavens will be opened

This speaks of large amounts of rain falling from the sky as if Yahweh opened a window in the sky and let the water pour through. Alternate translation: “The sky will split open and torrents of rain will fall” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the foundations of the earth will shake

The word “foundation” normally refers to a stone structure that gives support to a building from underneath. Here it describes a similar structure that was thought to support and hold the earth in place. Isaiah says even the structure that holds the earth will shake. Alternate translation: “the earth will shake terribly” or “there will be a terrible earthquake”

ULT

18 He who flees from the sound of terror will fall into the pit, and he who comes up out of the middle of the pit will be caught in the snare. The windows of the heavens will be opened, and the foundations of the earth will shake.

UST

18 Those who try to flee because they are terrified will fall into deep pits, and those who climb out of the pits will be caught by traps. The sky will split open and torrents of rain will fall; the foundations of the earth will shake.

Isaiah 24:19

The earth will be completely broken, the earth ripped apart; the earth will be violently shaken

These passive clauses can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "The earth will break and split apart; the earth will shake violently" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁹ The earth will be completely broken, the earth ripped apart; the earth will be violently shaken.

UST

¹⁹ The earth will split apart and be shattered; it will shake violently.

Isaiah 24:20

The earth will stagger like a drunken man and it will sway back and forth like a hut

These similes emphasize how the earth will shake back and forth.
(See: [Simile](#))

Its sin will be heavy on it and it will fall and never rise again

This speaks of the earth as if it were a person and transgressions were a heavy object. The person tries to carry the heavy weight but the weight causes the person to fall and not be able to stand back up. Here the earth represents the people of the earth who cause Yahweh to destroy the earth because of their sins. Alternate translation: "The sins of the people are many and so Yahweh will destroy the earth, and the earth will be like a person who falls and cannot get back up" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁰ The earth will stagger like a drunken man and it will sway back and forth like a hut. Its sin will be heavy on it and it will fall and never rise again.

UST

²⁰ It will be as though the earth will stagger like a drunk; it will shake like a hammock in a windstorm. It will collapse and not be able to rise again, because the guilt of the people who rebel against Yahweh is very great.

Isaiah 24:21

On that day

Alternate translation: "At that time"

the host of the heaven

A host is an army. Here "the host of the heaven" refers to the many powerful spirits in the heavens. It can be stated clearly that they are evil. Alternate translation: "the powerful beings" or "the evil spiritual beings" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

in the heavens

Alternate translation: "in the sky"

ULT

²¹ On that day Yahweh will punish the host of the heaven in the heavens, and the kings of the earth on the earth.

UST

²¹ At that time, Yahweh will punish the wicked powerful beings in the skies and the wicked kings on the earth.

Isaiah 24:22

They will be gathered together, prisoners in a pit, and will be shut up in a prison

Here “pit” refers to a dark room or hole in a prison. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will gather them together as his prisoners and lock them in the dungeon of a prison” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

they will be punished

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will punish them” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²² They will be gathered together, prisoners in a pit, and will be shut up in a prison; and after many days they will be punished.

UST

²² They will all be gathered together and thrown into a dungeon. They will be shut in that dungeon, and later they will be punished.

Isaiah 24:23

Then the moon will be ashamed, and the sun disgraced

The sun and the moon are described as a person who is ashamed of being in front of someone with greater power. In the presence of Yahweh, the light of the moon and sun will seem less bright. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

²³ Then the moon will be ashamed, and the sun disgraced, for Yahweh of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his elders in glory.

UST

²³ At that time the light of the moon and the sun will be lessened; it will be as though they are ashamed in the presence of Yahweh, because he, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will rule gloriously on Mount Zion, in the presence of all the leaders of his people.

Isaiah 25

Isaiah 25 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

This chapter shifts from being a prophecy against the nations to the personal praises of Isaiah. He praises Yahweh for the deliverance of his people. (See: [prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess](#) and [deliver, hand over, turn over, release, rescue](#) and [people of God](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Reign of the Messiah

This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. This chapter pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator should not add explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore, restoration](#) and [prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess](#) and [Christ, Messiah](#))

Isaiah 25:1

praise your name

Here “name” represents Yahweh. Alternate translation: “praise you” (See: [Metonymy](#))

things planned long ago

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “things you planned long ago” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

in perfect faithfulness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **faithfulness**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “faithful.” Alternate translation: “because you are perfectly faithful” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹ Yahweh, you {are} my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful {things,} things planned long ago, in perfect faithfulness.

UST

¹ Yahweh, you are my God; I will honor you and praise you. You do wonderful things; you said long ago that you would do those things, and now you have done them as you said that you would.

Isaiah 25:2

the city

This is not referring to a certain city. It means cities in general. (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

a fortress of strangers

Alternate translation: "a fortress belonging to foreigners"

ULT

² For you have made the city a heap, a fortified city, a ruin, and a fortress of strangers into no city.

UST

² Sometimes you have caused cities to become heaps of rubble, cities that had strong walls around them. You have caused palaces in foreign countries to disappear; they will never be rebuilt.

Isaiah 25:3

a city of ruthless nations

Here “city” and “nations” represent the people who live there. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³ Therefore a strong people will glorify you; a city of ruthless nations will fear you.

UST

³ Therefore, people in powerful nations will declare that you are very great, and people in nations whose leaders show mercy to no one will revere you.

Isaiah 25:4

**you have been a place of safety ... a shelter ...
a shelter from the storm ... a shade from the
heat**

Yahweh protecting his people is spoken of as if he were a place that the people could go to be safe and comforted. (See: [Metaphor](#))

**When the breath of the ruthless was like a
storm against a wall**

Ruthless people oppressing the people of God is spoken of as if they were a storm beating against a wall. (See: [Simile](#))

When the breath

Alternate translation: "When the wind" or "When the blast"

the ruthless

This is a nominal adjective. Alternate translation: "ruthless people" or "those who are ruthless" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

⁴ For you have been a place of safety for the one who is poor, a shelter for the one who is needy in his distress— a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. When the breath of the ruthless was like a storm {against} a wall,

UST

⁴ Yahweh, you are like a strong tower where poor people can find refuge, a place where needy people can go when they are distressed. You are like a place where people can find refuge in a storm and where they can stay in the shade, out of the hot sun. People oppress us and show us no mercy, they are like a storm beating against a wall,

Isaiah 25:5

like heat in a dry land

This compares the enemies of God's people to the heat that dries up the land. This emphasizes how much the enemies cause the people of God to suffer. (See: [Simile](#))

as the heat is subdued ... ruthless ones is answered

Yahweh stopping ruthless people from singing and boasting is compared to a cloud providing shade on a hot day. This emphasizes that Yahweh comforts his people by stopping those who cause them to suffer. (See: [Simile](#))

as the heat is subdued by the shade of a cloud

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "just like when a cloud passes overhead and subdues the heat" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the song of the ruthless ones is answered

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "you will stop the ruthless people from singing" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ and like heat in a dry land, you subdued the noise of foreigners, as the heat is subdued by the shade of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless ones is answered.

UST

⁵ and like the very strong heat in the dry land. But you cause the noisy cries of people from foreign nations to be quiet. Like the air cools when a cloud comes overhead, you stop merciless people from singing songs about how great they are.

Isaiah 25:6

On this mountain

This refers to Jerusalem or Mount Zion.

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

a feast of fat things

Here “fat things” means the best food.

a feast on the lees

“the oldest wine.” This means the best wine.

ULT

⁶ On this mountain Yahweh of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, of choice wines, of tender meats, a feast on the lees.

UST

⁶ Here in Jerusalem Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will prepare a wonderful feast for all the people of the world. It will be a banquet with plenty of good meat and fine well-aged wine.

Isaiah 25:7**the covering over all peoples, the web woven over all the nations**

Death, suffering, and sadness are spoken of as if they were a dark cloud or web that covers everyone on the earth. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁷ He will destroy on this mountain the covering over all peoples, the web woven over all the nations.

UST

⁷ People here are sad; they are so sad that it is like a dark cloud that hangs over them, like they experience when someone dies. But Yahweh will enable them to quit being sad.

Isaiah 25:8

He will swallow up death forever

Yahweh causing people to live forever is spoken of as if he would swallow death. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth

Yahweh causing the people to never be ashamed again is spoken of as if disgrace were an object that Yahweh would take away. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces; the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for Yahweh has spoken it.

UST

⁸ He will get rid of death forever! Yahweh our God will cause people to no longer mourn because someone has died. And he will stop other people insulting and making fun of his land and us his people. That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it!

Isaiah 25:9

It will be said

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People will say" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

on that day

Alternate translation: "at that time"

ULT

⁹ It will be said on that day, "Look, this {is} our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This {is} Yahweh; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

UST

⁹ At that time, people will proclaim, "Yahweh is our God! We trusted in him, and he has rescued us! Yahweh, in whom we trusted, has done it; we should rejoice because he has saved us!"

Isaiah 25:10

For on this mountain the hand of Yahweh will rest

The “hand” represents God’s power. For Yahweh’s hand to rest on “this mountain” means he will protect his people. Alternate translation: “The power of Yahweh will be on this mountain” or “For on Mount Zion Yahweh will protect his people” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Idiom](#))

Moab will be trampled down in his place, even as straw is trampled down in a pit filled with manure

Yahweh destroying the people of Moab is spoken of as if he would step on them and crush them. This is compared to how people trampled on straw to mix it with manure. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#))

Moab will be trampled down in his place

Here Moab represents the people of Moab. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will trample the people in the land of Moab” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁰ For on this mountain the hand of Yahweh will rest; and Moab will be trampled down in his place, even as straw is trampled down in a pit filled with manure.

UST

¹⁰ Yahweh will protect and bless Jerusalem. But he will crush the people in the land of Moab; they will be like straw that is trampled in the manure and left to rot.

Isaiah 25:11

They will spread their hands ... his hands to swim

This simile emphasizes how badly Yahweh will humiliate the people of Moab. They will spread their hands in dung like a swimmer spreads his hands in water. (See: [Simile](#))

They will spread their hands in the midst of it

Alternate translation: "The people of Moab will push their hands through the dung"

as a swimmer spreads his hands to swim

Alternate translation: "as if they were swimming"

will bring down their pride

Yahweh humiliating a proud person is spoken of as if pride were something high and Yahweh would cause it to be low. (See: [Metaphor](#))

in spite of the skill of their hands

Here "hands" represents the power to do or make something. Alternate translation: "in spite of the great things they have built" or "in spite of the great things they have done" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹¹ They will spread their hands in the midst of it, as a swimmer spreads his hands to swim. But Yahweh will bring down their pride in spite of the skill of their hands.

UST

¹¹ Yahweh will push down the people of Moab; they will be like a swimmer who pushes down the water with his hands; they will push their hands through the dung but never get out of it. He will cause them to cease being proud, and he will show that all the things that they have done are worthless.

Isaiah 25:12

Your high fortress walls he will bring down to the ground, to the dust

This speaks of Yahweh causing armies to bring down the walls as if he himself were going to bring them down. Alternate translation: "He will send an army to bring your high fortress walls to the ground, to the dust" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Your high fortress

Here "Your" refers to the people of Moab. It can be stated in third person to be consistent with the previous verse. Alternate translation: "Their high fortress" (See: [First](#), [Second](#) or [Third Person](#))

ULT

¹² Your high fortress walls he will bring down to the ground, to the dust.

UST

¹² He will cause armies to tear down the high walls around the cities of Moab; they will fall into pieces and lie in the dust.

Isaiah 26

Isaiah 26 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“That day”

This is a common phrase in this section of Isaiah. This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. This chapter pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator should not add explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore](#), [restoration](#), [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [Christ](#), [Messiah](#) and [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Isaiah 26:1

In that day

Alternate translation: "At that time"

this song will be sung in the land of Judah

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "the people in the land of Judah will sing this song" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

We have a strong city

This refers to the city of Jerusalem.

God has made salvation its walls and ramparts

God's power to protect and save his people is spoken of as if his salvation were walls around a city. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; {God} has made salvation its walls and ramparts.

UST

¹ Some day, people in Judah will sing this song: "Our city of Jerusalem is strong! Yahweh protects our city; He is like a wall that surrounds it."

Isaiah 26:2

the righteous nation that keeps faith

Here “nation” represents the people. Alternate translation: “the righteous and faithful people” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.

UST

² Open the gates of the city for people who are righteous; allow people who faithfully obey Yahweh to enter the city.

Isaiah 26:3

The mind that is stayed on you

Here “mind” represents a person’s thoughts. Also “you” refers to Yahweh. The phrase “stayed on you” is an idiom. Alternate translation: “The person who continually thinks about you” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Idiom](#))

ULT

³ The mind {that} {is} stayed {on you},
you will keep {him} in {perfect} peace,
for he trusts in you.

UST

³ Yahweh, those who trust in you, those
who are determined to never doubt
you, you will enable them to be
perfectly peaceful in their inner beings.

Isaiah 26:4

Yah, Yahweh

Yah is another name for Yahweh.

Yahweh, is an everlasting rock

Yahweh having the power to protect his people is spoken of as if he were a tall rock where people could go to escape from their enemies. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Trust in Yahweh forever; for in Yah, Yahweh, {is} an everlasting rock.

UST

⁴ So always trust in Yahweh, because he is forever like a huge rock on top of which we will be safe.

Isaiah 26:5

he will bring down those who live proudly

Yahweh humiliating those who are proud is spoken of as if proud people were up high and he would cause them to come down low. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the fortified city

This means fortified cities in general not a specific city. (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

he will lay low ... he will level

Yahweh causing an army to destroy fortified cities is spoken of as if Yahweh would do it himself. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁵ For he will bring down those who live proudly; the fortified city he will lay low, he will lay low to the ground; he will level it to the dust.

UST

⁵ He humbles proud people and destroys cities whose people are arrogant. He causes those cities to collapse into the dust.

Isaiah 26:6

It will be trampled down by the feet of the poor and the treading of the needy

Both statements mean the same thing. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The poor and oppressed people will trample on the ruins of the city" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁶ It will be trampled down by the feet of the poor {and} the treading of the needy.

UST

⁶ When that happens, poor and oppressed people will trample on the ruins.

Isaiah 26:7

The path of the righteous is level ... the path of the righteous you make straight

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. People obeying Yahweh is spoken of as if they were walking on his path. Yahweh ensuring the people that what they do is right is spoken of as if he were making the path level and straight for them. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ The path of the righteous {is} level, Righteous One; the path of the righteous you make straight.

UST

⁷ But for the righteous people, Yahweh, you do what is right; it is as though you smooth out the paths where they walk.

Isaiah 26:8

in the path of your judgments, Yahweh, we wait for you

Doing what Yahweh judged to be right is spoken of walking on his path. Alternate translation: “we wait for you, Yahweh, as we continue to do what you judged to be right” (See: [Metaphor](#))

of your judgments

Alternate translation: “of your laws” or “of your teachings”

we wait

Here “we” refers to Isaiah and all righteous people who are speaking to Yahweh. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#))

your name and your reputation are our desire

Here “name” and “reputation” represent Yahweh’s character which represents Yahweh himself. Alternate translation: “our only desire is to honor you” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁸ Yes, in the path of your judgments, Yahweh, we wait for you; your name and your reputation are our desire.

UST

⁸ Yahweh, by obeying your laws we show that we trust you to help us; and what we desire in our inner beings is that you will be honored.

Isaiah 26:9

my spirit within me seeks you earnestly

Wanting to know Yahweh and his laws better is spoken of as if the person were seeking to find Yahweh. Alternate translation: "I earnestly want to know you better" (See: [Metaphor](#))

my spirit within me seeks you earnestly

Here "spirit" represents the speaker as a whole. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁹ I have longed for you in the night; yes, my spirit within me seeks you earnestly. For when your judgments come on the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn about righteousness.

UST

⁹ All during the nights I desire to know you better, and in the mornings I still want to be with you. When you come to judge and punish people who live on the earth they will learn to do what is right.

Isaiah 26:10

Let favor be shown to the wicked one, but he will not learn righteousness

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Even if Yahweh is kind to wicked people, they still do not learn to do what is right” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the wicked one

This means wicked people in general. (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

In the land of uprightness

Here “land” represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: “In the land where the people do what is right” (See: [Metonymy](#))

does not see the majesty of Yahweh

Here “see” represents realizing something. Alternate translation: “does not realize that Yahweh is great” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Let favor be shown to the wicked one, {but} he will not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness he acts wickedly and does not see the majesty of Yahweh.

UST

¹⁰ But your acting kindly toward wicked people does not cause them to do what is good. Even in places where people do what is right, the wicked people continue to do what is evil, and they do not realize that you, Yahweh, are great.

Isaiah 26:11

your hand is lifted up

Yahweh preparing to punish wicked people is spoken of as if his hand were raised and about to hit the wicked people. (See: [Metaphor](#))

but they do not notice

Alternate translation: “but the wicked people do not notice”

they will see your zeal for the people

Here “see” represents realizing something. Alternate translation: “they will realize that you are eager to bless your people” (See: [Metonymy](#))

be put to shame

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “they will be ashamed” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

fire of your adversaries will devour them

Yahweh punishing and completely destroying his adversaries is spoken of as if he would send a fire that will completely burn them up. (See: [Metaphor](#))

fire of your adversaries

Here “of” does not mean the fire belongs to the adversaries but that the fire is intended to be used against the adversaries. Alternate translation: “your fire will completely burn them up”

ULT

11 Yahweh, your hand is lifted up, but they do not notice. But they will see your zeal for the people and be put to shame, because fire of your adversaries will devour them.

UST

11 Yahweh, it is as though your fist was raised up ready to strike them, but they do not realize that. Show them that you are very eager to help your people. If your enemies would realize that, they would be ashamed; make your fire burn them up because they are your enemies.

Isaiah 26:12

for us

Here “us” refers to Isaiah and includes all the righteous people. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#))

ULT

12 Yahweh, you will bring about peace for us; for indeed, you have also accomplished all our works for us.

UST

12 Yahweh, we desire that you will allow things to go well for us; all that we have done is what you have enabled us to do.

Isaiah 26:13

but we praise your name alone

Here “name” represents the person of God. Alternate translation: “but we praise you alone” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

13 Yahweh our God, other masters besides you have ruled over us; {but} we praise your name alone.

UST

13 Yahweh, our God, other masters have ruled over us, but you are the only one whom we honor.

Isaiah 26:14

they will not arise

Alternate translation: "they will not come back to life"

made every memory of them to perish

Yahweh causing people to no longer remember those he destroyed is spoken of as if Yahweh made their memory perish or die. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁴ {They are} dead, they will not live; {they are} deceased, they will not arise. Indeed, you came in judgment and destroyed them, and made every memory of them to perish.

UST

¹⁴ Those who ruled us are now gone; they are dead; their spirits have left this earth and they will never live again. You punished those rulers and got rid of them, and people do not even remember them anymore.

Isaiah 26:15

You have increased the nation, Yahweh, you have increased the nation

This clause is repeated for emphasis. Here “nation” represents the people. Alternate translation: “You have greatly increased the number of people in our nation” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁵ You have increased the nation, Yahweh, you have increased the nation; you are honored; you have extended all the borders of the land.

UST

¹⁵ Yahweh, you have enabled our nation to become great; we are more people now, and we have more land, so we thank you.

Isaiah 26:16

they looked to you

Here “they” refers to the people of Israel. This would include Isaiah. Alternate translation: “we looked to you” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

looked to you

This idiom means they asked Yahweh for help. (See: [Idiom](#))

when your discipline was on them

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **discipline**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “when you disciplined them” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

16 Yahweh, in trouble have they looked to you; they whispered prayers {when} your discipline {was} on them. ^[1]

UST

16 Yahweh, when we were distressed, we asked you to help us; when you disciplined us, we could barely speak out any prayer to you.

Isaiah 26:17

As a pregnant woman ... cries out in her labor pains

This compares the people to a woman giving birth. This emphasizes their suffering and crying when Yahweh disciplined them. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁷ As a pregnant {woman} nears the time for her to give birth, when she is in pain and cries out in her labor pains, so we have been before you, Lord.

UST

¹⁷ Like pregnant women who writhe and cry out when they are giving birth, we suffered very much, too.

Isaiah 26:18

but it is as if we have only given birth to wind

“but it is as if we have only given birth to air” or “it is like we gave birth to nothing.” This is a simile that emphasizes that the people’s suffering resulted in nothing. Alternate translation: “but nothing good resulted from it” (See: [Simile](#))

We have not brought salvation to the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen

Here “earth” represents the people who live on the earth. The meaning is unclear, but it seems to mean that the people of Israel have not been able to save themselves or other people by defeating their enemy in battle. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

We have not brought salvation to the earth

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **salvation**, you could express the same idea with the verb “save.” Alternate translation: “We have not saved the inhabitants of the earth” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen

Alternate translation: “nor have we caused the wicked people of the world to fall in battle”

ULT

¹⁸ We have been pregnant, we have been in labor, but it is as if we have only given birth to wind. We have not brought salvation to the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.

UST

¹⁸ We were pregnant and had severe pain, but nothing good resulted from it. We have not rescued any people or kept their enemies from conquering them, and those in the world who were our enemies did not fall in battle.

Isaiah 26:19

Your dead will live

This can be reworded so that the nominal adjective “dead” is expressed as the verb “have died.” Alternate translation: “Your people who have died will live again” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

Your dead

This could mean: (1) “Your” refers to Yahweh or (2) “Your” refers to the people of Israel. If you choose option two you could translate it as “Our dead.”

Awake

This speaks of dead people coming back to life as if they were waking up from sleep. (See: [Metaphor](#))

you who live in the dust

This is a polite way of referring to those who have died. Alternate translation: “those who are dead and buried” (See: [Euphemism](#))

for your dew is the dew of light

Yahweh acting kindly towards his people and bringing them back to life is spoken of as if it were the dew that causes the plants to live. (See: [Metaphor](#))

for your dew

This could mean: (1) “your” refers to Yahweh and this is the dew that Yahweh gives or (2) “your” refers to the people of Israel and this is the dew they receive from Yahweh.

dew of light

This could mean: (1) “light” refers to Yahweh’s power to make dead people alive again. Alternate translation: “dew from Yahweh” or (2) “light” refers to the morning time when dew is on the plants. Alternate translation: “dew in the morning”

the earth will bring forth its dead

“the earth will give birth to those who died.” Yahweh causing dead people to come back to life is spoken of as if the earth would give birth to those who have died. Alternate translation: “and Yahweh will cause those who have died to rise from the earth” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

19 Your dead will live; their dead bodies will arise. Awake and sing for joy, you who live in the dust; for your dew is the dew of light, and the earth will bring forth its dead.

UST

19 But Yahweh’s people who have died will become alive again, their corpses will become alive! You whose bodies lie in graves, rise and shout joyfully! His light will be like dew that falls on you, his people who have died, you who are now in the place where the dead people are; he will cause you to live again.

Isaiah 26:20

my people

Here “my” refers to Isaiah. Also “people” refers to the people of Israel.

until the indignation has passed by

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **indignation**, you could express the same idea with the adjective “angry.” Alternate translation: “until Yahweh is no longer angry with us” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

20 Go, my people, enter into your rooms and shut your doors behind you; hide for a little while, until the indignation has passed by.

UST

20 But now, my fellow Israelites, go home and lock your doors! Hide for a short time, until Yahweh is no longer angry.

Isaiah 26:21

the earth will uncover her bloodshed, and will no longer conceal her slain

Yahweh revealing all murders that have happened on the earth so that he can punish the murderers is spoken of as if the earth itself will reveal everyone who has been murdered. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

²¹ For, look, Yahweh is about to come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will uncover her bloodshed, and will no longer conceal her slain.

UST

²¹ Listen to this: Yahweh will come from heaven to punish all the people on the earth for the sins that they have committed. People will be able to see the blood of those who have been murdered; everyone will at last know all the crimes of murder that have been committed."

Isaiah 27

Isaiah 27 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Leviathan

This was an ancient type of dragon or serpent. It is possible that this is a reference to Satan, who is also described as a serpent and a dragon. (See: [Satan, devil, evil one](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“That day”

This is a common phrase in this section of Isaiah. This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. This chapter pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator should not add explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore, restoration, prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess](#) and [Christ, Messiah](#) and [fulfill, fulfilled, carried out](#))

Isaiah 27:1

On that day

Alternate translation: "At that time"

Yahweh with his hard, great and fierce sword will punish

Yahweh having the power to destroy his enemies is spoken of as if he had strong, large sword. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the monster that is in the sea

This refers to Leviathan.

ULT

¹ On that day Yahweh with his hard, great and fierce sword will punish Leviathan the slithering serpent, Leviathan the squirming serpent, and he will kill the monster that {is} in the sea.

UST

¹ At that time, Yahweh will punish Leviathan, the swift-moving monster, that coiling serpent that lives in the sea. Yahweh will kill it with his sharp, huge, and powerful sword.

Isaiah 27:2

A vineyard of wine, sing of it

“Sing about the vineyard of wine.” This speaks about the people of Israel as if they were a vineyard that produced fruit. Alternate translation: “Sing about the people of Israel as if they were a vineyard that produced grapes for wine” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² In that day: A vineyard of wine, sing of it.

UST

² At that time, Yahweh will say, “You Israelite people, who are like a fruitful vineyard, must sing!”

Isaiah 27:3

I, Yahweh, am its protector

Alternate translation: "I, Yahweh, protect the vineyard"

night and day

The words "night" and "day" are combined here to mean "all the time." Alternate translation: "all the time" or "continually" (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

³ "I, Yahweh, am its protector; I water it every moment. I guard it night and day so no one will hurt it.

UST

³ I will protect you like a farmer waters his crops carefully in order that they will grow well. I will guard you day and night, in order that no one harms you.

Isaiah 27:4

Connecting Statement:

This continues to speak about the people of Israel as if they were a vineyard ([Isaiah 27:2-3](#)).

I am not angry, Oh, that there were briers and thorns! In battle I would march against them

Alternate translation: "I am not angry. If there were briers and thorns I would march against them in battle"

I am not angry

It is understood that Yahweh is not angry with his people any longer.

Alternate translation: "I am not angry with my people any longer" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

that there were briers and thorns

The enemies of the people of Israel are spoken of as if they were briers and thorns growing in the vineyard. (See: [Metaphor](#))

briers and thorns

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 5:6](#).

In battle I would march against them

Yahweh fighting his enemies is spoken of as if he were a warrior in an army. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I would march against them; I would burn them all together

Here Isaiah combines different images to speak of Yahweh's enemies. He speaks of them as if they are briers and thorns but also as soldiers in an army. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ I am not angry, Oh, that there were briers {and} thorns! In battle I would march against them; I would burn them all together;

UST

⁴ I am no longer angry with my people; if any of your enemies try to injure you like briers and thorns injure people, I will attack them in battle; I will get rid of them completely,

Isaiah 27:5

unless they grasp my protection

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **protection**, you could express the same idea with the verb “protect.” Alternate translation: “unless they ask me to protect them” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

make peace with me; let them make peace with me

Alternate translation: “they ask to live peacefully with me; I want them to live peacefully with me”

ULT

⁵ unless they grasp my protection {and} make peace with me; let them make peace with me.

UST

⁵ unless they request me to protect them; I strongly invite them to make peace with me!”

Isaiah 27:6

In the coming day

This speaks about a day as if it travels and arrives somewhere.
Alternate translation: "In the future" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Jacob will take root; Israel will blossom and bud

Yahweh blessing the people of Israel and causing them to prosper is spoken of as if they were a vine that grows roots and blossoms.
Alternate translation: "the descendants of Israel will prosper like a vine that has taken root and blossomed" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Jacob ... Israel

Here "Jacob" and "Israel" are metonyms that represent the descendants of Jacob. (See: [Metonymy](#))

they will fill the surface of the ground with fruit

Yahweh causing the people of Israel to prosper greatly so that they can help other people is spoken of as if they were a vine that grows so much fruit that it would cover the earth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ In the coming day, Jacob will take root; Israel will blossom and bud; and they will fill the surface of the ground with fruit."

UST

⁶ There will be a time when the descendants of Jacob will prosper like a plant that has good roots; they will be like trees that bud and blossom and bear a lot of fruit; what they do will bless all the people in the world.

Isaiah 27:7

Has Yahweh attacked Jacob and Israel as he attacked those nations who attacked them?

The question is used to contrast the severity of God's punishment. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has certainly punished the enemy nations more severely than he punished the people of Israel." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Jacob ... Israel

These represent the descendants of Jacob. (See: [Metonymy](#))

Have Jacob and Israel been killed as in the slaughter of those nations that were killed by them?

This question too is used to contrast the severity of God's punishment. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has not killed the people of Israel like they killed their enemies from other nations." (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁷ Has Yahweh attacked Jacob and {Israel} as he attacked those nations who attacked them? Have Jacob and Israel been killed as in the slaughter of those nations that were killed by them?

UST

⁷ Has Yahweh punished us Israelites like he punished our enemies? Has he punished us as much as he punished them?

Isaiah 27:8

In exact measure you have contended

Here “you” refers to God. Yahweh punishing his people as much as they needed is spoken of as if God’s punishment were something that could be measured. Alternate translation: “But you did punish them as much as was needed” (See: [Forms of You](#) and [Metaphor](#))

sending Jacob and Israel away

This represents the descendants of Jacob. Alternate translation: “sending the Israelites away” (See: [Metonymy](#))

he drove them away with his fierce breath in the day of the east wind

Yahweh’s power to send his people away to a foreign country is spoken of as if Yahweh used his breath to blow them to a foreign country. Alternate translation: “the power of Yahweh drove them out like a fierce wind from the east” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ In exact measure you have contended, sending Jacob and Israel away; he drove them away with his fierce breath in the day of the east wind. ^[1]

UST

⁸ No, he has not done that, but he did punish us Israelite people and exiled us; we were taken away from our land as though we were struck by a windstorm from the east.

Isaiah 27:9

So in this way

This could mean: (1) “this” refers to Yahweh sending the people into exile as Isaiah mentioned in the previous verse or (2) “this” refers to the actions that Isaiah will mention in the next part of verse 9.

the iniquity of Jacob will be atoned for

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will purge the sin from the Israelites” or “Yahweh will forgive the sins of the Israelites” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

iniquity of Jacob ... removal of his sin

Here “Jacob” represents the descendants of Jacob. Alternate translation: “iniquity of the Israelites ... removal of their sins” (See: [Metonymy](#))

for this will be

Here “this” refers to the actions that Isaiah will describe in the next part of verse 9.

the full fruit

This speaks of the results of an action as if it were the fruit that grows as on a tree or vine. Alternate translation: “the result” (See: [Metaphor](#))

he will make all the altar stones as chalk and crushed to pieces, and no Asherah poles or incense altars will remain standing

Here “he” refers to Jacob who represents his descendants. Alternate translation: “They will completely destroy all the altars on which they sacrifice to false gods, and they will remove all the Asherah idols and the altars on which they burn incense to false gods” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ So in this way, the iniquity of Jacob will be atoned for, for this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: when he will make all the altar stones as chalk and crushed to pieces, and no Asherah poles or incense altars will remain standing.

UST

⁹ Yahweh did that in order to punish us for our sins and remove our guilt. As a result of our being exiled, all the altars to other gods in Israel will be demolished, and we will be forgiven for the sins that we have committed. There will be no more poles for worshiping the goddess Asherah or altars for burning incense to other gods; they will all be torn down and smashed to bits.

Isaiah 27:10

For the fortified city is ... consumes its branches

Here Isaiah describes an event that will happen in the future as if it already happened. This emphasizes that it certainly will happen. (See: [Predictive Past](#))

For the fortified city is desolate, the habitation is deserted and forsaken like the wilderness

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The cities that were strong and had many people living in them will become empty like a desert" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the fortified city ... the habitation

This does not refer to a specific city or habitation but to cities and habitations in general. (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

a calf feeds, and there he lies down and consumes

Here "calf" represents calves or cattle in general. Alternate translation: "calves feed, and there they lie down and consume" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

ULT

¹⁰ For the fortified city is desolate, the habitation is deserted and forsaken like the wilderness. There a calf feeds, and there he lies down and consumes its branches.

UST

¹⁰ The cities that have strong walls around them will be empty; like the desert, they will have no one living in them. The houses will be abandoned, and the streets will be full of weeds. Calves will eat grass there and lie down there; they will chew up all the leaves on the trees.

Isaiah 27:11

When the boughs ... not a people of understanding

The people becoming so weak because they disobey Yahweh so that enemies can easily destroy them is spoken of as if they are dry branches that women break off of a tree. (See: [Metaphor](#))

When the boughs are withered, they will be broken off. Women will come and make fires with them

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "When the branches wither, women will come and break them off and make fires with them" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

this is not a people of understanding

This can be made more explicit. Alternate translation: "this is not a people who understands Yahweh or his law" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

a people

This could mean: (1) "people" refers to the people of Israel or (2) "people" refers the people of foreign nations who oppress the people of Israel.

Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them, and he who made them will not be merciful to them

Both clauses mean the same thing. Alternate translation: "Because they do not understand, Yahweh, the one who made them, will not be merciful to them" (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹¹ When the boughs are withered, they will be broken off. Women will come {and} make fires with them, for this is not a people of understanding. Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them, and he who made them will not be merciful to them.

UST

¹¹ The Israelite people are like dry branches on a tree; women break them off and use them to make fires under their cooking pots. Our Israelite people do not have any sense; so Yahweh, who created them, will not act mercifully toward them or be kind to them.

Isaiah 27:12

It will come about

This phrase marks an important event that will happen.

on that day

Alternate translation: “at that time”

Yahweh will thresh

Yahweh gathering his people to bring them back from the foreign nations to the land of Israel is spoken of as if he were threshing wheat to separate the grain from the chaff. (See: [Metaphor](#))

from the Euphrates River to the Wadi of Egypt

Isaiah mentions the Euphrates River and the Wadi of Egypt to mean that Yahweh will bring back the people of Israel who were exiled in lands near those waters, that is, Assyria and Egypt. The Euphrates River is northeast of Israel, and the Wadi of Egypt is southwest of Israel.

the Wadi of Egypt

Alternate translation: “the brook of Egypt”

you ... will be gathered together one by one

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will gather you together one by one” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹² It will come about on that day {that} Yahweh will thresh from the Euphrates River to the Wadi of Egypt and you, the people of Israel, will be gathered together one by one.

UST

¹² However, there will be a time when Yahweh will gather them together again; he will separate them from the people who have conquered them, like people separate wheat from chaff. He will bring them back to Israel, one by one, from the land between the Euphrates River in the northeast and the brook at the border of Egypt in the southwest.

Isaiah 27:13

a great trumpet will be blown

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “someone will blow a trumpet loudly” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the perishing ones in the land of Assyria will come, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt

The understood information can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “those who are in exile and dying in the land of Assyria and the land of Egypt will return to the land of Israel” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

holy mountain

The “holy mountain” is Mount Zion, in Jerusalem. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 11:9](#).

ULT

13 On that day a great trumpet will be blown; and the perishing ones in the land of Assyria will come, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, they will worship Yahweh on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

UST

13 At that time, a trumpet will be blown very loudly. And those who were exiled to Assyria and Egypt and who almost died there will return to Jerusalem, to worship Yahweh on Zion, his holy hill.

Isaiah 28

Isaiah 28 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphors

There are many metaphors used to describe Yahweh's punishment as well as the sin of the people of Ephraim. In one such metaphor, they are described as being drunk. Construction and weather metaphors are also used in this chapter. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [sin, sinful, sinner, sinning](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“That day”

This is a common phrase in this section of Isaiah. This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. This chapter pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator does not need to add an explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore, restoration, prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess](#) and [Christ, Messiah](#) and [fulfill, fulfilled, carried out](#))

Isaiah 28:1

Woe to the proud garland ... on the head of the lush Valley of those who are overcome with wine

A “garland” is a crown made of flowers. Here it represents the city of Samaria, the capital of Israel, which sits above a fertile valley. Samaria and its people being destroyed is spoken of as if the flowers in the garland will grow old and stop being beautiful. (See: [Metaphor](#))

who are overcome with wine

Alternate translation: “who are drunk with wine”

ULT

¹ Woe to the proud garland crown that {is} worn by each of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty, the garland that {is} set on the head of the lush Valley of those who are overcome with wine!

UST

¹ Terrible things will happen to the city of Samaria, the capital of Israel! It is on a hill above a fertile valley; the people who live there, who get drunk by drinking too much wine, are very proud; it is a beautiful and glorious city, but some day that beauty will disappear like a flower that wilts and dries up.

Isaiah 28:2

Behold

Alternate translation: "Listen" or "Pay attention"

the Lord sends one who is mighty and strong

Here "one" refers to a mighty king who also represents his powerful army. Alternate translation: "the Lord sends a king with his powerful army" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

storm of hail

A "storm of hail" or hailstorm happens when hard pieces of ice fall from the sky. Here it is a simile that refers to the enemy army that Yahweh will send to destroy the people of Samaria. (See: [Simile](#))

he will throw each garland crown down to the ground

The king and his powerful army destroying the people of Samaria and their city is spoken of as if the king will throw the people's garlands onto the ground. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² Behold, the Lord sends one who is mighty and strong; like a storm of hail and a destructive windstorm, like a driving rain and overflowing waters; and he will throw each garland crown down to the ground.

UST

² Listen to this: Yahweh will cause a great army to attack it. Their soldiers will be like a huge hailstorm or a very strong wind; they will be everywhere, like the water of a huge flood, and they will smash to the ground the buildings in Samaria.

Isaiah 28:3

The proud garland of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The enemy army will crush the proud drunkards of Samaria as if they were crushing flowers under their feet" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

proud garland ... of Ephraim

A "garland" is a crown made of flowers. Here it represents the city of Samaria, the capital of Israel, which sits above a fertile valley. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ The proud garland of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot.

UST

³ The people of Samaria are proud, but everything that the drunks who live there think is wonderful will be trampled on by their enemies.

Isaiah 28:4

that is on the head of the rich valley

The city of Samaria, the capital of Israel, sits above a fertile valley.
(See: [Metaphor](#))

will be as the first ripe fig ... gulps it down

This speaks of the enemy soldiers seeing the beauty of Samaria and quickly plundering it as if they were a person who sees the first fig of the season and quickly eats it. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

⁴ The fading flower of his glorious beauty, that is on the head of the rich valley, will be as the first ripe fig before the summer, that, when someone sees it, while it is yet in his hand, he gulps it down.

UST

⁴ Yes, Samaria is beautiful, set on a hill above a fertile valley, but that beauty will disappear like a flower that wilts and dries up. Whenever someone sees a good fig at the beginning of the season when figs become ripe, he quickly picks and eats it; similarly, when the enemies of Israel see all the beautiful things in Samaria, they will quickly conquer the city and take away all those things.

Isaiah 28:5

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

will become a beautiful crown and a diadem of beauty

Yahweh is spoken of as if he were to become a beautiful crown that the people who honor him as their true king would wear. (See: [Metaphor](#))

a beautiful crown and a diadem of beauty

These mean the same thing. Alternate translation: “a beautiful crown” (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁵ In that day Yahweh of hosts will become a beautiful crown and a diadem of beauty for the remainder of his people,

UST

⁵ At that time, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will be like a glorious wreath of flowers for us Israelite people who are still alive after being exiled.

Isaiah 28:6

a spirit of justice for him who sits in judgment, and strength for those who

This can be reworded so that the abstract nouns “justice” and “strength” are expressed as adjectives. These words can begin a new sentence. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will cause the judges to be just and will cause to be strong those who” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

a spirit of justice

A person who has a “spirit of justice” is someone who has the characteristic of justice and is a just person. (See: [Idiom](#))

sits in judgment

This idiom means the person has the authority to judge. (See: [Idiom](#))

strength for those who turn back their enemies at their gates

Here “to turn back” is an idiom that means to defeat in battle. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will cause the soldiers to be strong so that they defeat their enemies when the enemies attack their city” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁶ a spirit of justice for him who sits in judgment, and strength for those who turn back their enemies at their gates.

UST

⁶ He will cause our judges to want to do what is fair when they decide people's cases. He will enable the soldiers who stand at the city gates to strongly defend the city when our enemies attack it.

Isaiah 28:7

But even these

Alternate translation: "But even the leaders"

The priest and the prophet

This does not mean a specific priest or prophet. It refers to priests and prophets in general. Alternate translation: "The priests and the prophets" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize that the priests and the prophets cannot do their job because they are very drunk. Alternate translation: "stumble around because they are drunk" (See: [Parallelism](#))

they are swallowed up by wine

Their drinking so much that they can no longer think properly is spoken of as if the wine swallowed them. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "the wine is causing them to be confused" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

staggering in vision and reeling in decision

Just like they are too drunk to walk correctly, they are too drunk to understand the visions God gives them or to make good decisions.

ULT

⁷ But even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink. The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, and they are swallowed up by wine. They stagger with strong drink, staggering in vision and reeling in decision.

UST

⁷ But now, our leaders stagger, and the priests and prophets also stagger because of drinking a lot of wine and other alcoholic drinks. They are not able to think right; they see visions, but they cannot understand what they mean; they are unable to decide things correctly.

Isaiah 28:8

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁸ Truly, all tables are covered with vomit,
so that there {is} no {clean} place.

UST

⁸ All their tables are covered with their
vomit; filth is everywhere.

Isaiah 28:9

To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message?

The drunk prophets and priests use a question to criticize Isaiah, who is trying to correct them. Alternate translation: "The drunk prophets and priests say, 'Isaiah should not be trying to teach us about Yahweh's message!'" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

To those who are weaned from milk or to those just taken from the breasts?

The drunk prophets and priests use a question to criticize Isaiah, because they feel that he is treating them like babies. Alternate translation: "He should not treat us like babies!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁹ To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message? To those who are weaned from milk or to those {just} taken from the breasts?

UST

⁹ Who will he teach so that they can learn about knowledge? Who will listen to him so that he can teach lessons to them so they can learn? Does he think that we are like little children who no longer drink milk, and that we are like babies who, not long ago, were weaned?

Isaiah 28:10

For it is command upon command, command upon command; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; here a little, there a little

The drunk prophets and priests criticize Isaiah because they feel that Isaiah is repeating simple commands as if he were talking to a child.

ULT

¹⁰ For it is command upon command, command upon command; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; here a little, there a little.

UST

¹⁰ He continually tells us, 'Do this, do that;' first he tells us one rule, then another rule, he tells us only one line at a time."

Isaiah 28:11

with mocking lips and a foreign tongue he will speak to this people

Here “lips” and “tongue” represent the foreigners who speak a different language than the Israelites do. It is implied that this refers to the Assyrian army that will attack Israel. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will speak to this people through enemy soldiers who will speak a foreign language” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

mocking lips

Alternate translation: “stammering lips”

ULT

¹¹ Indeed, with mocking lips and a foreign tongue he will speak to this people.

UST

¹¹ So now, Yahweh will need to force them to listen to Assyrians speaking to them in a language that they do not understand.

Isaiah 28:12

This is the rest

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **rest**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: "This is the resting place" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

give rest to him who is weary

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **rest**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "let whoever is tired come and rest" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

this is the refreshing

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **refreshing**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "this is the place where you can be refreshed" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

12 In the past he said to them "This {is} the rest, give rest to him who is weary; and this {is} the refreshing," but they would not listen.

UST

12 Yahweh told his people long ago, "This is a place where you can rest; you are exhausted from all your travels through the desert, but you will be able to rest in this land." But they refused to pay attention to what he said.

Isaiah 28:13

So the word of Yahweh

Alternate translation: "So Yahweh's message"

command upon command, command upon command; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; here a little, there a little

These are the words that the drunk priests and prophets used to criticize how Isaiah teaches them. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 28:10](#).

so that they may go and fall backward, and be broken, ensnared, and captured

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "in order that the army of Assyria will come and defeat them and take them as captives" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

go and fall backward, and be broken

People losing in battle to the enemy army is spoken of as if the people will fall down and break. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ensnared

The enemy soldiers capturing the people of Israel is spoken of as if they were hunters that catch an animal in a snare. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

13 So the word of Yahweh will be to them command upon command, command upon command; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; here a little, there a little; so that they may go and fall backward, and be broken, ensnared, and captured.

UST

13 So Yahweh continues to tell the people of Samaria, one line at a time, "Do this, do that," first one rule and then another rule. But because of their ignoring what God said, they will be attacked and defeated; they will be wounded and snared and captured.

Isaiah 28:14

So listen to the word of Yahweh

Alternate translation: "So listen to Yahweh's message"

ULT

¹⁴ So listen to the word of Yahweh, you who mock, you who rule over this people who {are} in Jerusalem.

UST

¹⁴ Listen to the word that Yahweh says, you who rule over the people of Jerusalem, you who mock and make fun of me!

Isaiah 28:15

We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have reached an agreement

Both of these statements mean basically the same thing. This could mean: (1) the leaders of Jerusalem have used magic or sorcery to try to make an agreement with the gods of the place of the dead so that these gods would protect them from dying or (2) this is a metaphor that speaks of the leaders having made an agreement with the leaders of Egypt. The leaders of Jerusalem were so confident that the Egyptians would protect that it was like they had made an agreement with the gods of the place of the dead. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

So when the overwhelming whip passes through, it will not reach us

This speaks of Yahweh's judgment and punishment as if it were a whip that would strike the people. And the whip is spoken of as if it were a flood that would pass through Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "As a result, when everyone else is suffering and dying, nothing will harm us" (See: [Metaphor](#))

For we have made a lie our refuge, and taken shelter in falsehood

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. A "lie" and "falsehood" are spoken of as if they were places where a person could go to hide. The leaders in Jerusalem would not have said they trust in a lie. They believed they were truly safe. But Isaiah knows they are not safe, because they trust in lies. Alternate translation: "For lies and falsehoods have become like a place where we can hide from danger" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

a lie our refuge ... taken shelter in falsehood

This could mean: (1) the leaders trust in their own lies that they have said in order to protect themselves or (2) the leaders trust that the covenant they have made with the false gods of the place of the dead will keep them safe or (3) the leaders trust that the agreement they have made with the Egyptians will keep them safe.

ULT

¹⁵ This will happen because you said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have reached an agreement. So when the overwhelming whip passes through, it will not reach us. For we have made a lie our refuge, and taken shelter in falsehood."

UST

¹⁵ You boast and say, "We made a promise with death to ensure that the power of death, when it passes over us, it cannot get to us. We tried to turn our lying words into a shelter in which we could hide."

Isaiah 28:16

See

Alternate translation: "Look" or "Listen" or "Pay attention to what I am about to tell you."

I will lay in Zion a foundation stone ... sure foundation

Yahweh sending a strong person to help the people of Israel is spoken of as if Yahweh is constructing a strong foundation for a building. (See: [Metaphor](#))

a tried stone

Alternate translation: "a stone that is solid"

a sure foundation

Alternate translation: "a firm support"

He who believes will not be ashamed

Alternate translation: "Anyone who trusts in this foundation stone will not be sorry"

ULT

16 Therefore the Lord Yahweh says, "See, I will lay in Zion a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. He who believes will not be ashamed.

UST

16 Therefore, Yahweh our Lord says this: "Listen to this! I am going to place in Jerusalem someone who is like a foundation stone, he is like a stone that has been tested to determine if it is solid. He will be like a valuable stone on which it will be safe to build a house; and whoever trusts in him will never be disappointed.

Isaiah 28:17

I will make justice the measuring stick, and righteousness the plumbline

Yahweh testing according to his justice and righteousness to determine if the people are just and righteous is spoken of as if he were a builder using tools to determine that something is the correct length and perfectly level. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the measuring stick

A builder uses a measuring stick to determine if something is the correct length.

the plumbline

A builder uses a plumbline to determine if something is straight and level.

Hail will sweep away

Yahweh causing a large amount of hail to fall is spoken of as if it would be an overwhelming flood. Alternate translation: "Hailstorms will destroy" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Hail ... the floodwaters

This could mean: (1) these are a synecdoche representing anything in general that will cause destruction or (2) these are a metaphor referring to the enemy army that Yahweh will send to destroy the people of Jerusalem. (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Hail

hard pieces of ice that fall from the sky

the refuge of lies ... the hiding place

This speaks about "lies" as if they were a place a person could go to hide. They represent what the leaders of Jerusalem trusted in to keep them safe from Yahweh's punishment. This could mean: (1) the leaders trust in their own lies that they have said in order to protect themselves or (2) the leaders trust that the covenant they have made with the false gods of the place of the dead will keep them safe or (3) the leaders trust that the agreement they have made with the Egyptians will keep them safe. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 28:15](#). (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹⁷ I will make justice the measuring stick, and righteousness the plumbline. Hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the floodwaters will overwhelm the hiding place.

UST

¹⁷ I will test you people of Jerusalem to find out if you will act justly and righteously, I will measure your character like a carpenter uses a plumb line to determine if a wall is straight and level. And then the hail will fall! And it will destroy everything you have. Your shelter will be destroyed because it is built on a foundation of lies, and the water from the storm will wash your shelter away.

Isaiah 28:18

Your covenant with death will be dissolved, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will cancel the covenant you have with death, and I will cancel the agreement you have with Sheol" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

covenant with death ... agreement with Sheol

This could mean: (1) the leaders of Jerusalem had used magic or sorcery to try to make an agreement with the gods of the place of the dead so that these gods would protect them from dying or (2) this is a metaphor that speaks of the leaders having made an agreement with the leaders of Egypt. The leaders of Jerusalem were so confident that the Egyptians would protect that it was like they had made an agreement with the gods of the place of the dead. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 28:15](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

will not stand

Alternate translation: "will not last"

When the raging flood passes through

This could mean: (1) "flood" is a synecdoche that represents anything in general that will cause destruction or (2) "flood" is a metaphor referring to the enemy army that Yahweh will send to destroy the people of Jerusalem. (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

you will be overwhelmed by it

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "it will overwhelm you" or "it will destroy you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁸ Your covenant with death will be dissolved, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand. When the raging flood passes through, you will be overwhelmed by it.

UST

¹⁸ I will cancel the covenant that you made with death, and I will bring to an end the covenant you made with the place where the dead dwell. But when the vast flood comes, it will pour over you; and day after day it will pass over you.

Isaiah 28:19

morning by morning

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

by day and night

This means “throughout the entire day” (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

19 Whenever it passes through, it will overwhelm you, and morning by morning it will pass through and by day and night it will come. When the message is understood, it will cause terror.

UST

19 When the flood comes, it will pass through and over you like the river when it overflows its banks and causes flooding everywhere. When you finally understand the message of Yahweh, it will cause you to be terrified, not comforted. For the bed is too short to stretch oneself on, and the covering too narrow to wrap oneself in.

Isaiah 28:20

For the bed is too short for a man to stretch out on, and the blanket too narrow for him to wrap himself in

This was probably a proverb that the people knew at the time. It means that what they believe will keep them safe from Yahweh's punishment will disappoint them like a bed that is too short or a blanket that is too narrow. (See: [Proverbs](#))

ULT

²⁰ For the bed is too short for a man to stretch out {on}, and the blanket too narrow for him to wrap himself {in}."

UST

²⁰ You have heard people say, "Your bed is very short; you will not be able to sleep in it; your blankets are very narrow; they will not cover you!"

Isaiah 28:21

Yahweh will rise up

Yahweh preparing to act is spoken of as if he were sitting and then rising up. (See: [Idiom](#))

Mount Perazim ... Valley of Gibeon

These refer to places where God miraculously defeated enemy armies. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [How to Translate Names](#))

he will rouse himself

Alternate translation: "he will become very angry"

his strange work ... his strange deed

These two phrases mean the same thing. This work is strange because God is using a foreign army to defeat the people of Jerusalem rather than helping the people of Jerusalem defeat their enemies. (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

²¹ Yahweh will rise up as {on} Mount Perazim; he will rouse himself as in the Valley of Gibeon to do his work, his strange work, and perform his strange deed.

UST

²¹ Yahweh will come and cause you to be defeated; he will do to you like he did to the army of Philistia at Mount Perizim, and like he did to the Amorites at Gibeon Valley. What he will do will be very strange and unusual.

Isaiah 28:22

Now

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

your bonds will be tightened

Yahweh punishing the people even more severely is spoken of as if he would tighten their bonds. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will tighten your bonds” or “Yahweh will punish you even more severely” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

a decree of destruction on the earth

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **destruction**, you could express the same idea with the verb “destroy.” Alternate translation: “that he is going to destroy people throughout the land” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

22 Now therefore do not mock, or your bonds will be tightened. I have heard from the Lord Yahweh of hosts, a decree of destruction on the earth.

UST

22 Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has told me that he is going to destroy the entire land. So do not ridicule what I say anymore, because if you do that, he will punish you even more severely.

Isaiah 28:23

General Information:

This begins a parable that ends in 28:29. (See: [Parables](#))

Pay attention and listen to my voice; be attentive and listen to my words

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The second phrase is used to strengthen the first. (See: [Parallelism](#))

to my voice

Here “voice” represents what Isaiah says. Alternate translation: “to what I say” (See: [Metonymy](#))

to my words

Alternate translation: “to my message”

ULT

²³ Pay attention and listen to my voice; be attentive and listen to my words.

UST

²³ Listen to what I say; pay attention carefully.

Isaiah 28:24

Does a farmer who plows all day to sow, only plow the ground? Does he continually break up and harrow the field?

Isaiah uses rhetorical questions to make the people think deeply.
Alternate translation: "A farmer does not plow the ground over and over and continually work the soil without ever sowing seed." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²⁴ Does a farmer who plows all day to sow, only plow the ground? Does he continually break up and harrow the field?

UST

²⁴ When a farmer plows some ground, does he never plant seeds? Does he continue to plow it and never plant anything?

Isaiah 28:25

When he has prepared the ground

Alternate translation: "When the farmer has plowed the soil"

does he not scatter caraway seed, sow the cumin, put in the wheat in rows and the barley in the right place, and the spelt at its edges?

Isaiah uses a question to make the people of Jerusalem think deeply. If your language does not have a word for each of these seeds, they can be stated more generally. Alternate translation: "he will certainly plant each kind of seed in the correct way and in the proper places." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

caraway ... cumin

These are names of plants that are spices. Translators may represent them in general as seeds of spices used to spice food. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

wheat ... barley ... spelt

These are all names of plants that are grains. Translators may represent them in general as seeds of grains. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

²⁵ When he has prepared the ground, does he not scatter caraway seed, sow the cumin, put in the wheat in rows and the barley in the right place, and the spelt at its edges? ^[1]

UST

²⁵ No, he makes the ground very level, and then he plants seeds— caraway seed and cumin and wheat and barley. He plants each kind of seed in the correct manner. He does not plant one kind of seed in the way that is not right for it.

Isaiah 28:26

His God instructs him; he teaches him wisely

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "Yahweh helps the farmer know how to care for each kind of plant" (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

²⁶ His God instructs him; he teaches him wisely.

UST

²⁶ He does that because God has taught him the correct way to do it.

Isaiah 28:27

the caraway seed is not threshed with a sledge

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the farmer does not separate the caraway seed from the plant with a heavy club” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

caraway

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 28:25](#).

nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cumin

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “nor does he roll a heavy wheel over the cumin seed” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

cumin

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 28:25](#).

but caraway is beaten with a stick, and cumin with a rod

Isaiah describes the correct way for a farmer to separate the seed from the plant. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “but he beats the caraway with a stick, and he beats cumin with a rod” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁷ Moreover, the caraway seed is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cumin; but caraway is beaten with a stick, and cumin with a rod.

UST

²⁷ Moreover, the caraway seed is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cumin; but caraway is beaten with a stick, and the cumin with a rod.

Isaiah 28:28

Grain is ground for bread but not too finely

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The farmer grinds the grain for bread but not so that it is too small" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁸ Grain is ground for bread but not too finely, and though the wheels of his cart and his horses scatter it, his horses do not crush it.

UST

²⁸ And grain for baking bread is crushed easily, so the farmers do not continue to pound it for a long time. They sometimes cause their horses to pull a cart over it to thresh it, but doing that does not grind the grain.

Isaiah 28:29

This too comes ... excellent in wisdom

This concludes the parable started in [Isaiah 28:23](#). The implied lesson of the parable is that farmers are wise enough to listen to Yahweh's instructions about planting and threshing. But the leaders of Jerusalem are foolish for not listening to Yahweh's instructions that he is speaking through Isaiah. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

ULT

²⁹ This too comes from Yahweh of hosts, {who} is wonderful in instruction {and} excellent in wisdom.

UST

²⁹ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, gives us wonderful advice about how to do things; he gives us great wisdom. So what the farmers do is very smart, but what your leaders are doing is very stupid.

Isaiah 29

Isaiah 29 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

This chapter begins a series of “woes” against specific nations. It presents judgments against the kingdoms of Ephraim and eventually Judah. (See: [woe](#) and [judge, judgment](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Ariel

This is another name for Jerusalem. It is an uncommon name.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Prophecies

This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. It pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator does not need to add an explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore, restoration](#) and [prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess](#) and [fulfill, fulfilled, carried out](#))

Isaiah 29:1

Woe to Ariel

Here “Ariel” represents the people who live in the city of Ariel.
Alternate translation: “How terrible it will be for the people of Ariel”
(See: [Metonymy](#))

Ariel

This is another name for Jerusalem, and it means “altar.” If possible translate this as “Ariel” rather than “Jerusalem” since the meaning of “Ariel” is important in 29:2. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

David encamped

Alternate translation: “David dwelled” or “David lived”

Add year to year; let the festivals come round

“Keep celebrating your festival year after year.” This is an ironic statement. Yahweh tells the people to keep celebrating their festivals where they sacrifice to him, but he knows it will not prevent him from destroying them.
(See: [Irony](#))

ULT

¹ Woe to Ariel, Ariel, the city {where} David encamped! Add year to year; let the festivals come round.

UST

¹ This is a message from Yahweh: Terrible things will happen to Jerusalem, the city where King David lived. You people continue to celebrate your festivals each year.

Isaiah 29:2

But I will besiege

The word “I” refers to Yahweh. This represents Yahweh causing an enemy army to besiege Jerusalem. (See: [Metonymy](#))

she will

Here “she” refers to Ariel, which represents the people of Ariel. Alternate translation: “the people of Ariel will” (See: [Metonymy](#))

mourning and lamenting

The words “mourning” and “lamenting” mean basically the same thing and emphasize the intensity of mourning. Alternate translation: “they will mourn deeply” (See: [Doublet](#))

like Ariel

Translators may add a footnote that says, “The name Ariel means ‘altar.’” (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

² But I will besiege Ariel, and she will be mourning and lamenting; and she will be to me like Ariel.

UST

² But I will cause you to experience a great disaster, and when that happens, people will weep and lament very much. Your city will become like an altar to me where people are burned as sacrifices.

Isaiah 29:3

I will encamp against you

The word “I” refers to Yahweh. This represents Yahweh causing an enemy army to surround Jerusalem. Alternate translation: “I will command the army of your enemies to surround you” (See: [Metonymy](#))

palisade ... siege works

A “palisade” is a tower armies would build to attack cities with high walls. Also “siege works” refers to other various weapons armies would build to attack cities. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

³ I will encamp against you in a circle and will lay siege against you with a palisade, and I will raise siege works against you.

UST

³ I will cause your enemies to come and camp all around your city; they will surround it by building towers and putting in place other things with which to attack you.

Isaiah 29:4

You will be brought down

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Your enemy will bring you down” or “Your enemy will humble you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

will speak from the ground; your speech will be low from the dust. Your voice will sound like a spirit that speaks from the ground, and out of the dust your speech will whisper

All of these statements mean basically the same thing. They emphasize that the people who once spoke with proud words will be weak and grieving after the enemy defeats them. Alternate translation: “you will only be able to speak with weak whispers like a spirit speaking from where dead people dwell” (See: [Simile](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁴ You will be brought down and will speak from the ground; your speech will be low from the dust. Your voice will sound like a spirit that speaks from the ground, and out of the dust your speech will whisper.

UST

⁴ Then you will talk as though you were buried deep in the ground; it will sound like someone whispering from under the ground, like a ghost speaking from a grave.

Isaiah 29:5

The great number of your invaders will become like fine dust, and the multitude of the ruthless ones as chaff that passes away

This emphasizes how weak and insignificant the invading army is before God. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will easily remove the horde of your invaders and the multitude of the ruthless ones” (See: [Simile](#))

great number of your invaders

Alternate translation: “many soldiers that will attack you”

the ruthless ones as chaff

The translator can supply the verb “will become.” Alternate translation: “the soldiers who show you no mercy will become as chaff” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

⁵ The great number of your invaders will become like fine dust, and the multitude of the ruthless ones as chaff that passes away. It will happen suddenly, in an instant.

UST

⁵ But suddenly your enemies will be blown away like dust; their armies will disappear like chaff that is blown away by the wind. It will happen very suddenly:

Isaiah 29:6

Yahweh of hosts will come to you

The word “you” refers to the people of Jerusalem. This could mean: (1) “Yahweh of hosts will come to help you” or (2) “Yahweh of hosts will come to punish you.” (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

⁶ Yahweh of hosts will come to you with thunder, earthquake, great noise, {with} strong winds and violent storm, and the flames of a devouring fire.

UST

⁶ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will come to help you with thunder and an earthquake and a very loud noise, with a strong wind and a big storm and a fire that will burn up everything.

Isaiah 29:7

It will be like a dream, a vision of the night

The phrase “a vision of the night” is the same thing as “a dream.” The two phrases emphasize that soon it will be like the invading army was never there. (See: [Doublet](#) and [Simile](#))

A horde of all the nations

Alternate translation: “Large armies from all the nations”

fight against Ariel

The name “Ariel” is another name for Jerusalem, and it represents the people who live there. See how you translated “Ariel” in [Isaiah 29:1](#). Alternate translation: “fight against the people of Ariel” (See: [Metonymy](#))

her stronghold. They will attack her and her fortifications to press upon her

The word “her” refers to Ariel which represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: “their stronghold. They will attack the city of Ariel and its defenses and cause the people to be in great distress” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ It will be like a dream, a vision of the night: A horde of all the nations will fight against Ariel and her stronghold. They will attack her and her fortifications to press upon her.

UST

⁷ Then the armies of all the nations that will be attacking Jerusalem will quickly disappear like a dream in the night. Those who will be attacking Jerusalem will suddenly vanish.

Isaiah 29:8

It will be like when a hungry man dreams he is eating ... his thirst not quenched

These similes mean that the enemy will expect victory but they will fail because God will not allow them to conquer Jerusalem. (See: [Simile](#))

Yes, so will be the great number of nations that fights against Mount Zion

Here "Mount Zion" represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: "Yes, this will be what happens to the armies from the nations who fight against the people who live on Mount Zion" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁸ It will be like when a hungry man dreams he is eating, but when he awakes, his stomach is empty. It will be like when a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking, but he when he awakes, {he is} fainting, with his thirst not quenched. Yes, so will be the great number of nations that fights against Mount Zion.

UST

⁸ People who are asleep dream about eating food, but when they wake up, they are still hungry. People who are thirsty dream about drinking something, but when they wake up they are still thirsty. It will be like that when your enemies come to attack Mount Zion; they will dream about conquering you, but when they wake up, they will realize that they have not succeeded.

Isaiah 29:9

Astonish yourselves and be astonished

The word “yourselves” refers to the people of Jerusalem. Why they are astonished can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “Be astonished at what I am telling you” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Doublet](#))

blind yourselves and be blind

The people ignoring what Yahweh says is spoken of as if they would make themselves blind. Alternate translation: “keep being ignorant and spiritually blind to what I am showing you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with beer

The people being senseless and not understanding what Yahweh is doing is spoken of as if they were drunk. Alternate translation: “Be senseless like a drunk person, but it is not because you have drank too much wine or beer” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ Astonish yourselves and be astonished; blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with beer.

UST

⁹ You people of Jerusalem, be amazed and surprised about this! Do not believe what I have said! And continue to be blind about what Yahweh is doing. You are stupid, but it is not because you have drunk a lot of wine. You stagger, but not from drinking alcoholic drinks.

Isaiah 29:10

For Yahweh has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep

Here “the spirit of” means “to have the characteristic of” being asleep. Yahweh causing the people to be asleep is spoken of as if “the spirit” were a liquid that he poured out on the people. Also “deep sleep” is a metaphor that means the people are senseless and cannot understand what Yahweh is doing. Alternate translation: “The reason you are senseless is because Yahweh has caused you to be spiritually asleep” (See: [Metaphor](#))

He has closed your eyes, the prophets, and has covered your heads, the seers

Yahweh causing the people to be senseless and not to understand what he is doing is spoken of as if he closed their eyes and covered their heads so they could not see. Alternate translation: “It is as though Yahweh has closed the eyes of the prophets and covered the heads of the seers” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁰ For Yahweh has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep. He has closed your eyes, the prophets, and has covered your heads, the seers.

UST

¹⁰ Because Yahweh has prevented the prophets from understanding and telling you his messages, it is as though he had made you go fast asleep.

Isaiah 29:11

All revelation has become to you as the words of a book that is sealed

The other prophets in Jerusalem are unable to hear or understand God's message. Alternate translation: "All that Yahweh has revealed is to you like a sealed book" (See: [Simile](#))

is sealed, which men might give to one who is learned

This can be stated as a new sentence. Alternate translation: "is sealed. A person may take the sealed book to someone who can read"

ULT

¹¹ All revelation has become to you as the words of a book that is sealed, which {men} might give to one who is learned, saying, "Read this." He also says, "I cannot, for it {is} sealed."

UST

¹¹ Yahweh gave me visions; but for you, they are only words on a scroll that is sealed shut. If you give it to those who can read and request they read it, they will say, "We cannot read it because the scroll is sealed."

Isaiah 29:12

If the book is given to one who cannot read

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "If a person takes the book to someone who cannot read" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹² If the book is given to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read."

UST

¹² When you give it to others who cannot read, they will say, "We cannot read it because we do not know how to read."

Isaiah 29:13

This people comes close to me with their mouths and honors me with their lips

The words “mouths” and “lips” represent what people say. Here it also represents saying something but not truly meaning it. Alternate translation: “The people of Jerusalem pretend to worship me and honor me with what they say” (See: [Metonymy](#))

but their heart is far from me

Here “heart” is a metonym that represents a person’s thoughts and emotions. The people not being truly devoted to Yahweh is spoken of as if their hearts were far away from him. Alternate translation: “but they do not honor me in their thoughts” or “but they are not truly devoted to me” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Their honor for me is only a commandment of men that has been taught

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “They honor me only because that is what people tell them to do” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹³ The Lord said, “This people comes close to me with their mouths and honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Their honor for me is only a commandment of men that has been taught.

UST

¹³ So the Lord says, “These people pretend to worship me. They say good things to pretend to honor me, but they do not think about what I desire. When they worship me, all they do is recite rules that people have made and that they have memorized.

Isaiah 29:14

Therefore, see, I will proceed to do a marvelous thing among this people, wonder after wonder

Alternate translation: "Therefore, look and see! I am going to do wonderful and marvelous things among you that you will not be able to explain"

The wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the understanding of their prudent men will disappear

Both of these statements mean the same thing. Yahweh showing that the wise people cannot understand or explain what Yahweh does is spoken of as if their wisdom and understanding will vanish. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁴ Therefore, see, I will proceed to do a marvelous thing among this people, wonder after wonder. The wisdom of their wise {men} will perish, and the understanding of their prudent {men} will disappear."

UST

¹⁴ Therefore, again I will do something to amaze these people; I will perform many miracles. And I will show that the people who tell others that they are wise are not really wise, and I will show that the people who tell others that they are intelligent are not really intelligent.

Isaiah 29:15

General Information:

This may be Isaiah speaking or it may continue Yahweh's speech in 29:13-14.

who deeply hide their plans from Yahweh

People trying to make plans without Yahweh knowing about it is spoken of as if they hide their plans in a deep place where Yahweh cannot see. Alternate translation: "who try to hide their plans from Yahweh" or "who try to keep Yahweh from finding out what they are planning to do" (See: [Metaphor](#))

whose deeds are in darkness

It is implied that they are secretly doing evil things. Alternate translation: "who do evil things in the dark so no one can see them" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Who sees us, and who knows us?

They use a question to emphasize that they believe no one knows what they are doing. Alternate translation: "No one, not even Yahweh, sees us or knows what we are doing!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

15 Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from Yahweh, and whose deeds are in darkness. They say, "Who sees us, and who knows us?"

UST

15 Terrible things will happen to those who try to conceal from me, Yahweh, the evil things that they plan to do; they do those deeds in the darkness and they think, 'Yahweh certainly cannot see us; he cannot know what we are doing!'

Isaiah 29:16

You turn things upside down

This is an idiom that means to distort what is true. Alternate translation: "You make things opposite of the way they should be" or "You distort the truth" (See: [Idiom](#))

Should the potter be considered like clay, so that the thing that is made should say about him who made it..."He does not understand"?

Yahweh who created humans is spoken of as if he were a potter and humans were the clay. This metaphor emphasizes that it is foolish for humans to reject or criticize the one who created them. Alternate translation: "Should you consider me, your maker, to be like the clay rather than the potter? It is as if a potter created something, and that thing said about the potter, 'He did not make me,' or 'He does not understand.'" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Should the potter be considered like clay..."He does not understand"?

This question is used to scold the people of Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "Obviously, the potter should not be considered like clay...'He does not understand.'" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

16 You turn things upside down! Should the potter be considered like clay, so that the thing that is made should say about him who made it, "He did not make me," or the thing formed say about him who formed it, "He does not understand"?

UST

16 They are extremely foolish! They act as though they were the potters and I were the clay! Something that was created should certainly never say to the one who made it, 'You did not make me!' A jar should never say, 'The potter who made me did not know what he was doing!'"

Isaiah 29:17

Lebanon will be turned into a field, and the field will become a forest

This could mean: (1) this is literal and Yahweh will cause the places where trees grew wild in Lebanon to become fruitful fields or (2) this is a metaphor and the large forests of Lebanon represent powerful oppressors, and the crops that grow in the field and become a forest are the common people who are suffering. This means Yahweh will humble those who are powerful, but he will honor those who are suffering. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Lebanon will be turned into a field

Here “Lebanon” represents the large cedar forests in Lebanon. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “God will turn the mighty forests of Lebanon into a field” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁷ In just a little while, Lebanon will be turned into a field, and the field will become a forest.

UST

¹⁷ Soon the forests in Lebanon will become fertile fields, and abundant crops will grow in those fields, and that will happen very soon.

Isaiah 29:18

**the deaf will hear the words of a book, and
the eyes of the blind will see out of the deep
darkness**

This could mean: (1) this is literal and Yahweh will cause deaf people to hear and blind people to see or (2) this is a metaphor that means Yahweh will enable the people to hear and understand his message or (3) it may mean both options 1 and 2. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the eyes of the blind

Here “eyes” represents the whole person. Alternate translation: “those who are blind” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹⁸ On that day the deaf will hear the words of a book, and the eyes of the blind will see out of the {deep} darkness.

UST

¹⁸ At that time, deaf people will be able to hear; they will be able to hear when someone reads from a book; and blind people will be able to see; they will be able to see things when it is gloomy and even when it is dark.

Isaiah 29:19

**The oppressed will again rejoice in Yahweh,
and the poor among men will rejoice in the
Holy One of Israel**

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "The poor and oppressed people will again be happy because of what Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, has done" (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹⁹ The oppressed will again rejoice in Yahweh, and the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

UST

¹⁹ Yahweh will enable humble people to be very joyful again. Poor people will rejoice about what the Holy One of Israel has done.

Isaiah 29:20

For the ruthless will cease

The nominal adjective “the ruthless” can be stated as an adjective. Alternate translation: “For the ruthless people will cease” or “For there will no longer be cruel people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

the scoffer will vanish

The nominal adjective “the scoffer” can be stated as a verb. Alternate translation: “those who scoff will vanish” or “the people who mock will disappear” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

All those who love to do evil will be eliminated

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will eliminate all those who love to do evil” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁰ For the ruthless will cease, and the scoffer will vanish. All those who love to do evil will be eliminated,

UST

²⁰ There will be no more people who ridicule others and no more arrogant people. And those who plan to do evil things will be executed.

Isaiah 29:21

who by a word make a man out to be an offender

This refers to giving testimony in court against someone. Alternate translation: “who testify against a man and make him out to be an offender” or “who say in court that an innocent man is guilty of doing something wrong” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

They lay a snare for him who seeks justice at the gate and put the righteous down with empty lies

The evil people doing anything they can to stop a good person is spoken of as if the evil people set a trap like a hunter catching his prey. Alternate translation: “They lie and try to stop those who want to do what is fair and right” (See: [Metaphor](#))

who seeks justice at the gate

The city gate was often the place where the city leaders made official decisions.

ULT

²¹ who by a word make a man out to be an offender. They lay a snare for him who seeks justice at the gate and put the righteous down with empty {lies}.

UST

²¹ Those who testify falsely in order to persuade judges to punish innocent people will vanish. Similar things will happen to those who by lying in court persuade the judges to make unjust decisions.

Isaiah 29:22

who redeemed Abraham

This possibly refers to when Yahweh called Abraham from his home country and sent him to the promised land. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Jacob will no longer ... his face

Here “Jacob” represents his descendants. Alternate translation: “Jacob’s descendants will no longer ... their faces” (See: [Metonymy](#))

nor will his face be pale

This is an idiom that means he will no longer be afraid. Alternate translation: “nor will he be afraid” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

22 Therefore this is what Yahweh says concerning the house of Jacob— Yahweh, who redeemed Abraham, “Jacob will no longer be ashamed, nor will his face be pale.

UST

22 That is why Yahweh, who rescued Abraham, says about the people of Israel, “My people will no longer be ashamed; no longer will they show on their faces that they are ashamed.

Isaiah 29:23

he sees his children

The words “he” and “his” speak of Jacob (verse 22) and represent his descendants. Alternate translation: “Jacob’s descendants will no longer ... their faces ... they see their children” (See: [Metonymy](#))

But when he sees his children, the work of my hands

Here “hands” represents Yahweh’s power and action. Alternate translation: “When they see all the children I have given them and all that I have done” (See: [Metonymy](#))

they will make my name holy

Here “name” represents Yahweh. Alternate translation: “they will honor me” (See: [Metonymy](#))

They will make holy the name of the Holy One of Jacob

Here “name” represents Yahweh. Yahweh refers to himself as “the Holy One of Jacob.” Alternate translation: “They will honor me, the Holy One of Jacob” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [First, Second or Third Person](#))

of the God of Israel

Yahweh refers to himself as “the God of Israel.” Alternate translation: “of me, the God of Israel” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

23 But when he sees his children, the work of my hands, they will make my name holy. They will make holy the name of the Holy One of Jacob and they will stand in awe of the God of Israel.

UST

23 When they see that I have blessed them by giving them many children, and all that I have done for them, they will honor the holy name of the Holy One of Israel, and they will revere me, the God to whom they, the descendants of Jacob, belong.

Isaiah 29:24

Those who err in spirit

Here “spirit” represents a person’s inner being. Alternate translation: “Those who are wrong in what they think” or “Those who are wrong in their attitude” (See: [Metonymy](#))

will gain understanding

This can be made more explicit to explain what they will understand. Alternate translation: “will begin to understand Yahweh and his laws” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

complainers will learn knowledge

This can be made more explicit to explain what knowledge they will learn. Alternate translation: “those who complain will begin to know that what Yahweh teaches them is true” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

24 Those who err in spirit will gain understanding, and complainers will learn knowledge.”

UST

24 When that happens, those who are not able to think well will think clearly, and those who complain about what I am doing will accept what I am teaching them.”

Isaiah 30

Isaiah 30 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

This chapter continues the series of “woes” against specific nations. It presents judgments against the people of Ephraim and Judah when they desired to make an alliance with Egypt. (See: [woe](#) and [judge, judgment](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Negev

This is an area between Egypt and Judah. The people would have had to travel through it in order to get to Egypt. No one really lived in this area and it was known to be very dangerous.

Trust

The people were to trust in Yahweh. Only he could provide them with protection. The people were punished for their lack of trust when they were in trouble, but Yahweh only required that they trust him. (See: [trust](#), [trusted](#), [trustworthy](#), [trustworthiness](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“That day”

This is a common phrase in this section of Isaiah. The chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. It pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator does not need to add an explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore](#), [restoration](#), [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [Christ](#), [Messiah](#) and [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Isaiah 30:1

the rebellious children

Yahweh speaks about his people as if they were his children. (See: [Metaphor](#))

this is Yahweh's declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Alternate translation: "this is what Yahweh has declared" or "this is what I, Yahweh, have declared" (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

They make plans, but not from me

This can be reworded so that If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **plans**, you could express the same idea with the verb "plan." Alternate translation: "They plan to do things, but they do not ask me what I want them to do" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

but they were not directed by my Spirit

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "but my Spirit did not direct them" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

they add sin to sin

Continuing to sin is spoken of as if sins were objects that could be stacked on one another. Alternate translation: "they continue to sin more and more" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ "Woe to the rebellious children," this is Yahweh's declaration. "They make plans, but not from me; they make alliances with other nations, but they were not directed by my Spirit, so they add sin to sin."

UST

¹ Yahweh says, "Terrible things will happen to you, my people who rebel against me. You make plans, but what you plan is not what I want. You have made an alliance with the rulers of Egypt, but you did not ask my Spirit if that was what you should do. By doing that, you have increased the number of your sins."

Isaiah 30:2

They seek protection from Pharaoh

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **protection**, you could express the same idea with the verb “protect.” Alternate translation: “They ask Pharaoh to protect them” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

take refuge in the shadow of Egypt

Egypt’s protection from enemy armies is spoken of as if it were a shadow that protects someone from the burning heat of the sun. Alternate translation: “they rely on the Egyptians to keep them safe” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² They set out to go down into Egypt, but have not asked for my direction. They seek protection from Pharaoh and take refuge in the shadow of Egypt.

UST

² You went to Egypt to ask their rulers for help, without asking for my advice. You have trusted in the army of the king of Egypt to protect you; you have trusted in them like people sit in the shade to protect themselves from the sun.

Isaiah 30:3

Therefore Pharaoh's protection will be your shame, and the refuge in Egypt's shade, your humiliation

This can be reworded so that the abstract nouns "protection," "shame," and "humiliation" are expressed as adjectives or verbs.
Alternate translation: "Therefore you will be ashamed because you relied on Pharaoh to protect you; you will be humiliated because you relied on the Egyptians to keep you safe" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the refuge in Egypt's shade

Egypt's protection from enemy armies is spoken of as if it were a shadow that protects someone from the burning heat of the sun. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ Therefore Pharaoh's protection will be your shame, and the refuge in Egypt's shade, {your} humiliation,

UST

³ But the result of your trusting in the king of Egypt is that you will be disappointed and disgraced; because you trust in him, you will be humiliated.

Isaiah 30:4

their princes

Here “princes” mean an official or ambassador, not necessarily sons of the king.

their ... their

belonging to the people of Judah

Zoan ... Hanes

These were cities in the northern part of Egypt. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

have come to Hanes

Here “come” can be stated as “gone.” (See: [Go and Come](#))

ULT

⁴ although their princes are at Zoan, and their messengers have come to Hanes.

UST

⁴ Officials from Judah have gone to the cities of Zoan and Hanes in Egypt to make treaties,

Isaiah 30:5

They ... them

These words refer to the people of Judah.

because of a people

Alternate translation: "because of the people of Egypt"

ULT

⁵ They will all be ashamed because of a people {who} cannot help them, {who} are neither help nor aid, but a shame, and even a disgrace."

UST

⁵ but all those who trust in the king of Egypt will be humiliated, because that nation will not be able to help you; the treaty that you have made requesting help from them will be useless; instead, the result will be that you will be humiliated and disgraced."

Isaiah 30:6

A declaration

Alternate translation: "This is what Yahweh declares"

of the lioness and the lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent

This refers to these types of animals in general. Alternate translation: "where lionesses and lions dwell, and where there are vipers and serpents" (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

fiery flying serpent

Here the word "fiery" probably refers to the serpent's poisonous bite and the word "flying" refers to its quick movements. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 14:29](#).

they carry their riches

Alternate translation: "the people of Judah carry their riches"

ULT

⁶ A declaration about the beasts of the Negev: Through the land of trouble and danger, of the lioness and the lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the camels' humps, to a people {who} cannot help them.

UST

⁶ Isaiah received from Yahweh this message about the animals in the southern part of Judah, the desert part: That area is one where people experience a lot of troubles and difficulties, an area where there are male and female lions and various kinds of poisonous snakes. Caravans go through that area taking donkeys and camels loaded with valuable goods. They are taking them to Egypt because they hope that the army of Egypt will protect them, but it will be useless.

Isaiah 30:7

I have called her Rahab, who sits still

There were popular stories about a sea monster named Rahab. The name Rahab means “strength” or “arrogance.” Alternate translation: “I call Egypt a loud booster who does nothing” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁷ For Egypt's help is worthless; therefore I have called her Rahab, who sits still.

UST

⁷ The promises made by the king of Egypt are worthless; therefore I call Egypt 'Useless Rahab, the sea monster that does nothing.'

Isaiah 30:8

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in Yahweh's declaration about Judah. Here he tells Isaiah to do something.

in their presence

Alternate translation: "in the presence of the people of Judah"

for the time to come

This speaks of time as if it travels and arrives somewhere. Alternate translation: "for a future time" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ Now go, write it in their presence on a tablet, and inscribe it on a scroll, that it may be preserved for the time to come as a testimony.

UST

⁸ Yahweh told me to write on a scroll a message, in order that it would be a witness to the people of Judah that would endure forever.

Isaiah 30:9

lying children, children who will not hear the instruction of Yahweh

This speaks of Yahweh's people as if they were his children. This can be translated as a new sentence. Alternate translation: "They behave like children who lie and do not listen to what Yahweh commands" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ For these {are} a rebellious people, lying children, children {who} will not hear the instruction of Yahweh.

UST

⁹ It would remind them that they are deceitful and always rebelling against Yahweh, and that they refuse to pay attention to what he tells them.

Isaiah 30:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁰ They say to the seers, "Do not see;" and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy the truth to us; speak flattering words to us, prophesy illusions.

UST

¹⁰ They tell the people who see visions from Yahweh, "Stop seeing visions!" They tell the prophets, "Do not reveal to us what is right! Tell us pleasant things; do not tell us visions about things that are true!

Isaiah 30:11

Turn aside from the way, stray off the path

How Yahweh wants his people to behave is spoken of as if it were a way or path on which to walk. To disobey Yahweh is spoken of as if the person strays away from Yahweh's path. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this name in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

ULT

11 Turn aside from the way, stray off the path; cause the Holy One of Israel to cease speaking before our face."

UST

11 Stop doing what you have been doing; stop telling us what the Holy One of Israel says to us!"

Isaiah 30:12

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this name in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

you reject this word

Alternate translation: “you reject this message”

trust in oppression and deceit and lean on it

This could mean: (1) the leaders of Judah are trusting in the Egyptian leaders who rule by oppressing and deceiving others or (2) the leaders of Judah have oppressed and deceived their own people in order to take their money and send it to the Egyptians leaders as payment for protection. (See: [Metonymy](#))

lean on it

Here the word “it” refers to “oppression and deceit.” Alternate translation: “lean on them” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

lean on

This is an idiom that means to trust or rely on something. (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹² Therefore the Holy One of Israel says, “Because you reject this word and trust in oppression and deceit and lean on it,

UST

¹² Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: “You have rejected my message, and you are relying on those who oppress and deceive others.

Isaiah 30:13

so this sin will be to you like a broken part ... in an instant

This simile means that God will destroy the people of Judah suddenly because of their sin. (See: [Simile](#))

like a broken part ready to fall

It is understood that this is a broken part of a wall. Alternate translation: "like a broken part of a wall that is ready to fall" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

whose fall will happen suddenly

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **fall**, you could express the same idea with the verb "fall." Alternate translation: "that will suddenly fall" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

suddenly, in an instant

These mean the same thing and emphasize how quickly the wall will fall. (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

¹³ so this sin will be to you like a broken part ready to fall, like a bulge in a high wall whose fall will happen suddenly, in an instant."

UST

¹³ Therefore, the result of your sin of rejecting me will be that you will suddenly experience disasters; what will happen to you will be like a cracked wall that suddenly collapses on you."

Isaiah 30:14

General Information:

Isaiah describes how Yahweh will destroy the people of Judah ([Isaiah 30:12-13](#)).

He will break it

Here “it” refers to the part in the wall that is about to fall. The part in the wall is a metaphor that represents the people of Judah and their sin mentioned in [Isaiah 30:12-13](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

as a potter’s vessel is broken

This simile means that the piece of wall will break as quickly and completely as a clay jar that falls to the ground. (See: [Simile](#))

potter

A potter is a person who makes pots and jars out of clay.

there will not be found

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “no one will be able to find” or “there will not be” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

a shard with which to scrape

Alternate translation: “a shard big enough to scrape”

fire from the hearth

The word “fire” here refers here to ashes. Alternate translation: “ashes from the fireplace” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

14 He will break it as a potter’s vessel is broken; he will not spare it, so that there will not be found among its pieces a shard with which to scrape fire from the hearth, or to scoop up water out of the cistern.

UST

14 You will be smashed like a clay jar is smashed when it is dropped and shatters completely, with the result that there is not one piece big enough to sweep out cinders from a stove or to carry a little bit of water from a well.

Isaiah 30:15

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this name in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

In returning and resting you will be saved

Repenting is spoken of as if it were physically returning to Yahweh. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will save you from your enemies if you will repent and rest knowing that I will take care of you" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

resting

It is implied that the people rest because they trust that Yahweh will take care of them. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

in quietness and in trust will be your strength

Quietness here refers to not being anxious and worried. It is implied that they are not worried because they trust in Yahweh. Alternate translation: "You will be strong if you are quiet and trust in me" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

15 For this is what the Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel says, "In returning and resting you will be saved; in quietness and in trust will be your strength. But you were not willing.

UST

15 Yahweh, our God, the Holy One of Israel, also says this: "I will rescue you from your enemies only if you repent and trust in what I will do for you; you will be strong only if you quit worrying and trust in me. But you do not want to do that.

Isaiah 30:16

we will flee on horses

Apparently these are horses that the people of Judah received from the Egyptians. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

16 You said, 'No, for we will flee on horses,' so you will flee; and, 'We will ride upon swift {horses},' so those who pursue you will be swift.

UST

16 You said, 'No, we will escape on horses that the army of Egypt will give us!' So you will try to escape. You said, 'We will escape from the army of Assyria by riding on swift horses!' But those who pursue you will also ride swiftly.

Isaiah 30:17

One thousand will flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will flee

The word “solider” is understood. Alternate translation: “One thousand soldiers will flee at the threat of one enemy soldier; at the threat of five enemy soldiers all of your soldiers will flee” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

One thousand

“1,000” (See: [Numbers](#))

until your remnant will be like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, or like a flag on a hill

This simile means there will be so few people left that they will be like a single flag on top of a hill. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁷ One thousand {will flee} at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will flee until your remnant will be like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, or like a flag on a hill.”

UST

¹⁷ As a result, a thousand of you will flee when only one of them pursues you! When five of their soldiers threaten to kill you, all of you will flee. Only a few of you will be left, like a single flagpole on top of a mountain, or like one single signal flag on a hilltop.”

Isaiah 30:18

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

18 Yet Yahweh is waiting to be gracious to you, therefore he is ready to show you mercy. For Yahweh {is} a God of justice; blessed {are} all those who wait for him.

UST

18 But Yahweh wants to act kindly toward you; he is great because he desires to act mercifully. Do not forget he is a God who acts justly; Yahweh is pleased with those who patiently trust in him.

Isaiah 30:19

you will ... to you ... answer you

Here “you” refers to the people who will live in Zion.

he will answer you

Alternate translation: “he will help you”

ULT

19 For a people will live in Zion, in Jerusalem, and you will weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. When he hears it, he will answer you.

UST

19 You people who live in Jerusalem, some day you will not cry anymore. Yahweh will be kind to you when you call out to him for help. He will answer you as soon as he hears you call.

Isaiah 30:20

the bread of adversity and the water of affliction

Here “bread” and “water” make up the diet of a very poor person. The whole phrase represents the hard times and poverty of the people. (See: [Metonymy](#))

your teacher

This refers to Yahweh.

you will see your teacher with your own eyes

Here “eyes” represents the whole person. Alternate translation: “you yourselves will see your teacher” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁰ {Though} Yahweh gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, even so, your teacher will not hide himself anymore, but you will see your teacher with your own eyes.

UST

²⁰ Although now Yahweh has brought poverty on you, he, your teacher, will not hide himself from you. He will teach you many things clearly.

Isaiah 30:21

Your ears will hear

Here "ears" represents the whole person. Alternate translation: "You will hear" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

a word behind you saying

Alternate translation: "him speaking behind you saying"

This is the way, walk in it

How Yahweh wants his people to behave is spoken of as if it were a way or path. To obey Yahweh is spoken of as if it were a person walking on his path. (See: [Metaphor](#))

when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left

Disobeying Yahweh is spoken of as if the person turned left or right off of Yahweh's path. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

21 Your ears will hear a word behind you saying, "This {is} the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

UST

21 And you will hear him speak to you to guide you. Right behind you he will say, "This is the road on which you should walk; walk on this road!"

Isaiah 30:22

You will throw them away like a menstrual rag

This simile means they will throw away their idols like they were garbage. (See: [Simile](#))

You will say to them, "Get out of here."

This speaks of the idols as if they could hear and get up and leave a place. Yahweh means that the people will no longer need or want the idols. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

²² You will desecrate your carved figures overlaid with silver and your gold cast figures. You will throw them away like a menstrual rag. You will say to them, "Get out of here."

UST

²² When that happens, you will destroy all your idols that are covered with silver or gold. You will throw them away like you throw away a filthy rag, and you will say to them, "We do not need you anymore!"

Isaiah 30:23

He will give

Alternate translation: "Yahweh will give"

bread with abundance from the ground

Here "bread" represents food in general. Alternate translation: "he will cause the ground to produce plenty of food for you to eat" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

In that day

Alternate translation: "At that time"

ULT

²³ He will give the rain for your seed when you sow the ground, and bread with abundance from the ground, and the crops will be abundant. In that day your cattle will graze in broad pastures.

UST

²³ If you do that, Yahweh will bless you by giving you good rain at the time that you plant your crops. You will have good harvests and plenty of big fields with grass for your cattle to eat.

Isaiah 30:24

that has been winnowed with a shovel and a fork

Shovels and forks were used to throw the grain in the air so the wind would blow away the chaff, leaving only the part that could be eaten. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “that you have winnowed with a shovel and a pitchfork” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁴ The oxen and the donkeys, who plow the ground, will eat seasoned feed that has been winnowed with a shovel and a fork.

UST

²⁴ After the wind blows away the chaff, the oxen and donkeys that pull the plow over your ground will have good grain to eat.

Isaiah 30:25

On every high mountain ... every high hill

Isaiah describes what will be an ideal situation after Yahweh rescues his people. Although the language may be exaggerated, you should translate this just as Isaiah described it.

in the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall

Alternate translation: "when Yahweh slaughters your enemies and causes their strong towers to fall"

in the day

Alternate translation: "at the time"

ULT

²⁵ On every high mountain and on every high hill, there will be flowing brooks {and} streams of waters, in the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall.

UST

²⁵ At that time, when your enemies have been slaughtered and their towers have collapsed, there will be streams flowing down every hill and mountain in Judah.

Isaiah 30:26

The light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the sunlight of seven days

Isaiah describes what will be an ideal situation after Yahweh rescues his people. Although the language may be exaggerated, you should translate this just as Isaiah described it.

the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the sunlight of seven days

Alternate translation: “the sun will shine as bright as seven suns” or “the sun will give as much light in one day as it normally does in seven days”

Yahweh will bind up the breaking of his people and heal the bruises of his wounding them

Yahweh comforting his people and causing their suffering to end is spoken of as if he would put bandages on their wounds. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁶ The light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the sunlight of seven days. Yahweh will bind up the breaking of his people and heal the bruises of his wounding them.

UST

²⁶ The moon will seem to shine as brightly as the sun, and the sun will seem to shine seven times as brightly as previously. That is what it will be like when Yahweh causes the suffering of his people to cease; it will be as though he is putting bandages on their wounds and healing them.

Isaiah 30:27

the name of Yahweh ... like a devouring fire

Yahweh being extremely angry is spoken of as if he were a large fire. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the name of Yahweh comes

Here “name” represents Yahweh. Alternate translation: “Yahweh comes” (See: [Metonymy](#))

His lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire

Here “lips” and “tongue” are metonyms that represent Yahweh speaking. And, Yahweh speaks with so much anger and power that it is spoken of as if his tongue were a fire. Alternate translation: “When he speaks his fury is like a fire that destroys everything” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

²⁷ Look, the name of Yahweh comes from a distant place, burning {with} his anger and in dense smoke. His lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire.

UST

²⁷ It is as though we see Yahweh coming from far away; he is extremely angry, and there are thick clouds of smoke around him. By what he says he shows that he is angry; what he says is like a devastating fire.

Isaiah 30:28

His breath is like an overflowing torrent

This compares the air coming out of Yahweh's mouth to a flood to emphasize its power to destroy. (See: [Simile](#))

to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction

Yahweh separating the people of the nations and destroying the wicked people is spoken of as if Yahweh puts the nations in a sieve. This can be translated as a new sentence. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will separate and destroy the wicked people of the nations" (See: [Metaphor](#))

His breath is a bridle in the jaws of the peoples to cause them to wander away

Yahweh having the power to cause people's plans to fail or causing them to be destroyed is spoken of as if his breath were a bridle that steers people off the correct path. (See: [Metaphor](#))

a bridle in the jaws of the peoples

A "bridle" is a device that people put over a horse's head to guide it. The bridle contains a small piece called a "bit" that goes in the horse's mouth. Alternate translation: "a bridle on the heads of the peoples" or "a bit in the jaws of the peoples" (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

28 His breath is like an overflowing torrent that reaches up to the middle of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction. His breath {is} a bridle in the jaws of the peoples to cause {them} to wander away.

UST

28 His breath is like a flood that covers his enemies up to their necks. He will separate the nations in order to destroy some of them; it is as though he will put horses' bridles on them so he can lead them away to destruction.

Isaiah 30:29

You will have a song

This can be reworded so the noun “song” is stated as a verb.
Alternate translation: “You will sing”

as in the night when a holy feast is observed

This simile emphasizes how happy the people will be. (See: [Simile](#))

when a holy feast is observed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “when you observe a holy feast” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

gladness of heart

Here “heart” represents a person’s inner being. Alternate translation: “you will be glad” (See: [Metonymy](#))

as when one goes ... Rock of Israel

This simile emphasizes how happy the people will be. (See: [Simile](#))

to the Rock of Israel

Yahweh having the power to protect his people is spoken of as if he were a rock on which the people could climb and escape from enemies. Alternate translation: “to Israel’s protective rock” or “which is like a protective rock for Israel” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁹ You will have a song as in the night {when} a holy feast is observed, and gladness of heart, as when one goes with a flute to the mountain of Yahweh, to the Rock of Israel.

UST

²⁹ But his people will sing joyfully like they sing during the nights when they celebrate a holy festival. They will be very joyful, like a large group of his people are joyful when they go up to Mount Zion in Jerusalem, along with men playing flutes when they are all going there to worship Yahweh. He is like a huge rock on top of which we Israelite people are safe.

Isaiah 30:30

show the motion of his arm

Here “arm” represents the power of God. It is implied that Yahweh will show his power by destroying his people's enemies. Alternate translation: “show that he is powerful by destroying your enemies” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

in storming anger and flames of fire

Yahweh's anger is spoken of as if it were a storm or a fire. Alternate translation: “in anger that is like a storm and flames of fire” or “in great anger” (See: [Metaphor](#))

with windstorm, rainstorm, and hailstones

Alternate translation: “with storms full of wind, rain, and hail”

hailstones

hard pieces of ice that fall from the sky like rain

ULT

30 Yahweh will make the splendor of his voice heard and show the motion of his arm in storming anger and flames of fire, with windstorm, rainstorm, and hailstones.

UST

30 And Yahweh will enable us to hear him speaking powerfully. He will show us that he is very powerful. We will see him smash his enemies. Being very angry, he will descend with a big rainstorm and thunder and hail to punish them.

Isaiah 30:31

For at the voice of Yahweh, Assyria will be shattered

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "For when Yahweh speaks he will shatter the soldiers of Assyria" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Assyria will be shattered

Isaiah speaks of Assyria's fear as if Assyria is an object that Yahweh's voice shatters. Alternate translation: "Assyria will be terrified" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Assyria

Here this represents the soldiers of Assyria. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³¹ For at the voice of Yahweh, Assyria will be shattered; he will strike them with a staff.

UST

³¹ The soldiers of Assyria will be terrified when they hear the voice of Yahweh and when he strikes them with his rod.

Isaiah 30:32

Every stroke of the appointed rod that Yahweh will lay on them

Yahweh causing an army to defeat the Assyrians is spoken of as if Yahweh would hit the Assyrians with a rod. (See: [Metaphor](#))

will be accompanied

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the people of Judah will accompany it” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

tambourines

This is a musical instrument with a head like a drum that can be hit and with pieces of metal around the side that sound when the instrument is shaken. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:12](#).

he battles and fights with them

Yahweh causing the enemy army to defeat the Assyrians is spoken of as if Yahweh were a warrior who would fight along with the enemy army. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³² Every stroke of the appointed rod that Yahweh will lay on them will be accompanied with the music of tambourines and harps as he battles and fights with them.

UST

³² And while Yahweh strikes them to punish them, his people will celebrate by playing tambourines and harps. It will be as though Yahweh will lift up his powerful hand and defeat the Assyrian army in battle.

Isaiah 30:33

For a place of burning was prepared long ago

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "For long ago Yahweh prepared a place for burning" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

a place of burning

This phrase is the meaning of the word "Topheth." Topheth is a place in the Hinnom Valley, south of Jerusalem, where at one time people burned their children as sacrifices to a false god. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

it is prepared for the king

It is implied that this refers to the king of Assyria. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh prepared it for the king of Assyria" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

The pile is ready with a fire and much wood

Alternate translation: "The pile is ready with much wood to make a fire"

The breath of Yahweh, like a stream of brimstone, will set it on fire

This speaks of Yahweh's breath as if it were a river of fire that will set the pile on fire. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

33 For a place of burning {was} prepared long ago. Indeed, it is prepared for the king, and God has made it deep and wide. The pile {is} ready with a fire and much wood. The breath of Yahweh, like a stream of brimstone, will set it on fire.

UST

33 The Valley of Topheth outside Jerusalem has been prepared for a long time; it is ready for the king of Assyria; the funeral pyre for burning his body is wide and high, and it will be as though Yahweh will light the fire with his breath, which will come out like a stream of burning sulfur.

Isaiah 31

Isaiah 31 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

This chapter continues the series of “woes” against specific nations. It presents judgments against the people of Ephraim and Judah when they desired to make an alliance with Egypt. It also prophesies the destruction of Assyria. (See: [woe](#) and [judge, judgment](#) and [prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Trust

The people were to trust in Yahweh. Only he could provide them with protection. They were punished for their lack of trust when they were in trouble, but Yahweh only required that they trust him. (See: [trust, trusted, trustworthy, trustworthiness](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“That day”

This is a common phrase in this section of Isaiah. This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. It pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator does not need to add an explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore, restoration](#) and [fulfill, fulfilled, carried out](#))

Israel

The use of the term “Israel” in this chapter is in reference to the northern kingdom of Israel exclusively.

Isaiah 31:1

go down to Egypt

The phrase “go down” is used here because Egypt is lower in Elevation than Jerusalem.

those who go down

Alternate translation: “those people of Judah who go down”

lean on horses

This speaks about people relying on their horses to help them as if they were leaning on their horses. Alternate translation: “rely on their horses” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this name in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

nor do they seek Yahweh

Alternate translation: “nor do they ask Yahweh to help them”

ULT

¹ Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help {and} lean on horses, and trust in chariots (for {they are} many) and in horsemen (for they are countless). But they are not concerned about the Holy One of Israel, nor do they seek Yahweh!

UST

¹ Terrible things will happen to those who rely on Egypt to help them, trusting in their soldiers' horses and their many chariots and their many chariot drivers, instead of trusting that Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, will help them.

Isaiah 31:2

he will bring disaster

Here the word “bring” means to “cause.” Alternate translation: “he will cause disasters to happen” (See: [Idiom](#))

will not retract his words

The phrase “retract his words” speaks of a person not fulfilling what they said they will do as if the words that he had said were something that he could pull back to himself. Here it says that Yahweh will not do this, meaning he will fulfill what he has said. Alternate translation: “he will do what he said he would do” (See: [Metaphor](#))

arise against

Alternate translation: “punish”

evil house

This refers to evil people who live there. Alternate translation: “all who do evil things” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² Yet he {is} wise, and he will bring disaster and will not retract his words. He will arise against the evil house and against the helpers of those who commit sin.

UST

² Yahweh is very wise, but he also causes people to experience disaster! And when he decides to do that, he does not change his mind! He will strike the wicked people and all those who help them.

Isaiah 31:3

Egypt is a man

Here Egypt refers to the soldiers of Egypt. Alternate translation: “The soldiers of Egypt are men” (See: [Metonymy](#))

their horses flesh and not spirit

This means that their horses are only horses and not spiritual beings. Alternate translation: “their horses are only horses; they are not powerful spirits” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

When Yahweh reaches out with his hand

The term “hand” is often used in reference to God’s power and action. Alternate translation: “When Yahweh uses his power against them” (See: [Metonymy](#))

both the one who helps will stumble, and the one who is helped will fall

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Stumbling and falling are metaphors of failing. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “these two things will happen: I will destroy Egypt, who helps you, and I will destroy you, whom Egypt helps” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Metaphor](#) and [Parallelism](#))

the one who is helped

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the one who is seeking help” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ Egypt {is} a man and not God, their horses flesh and not spirit. When Yahweh reaches out with his hand, both the one who helps will stumble, and the one who is helped will fall; both will perish together.

UST

³ The soldiers of Egypt that you people of Judah are relying on are humans, not God! And their horses are only horses; they are not powerful spirits! So when Yahweh raises his fist to strike the soldiers of Egypt whom you thought would help you, he will also strike you who thought that you would be helped, and you and they will stumble and fall down; all of you will die together.

Isaiah 31:4

General Information:

Yahweh speaks to Isaiah.

As a lion ... thus Yahweh of hosts

"A lion ... in the same way Yahweh of hosts." Here Yahweh speaks of how he will defend the people who belong to him and not be scared away by comparing himself to a lion who guards its prey. (See: [Simile](#))

thus Yahweh of hosts will descend ... that hill

It may be more clear if you move the last line to before the first line: "Yahweh of hosts will descend to fight on Mount Zion, on that hill, as a lion, even a young lion"

a lion, even a young lion

"a female lion or killer lion." This is a doublet with both phrase referring to a fierce lion. Alternate translation: "a lion" (See: [Doublet](#))

growls

warns others to stay away

when a group of shepherds is called out against it

The phrase "called out against it" means to be sent out to chase the lion away. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "when someone sends shepherds to chase the lion away" (See: [Idiom](#) or [Active or Passive](#))

from their sound

The shepherds would make loud noises to try and chase away the lion. Alternate translation: "from the loud noises that they make" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

will descend

"will come down." This refers to descending from heaven. Alternate translation: "will come down from heaven" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

on Mount Zion, on that hill

Both of the phrases refer to Mount Zion. Alternate translation: "on Mount Zion" (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁴ This is what Yahweh says to me, "As a lion, even a young lion, growls over its torn prey, when a group of shepherds is called out against it, but it does not tremble at their voices, nor creep away from their sound; thus Yahweh of hosts will descend to fight on Mount Zion, on that hill.

UST

⁴ But this is what Yahweh said to me: "When a lion stands and growls over the body of a sheep that he has killed, even if a large group of shepherds comes to chase away the lion, even if they shout loudly, the lion will not be afraid and will not leave. Similarly, I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will come down to fight my enemies on Mount Zion, and nothing will stop me.

Isaiah 31:5

Like birds in flight, so Yahweh of hosts will protect Jerusalem

Here the way that Yahweh protects Jerusalem is compared to the way that a mother bird protects her baby birds in their nest. (See: [Simile](#))

he will protect and rescue as he passes over it and preserves it

This speaks of how Yahweh protects and rescues Jerusalem, describing him as a bird that flies over the city. Alternate translation: “he will protect and rescue the city from its enemies” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

Jerusalem

This refers to the people who live there. Alternate translation: “the people of Jerusalem” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁵ Like birds in flight, so Yahweh of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and rescue as he passes over it and preserves {it}.

UST

⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will protect Jerusalem like a mother bird hovers over the baby birds in her nest. He will defend the city and rescue it from its enemies.”

Isaiah 31:6

Return to him from whom you have deeply turned away

Alternate translation: "Return to the one against whom you have rebelled"

ULT

⁶ Return {to him} from whom you have deeply turned away, people of Israel.

UST

⁶ My people, even though you have greatly rebelled against Yahweh, return to him.

Isaiah 31:7

that your own hands have sinfully made

Here the people are referred to by their “hands” the emphasize that they made something with their hands. Alternate translation: “that you have sinned by making with you own hands” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁷ For in that day each one will get rid of his idols of silver and his idols of gold that your own hands have sinfully made.

UST

⁷ When you do that, each of you will throw away the idols that you have made in sin, idols that are covered with silver and gold.

Isaiah 31:8

Assyria will fall by the sword; a sword not wielded by man will consume him

“Sword” refers to military might. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “God’s sword, and not a man’s sword, will destroy the Assyrian army” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

He will flee

Alternate translation: “The Assyrians will flee”

his young men will be forced to do hard labor

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “enemies will capture their young men and force them to do hard labor” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁸ Assyria will fall by the sword; a sword not wielded by man will consume him. He will flee from the sword, and his young men will be forced to do hard labor.

UST

⁸ The Assyrian soldiers will be killed, but not by swords that men use. They will be destroyed by the sword of God; and those who are not killed will panic and flee. And some of them will be captured and forced to become slaves.

Isaiah 31:9

They will lose all confidence because of terror

The word “confidence” can be expressed with the adjective “confident.” The word “terror” can be expressed with the adjective “terrified.” Alternate translation: “They will no longer be confident because they are so terrified” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

his princes

Alternate translation: “their leaders”

whose fire is in Zion and whose firepot is in Jerusalem

Both of these clauses mean the same thing and are used together for emphasis. Here God’s presence and his power to judge and destroy are spoken of as if they were a fire. Alternate translation: “whose powerful presence is in Zion” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ They will lose all confidence because of terror, and his princes will be afraid at the sight of Yahweh’s battle flag— this is Yahweh’s declaration—whose fire {is} in Zion and whose firepot {is} in Jerusalem.”

UST

⁹ Even their very strong soldiers will be terrified; their leaders will abandon all hope and run away from Yahweh’s power! Yahweh’s presence on Mount Zion is like a fire, like a furnace that blazes in Jerusalem. This is what Yahweh says about the Assyrian army!

Isaiah 32

Isaiah 32 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Reign of the Messiah

This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. It pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator does not need to add an explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore](#), [restoration](#), [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [Christ](#), [Messiah](#) and [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Isaiah 32:1

Look

This word is used here to draw peoples' attention to what is said next. Alternate translation: "Listen"

ULT

¹ Look, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.

UST

¹ Listen to this! Some day there will be a righteous king, and his officials will help him to rule justly.

Isaiah 32:2

Each one will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm

This compares the king and princes who protect the people to a shelter. Alternate translation: “the rulers will protect the people like a shelter does in a storm” (See: [Simile](#))

like streams of water in a dry place

This is another comparison that means that the rulers will provide for the needs of the people. Alternate translation: “they will provide for the people like streams of water in a dry place” (See: [Simile](#))

like the shade of a great rock in a land of weariness

This is another comparison that means that the rulers will provide comfort and rest for the people. Alternate translation: “they will provide rest for the people like a huge rock gives shade to weary people” (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

² Each one will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a land of weariness.

UST

² Each of them will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm. They will be like streams of water in the desert, like the shade under a huge rock in a very hot and dry land.

Isaiah 32:3

Then the eyes ... attentively

Both of these phrases emphasize that the leaders will enable the people to understand God's truth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

will not be dim

Alternate translation: "will see clearly"

ULT

³ Then the eyes of those who see will not be dim, and the ears of those who hear will hear attentively.

UST

³ When that happens, those leaders will enable people who have not understood God's truth to understand it, and they will enable those who have not paid attention to God's truth to pay attention to it.

Isaiah 32:4

The rash ... the stutterer

This refers to people who act rashly and people who stutter.

Alternate translation: "The rash person ... the stuttering person" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

⁴ The rash will think carefully with understanding, and the stutterer will speak distinctly and with ease.

UST

⁴ Even those who act very hastily will have good sense, and those who cannot speak well will speak fluently and clearly.

Isaiah 32:5

The fool will no longer be called honorable

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "No one will give honor to the fool" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

nor the deceiver called principled

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. "The deceiver" refers to a person who is deceptive.

Alternate translation: "nor will anyone show respect to the person who deceives" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

⁵ The fool will no longer {be} called honorable, nor the deceiver called principled.

UST

⁵ At that time, people who are foolish will no longer be admired, and scoundrels will no longer be respected.

Isaiah 32:6

For the fool speaks folly, and his heart plans evil

“The fool” refers to foolish people. Also, “folly” and “evil” may be expressed as adjectives. Alternate translation: “For the foolish person says foolish things and his heart plans evil things” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

his heart plans evil

Here the foolish person is referred to by his heart to emphasize his inner thoughts. Alternate translation: “he plans evil things in his heart” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

He makes

The word “he” refers to the foolish person.

the hungry empty

“The hungry” refers to hungry people. They are hungry because they have empty stomachs. Alternate translation: “the hungry person have an empty stomach” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the thirsty he causes to lack drink

“The thirsty” refers to people who are thirsty. Alternate translation: “he causes the thirsty person to have nothing to drink” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

⁶ For the fool speaks folly, and his heart plans evil and godless actions, and he speaks wrongly against Yahweh. He makes the hungry empty, and the thirsty he causes to lack drink.

UST

⁶ Foolish people say things that are foolish, and they plan to do evil things. Their behavior is disgraceful, and they say things about Yahweh that are false. They do not give food to those who are hungry, and they do not give water to those who are thirsty.

Isaiah 32:7

The deceiver's

This refers to a person who deceives others. Alternate translation: "The deceptive person's" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

to ruin the poor with lies

"The poor" refers to poor people. Also, the phrase "to ruin" does not mean to kill them but to harm them by telling lies about them. Alternate translation: "to harm the poor people by telling lies" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

⁷ The deceiver's methods {are} evil. He devises wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lies, even when the poor say what is right.

UST

⁷ Scoundrels do things that are evil and that deceive people; they plan to do evil things; by telling lies in court they cause poor people to have trouble, even when what the poor people are requesting is fair.

Isaiah 32:8

he will stand

This means that he will be successful. Alternate translation: “he will be successful” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁸ But the honorable man makes honorable plans; and because of his honorable actions he will stand.

UST

⁸ But honorable people plan to do honorable things, and they do those honorable things, so they succeed.

Isaiah 32:9

Rise up

Alternate translation: "Stand up" or "Pay attention"

at ease

Alternate translation: "secure" or "carefree"

my voice

Isaiah refers to himself by his voice to emphasize what he says.

Alternate translation: "me speak" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ Rise up, you women who are at ease, and listen to my voice; you carefree daughters, listen to me.

UST

⁹ You women of Jerusalem who think that you are very secure and think that everything is going well, listen to what I say!

Isaiah 32:10

your confidence will be broken

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Also, Isaiah speaks of them no longer being confident as if their confidence were a physical object that is broken. Alternate translation: “you will no longer be confident” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the grape harvest will fail

This means that there would not be good grapes to harvest. Alternate translation: “there will be no grapes for you to harvest” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the ingathering will not come

Alternate translation: “the time for gathering crops will not happen”

ULT

¹⁰ For in a little more than a year your confidence will be broken, you carefree women, for the grape harvest will fail, the ingathering will not come.

UST

¹⁰ After one year is ended, you who now are not worried about anything will tremble, because there will be no grapes for you to harvest and no other crops to harvest.

Isaiah 32:11

Tremble

shake from fear

at ease

Alternate translation: “secure” or “carefree”

take off your fine clothes and make yourselves bare

Here “bare” does not necessarily mean naked, but to wear minimal covering such as undergarments. Alternate translation: “take off your fine clothes and make yourself unclothed” or “take off your fancy clothes” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

put on sackcloth around your waists

This is an act of grieving or mourning. Alternate translation: “put sackcloth around waists as you grieve” (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

¹¹ Tremble, you {women} who are at ease; be troubled, you confident ones; take off your fine clothes and make yourselves bare; put on sackcloth around {your} waists.

UST

¹¹ So tremble now, you women who are not worried about anything! Take off your fancy clothes and put rough sackcloth around your waists.

Isaiah 32:12

You will wail for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines

This means that they will cry out loudly as they grieve what happens to their fruitful fields and vines. Alternate translation: "You will wail because of what happens to your pleasant fields and fruitful vines" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹² You will wail for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines.

UST

¹² You will wail because you are grieving about what will happen in your fertile fields and to your fruitful grapevines,

Isaiah 32:13

thorns and briers

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 5:6](#).

the once joyful houses

Here the houses are described as joyful because of the joyful people in them. Alternate translation: “your houses where you were once joyful” (See: [Personification](#))

the city of revelry

“your joyful city.” The word “revelry” means celebrating and partying.

ULT

13 The land of my people will be overgrown with thorns {and} briers, even in all the once joyful houses {in} the city of revelry.

UST

13 because only thorns and thistles will grow in your soil. Your houses where you had joyful parties and your city where you have been happy will be gone.

Isaiah 32:14

For the palace will be forsaken, the crowded city will be deserted

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "For the people will forsake the palace and the crowds will abandon the city" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the hill

This refers to the fort built on the top of the hill. Alternate translation: "the fort on the hill" (See: [Metonymy](#))

the hill and the watchtower will become caves

This speaks of the fort and the watchtower being abandoned as if they became caves. Alternate translation: "the hill and the watchtower will become abandoned and empty" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks

This means the these animals will enjoy the grass that grows among the abandon fort and watchtower. Alternate translation: "the wild donkeys and the flocks of sheep will eat the grass there" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

forever

This is an exaggeration for a very long time. Alternate translation: "an extremely long time" (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

¹⁴ For the palace will be forsaken, the crowded city will be deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become caves forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks;

UST

¹⁴ The king's palace will be empty; there will be no people in the city that now is very noisy. Wild donkeys will walk around and flocks of sheep will eat grass in the empty forts and watchtowers.

Isaiah 32:15

until the Spirit is poured

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “until Yahweh pours the Spirit” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the Spirit is poured on us

This speaks of Yahweh giving him Spirit to his people as if his Spirit were a liquid that he would pour on them. Alternate translation: “the Spirit is given to us” (See: [Metaphor](#))

from on high

Here heaven is referred to as “on high.” Alternate translation: “from heaven” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the fruitful field is considered as a forest

This can be written in active form. This compares how overly bountiful the fruitful fields are by comparing them to a thick, dense forest. Alternate translation: “people will say that the fruitful fields have grown thick like a forest” or “the fruitful fields will be overly bountiful” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁵ until the Spirit is poured on us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is considered as a forest.

UST

¹⁵ It will be like that until God pours his Spirit out on us from heaven. When that happens, the deserts will become fertile fields, and abundant crops will grow in those fertile fields.

Isaiah 32:16

justice will reside ... righteousness will live

Isaiah describes “justice” and “righteousness” as a person who lives in these places. This means the people who live in these places will do what is just and right. Alternate translation: “people will act justly in the wilderness and people will act righteously in the fertile fields (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

16 Then justice will reside in the wilderness; and righteousness will live in the fruitful field.

UST

16 People will act justly in those desert areas, and people will act righteously in those fertile fields.

Isaiah 32:17

The work of righteousness will be peace; and the result of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever

These two phrases are parallel and both give results of righteousness. These can be combined. Alternate translation: "The result of people acting righteously is that there will be peace, and quietness, and confidence forever" (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹⁷ The work of righteousness will be peace; and the result of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.

UST

¹⁷ The result of their acting righteously will be that there will be peace, the land will be tranquil, and people will be secure forever.

Isaiah 32:18

habitation

place where people live

ULT

¹⁸ My people will live in a peaceful habitation, in secure homes, and in quiet resting places.

UST

¹⁸ My people will live in their homes peacefully, and safely, and calmly, in places of rest.

Isaiah 32:19

hails

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 28:2](#).

the forest is destroyed, and the city is completely annihilated

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "it destroys the forest and completely destroys the city" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

19 But even if it rains and the forest is destroyed, and the city is completely annihilated,

UST

19 Even if a severe hailstorm knocks down the trees in the forest, and all the buildings in the city are blown down,

Isaiah 32:20

you who sow beside all the streams will be blessed, you who send out your ox and donkey to graze

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. This refers to Yahweh blessing all of his people and speaks of the things that are normal for his people to do. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will bless you, as you plant your crops in fields alongside the streams and as you send out your ox and donkey to graze in the pasture" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁰ you who sow beside all the streams {will be} blessed, you who send out your ox and donkey to graze.

UST

²⁰ Yahweh will greatly bless you; you will plant seeds in fields alongside the streams and there will be abundant crops. Your donkeys and cattle will easily find grass to eat when you send them out into pasture.

Isaiah 33

Isaiah 33 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

This chapter continues the series of “woes.” It speaks against ungodly or evil people in general. (See: [woe](#) and [godly](#), [godliness](#), [ungodly](#), [godless](#), [ungodliness](#), [godlessness](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#))

Isaiah 33:1

General Information:

Isaiah speaks in poetry for Yahweh to the Assyrians. (See: [Parallelism](#))

who has not been destroyed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “whom others have not destroyed” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

you will be destroyed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “others will destroy you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

they will betray

Alternate translation: “others will betray”

ULT

¹ Woe to you, destroyer who {has} not {been} destroyed! Woe to the betrayer whom they have not betrayed! When you stop destroying, you will be destroyed. When you stop betraying, they will betray you.

UST

¹ Terrible things will happen to you people of Assyria! You have destroyed others, but you have not been destroyed yet. You have betrayed others, but you have not been betrayed yet. When you stop destroying others, others will destroy you. When you stop betraying others, others will betray you.

Isaiah 33:2

be our arm

Here Yahweh's arm refers to his strength. This speaks of Yahweh strengthening them as if Yahweh would use his strength to act for them. Alternate translation: "give us strength" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

every morning

This refers to the whole day, not just the morning. Alternate translation: "every day" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

our salvation

This understood verb "be" may be supplied. Also, the word "salvation" may be expressed with the verb "save." Alternate translation: "be our salvation" or "save us" (See: [Ellipsis](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

in the time of trouble

This refers to the times when they are experiencing trouble. Alternate translation: ""when we have troubles" (See: [Possession](#))

ULT

² Yahweh, be gracious to us; we wait for you; be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble.

UST

² Yahweh, act kindly toward us, because we have patiently waited for you to help us. Enable us to be strong every day, and rescue us when we have troubles.

Isaiah 33:3

At the loud noise the peoples flee

Possible meanings of **the loud noise** are: (1) it refers to Yahweh's voice. Alternate translation: "The peoples flee at the sound of your loud voice" or (2) it refers the loud sounds of Yahweh's army. Alternate translation: "The people flee at the sound of your army" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

arise

This means to begin doing something. Alternate translation: "begin acting" (See: [Idiom](#))

the nations are scattered

This can be written in active form. Alternate translation: "the nations scatter" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ At the loud noise the peoples flee; when you arise, the nations are scattered.

UST

³ Our enemies run away when they hear your voice. When you stand up and show that you are powerful, the people of all nations flee.

Isaiah 33:4

Your spoil is gathered as the locusts gather; as locusts leap, men leap on it

This compares how quick and eager Yahweh's people are when they gather the spoils from their enemies to the eagerness of locusts when they gather food. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Your people gather spoils from your enemies with the same fierceness as the locusts have who devour green plants" (See: [Simile](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁴ Your spoil is gathered {as} the locusts gather; as locusts leap, men leap on it.

UST

⁴ And after our enemies have been defeated, we, your people, will take away all our enemies' possessions, like caterpillars and locusts strip off all the leaves of plants.

Isaiah 33:5

General Information:

Isaiah speaks to the people of Judah.

Yahweh is exalted

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh is greater than anyone else" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

He will fill Zion with justice and righteousness

This speaks of Yahweh ruling Zion with his justice and righteousness as if he were filling Zion with justice and righteousness. Alternate translation: "He will rule Zion with justice and righteousness" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Yahweh is exalted. He lives in a high place. He will fill Zion with justice and righteousness.

UST

⁵ Yahweh is greater than anyone else, and he lives in heaven, and he will rule justly and righteously in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 33:6

He will be the stability in your times

This speaks of Yahweh causing his people to be secure as if he were the stability himself. The phrase “your times” refers to their lives. Alternate translation: “He will make you secure all your lives” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge

This refers to the things that Yahweh will give to them. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **salvation**, you could express the same idea with the verb “save.” The abstract nouns “wisdom” and “knowledge” can be expressed with adjectives. Alternate translation: “and he will give you an abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge” or “he will save you and cause you to be very wise and knowledgeable” (See: [Ellipsis](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

the fear of Yahweh is his treasure

This speaks of fearing Yahweh as if it were a treasure that Yahweh gives his people. Alternate translation: “revering Yahweh will be like a valuable treasure that he will give to you” or “to fear Yahweh will be as valuable to you as a treasure” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ He will be the stability in your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of Yahweh is his treasure.

UST

⁶ When that happens, he will enable you to live securely; he will fully protect your possessions, he will enable you to be wise and to know all that you need to know; and revering Yahweh will be like a valuable treasure that he will give to you.

Isaiah 33:7

Look

This word is used here to draw peoples' attention to what is said next. It is also used here to mark a new section in the book. Alternate translation: "Listen"

envoys

messengers

the diplomats hoping for peace weep bitterly

This means they weep because they do not succeed in making peace. Alternate translation: "the diplomats hope for peace but they do not succeed and so they weep bitterly" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁷ Look, their envoys cry in the streets; the diplomats hoping for peace weep bitterly.

UST

⁷ But now, look, our messengers are crying out in the streets; our ambassadors have gone to other countries to make peace treaties, but they will cry bitterly because they will not succeed.

Isaiah 33:8

The highways are deserted; there are no more travelers

Both of the phrases emphasize that there are no travelers on the highways. These can be combined and stated in active form. Alternate translation: “People no longer travel on the highways” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

Covenants are broken, witnesses are despised, and mankind is not respected

This passage may refer to general conditions of corruption in Israel, or it may refer to the nation’s inability to make reliable peace treaties with Assyria. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “People break covenants that they have made, people ignore the testimony of witnesses, and people do not respect one another” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁸ The highways are deserted; there are no more travelers. Covenants are broken, witnesses are despised, and mankind is not respected. ^[1]

UST

⁸ No one travels on our roads. The leaders of Assyria have broken their peace treaty with us; they despise the people who made those treaties, and they do not respect anyone.

Isaiah 33:9

The land mourns and withers away

This speaks of the land becoming dry as if it were a person mourning. Alternate translation: “The land becomes dry and its plants wither away” (See: [Personification](#))

Lebanon is ashamed and withers away

Here “Lebanon” represents Lebanon’s trees. This speaks of the trees withering and decaying as if they were a person who is ashamed. Alternate translation: “Lebanon’s trees wither and decay” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Personification](#))

Sharon ... Bashan ... Carmel

Many trees and flowers once grew in these places.

Sharon is like a desert plain

This compares how dry Sharon is to a desert plain. Alternate translation: “Sharon is as dry as a desert plain” (See: [Simile](#))

Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves

Here Bashan and Carmel are represented by their trees. Alternate translation: “there are no more leaves on the trees in Bashan and Carmel” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁹ The land mourns {and} withers away; Lebanon is ashamed {and} withers away; ^[2] Sharon is like a desert plain; and Bashan and Carmel shake off {their leaves}.

UST

⁹ The land of Judah is dry and barren. The cedar trees in Lebanon are drying up and decaying. The Plain of Sharon along the coast is now a desert plain. There are no more leaves on the trees in the areas of Bashan and Carmel.

Isaiah 33:10

will I arise

To arise or stand up is a metaphor for no longer watching and thinking and instead beginning to act. Alternate translation: “will I begin to act” (See: [Metaphor](#))

now I will be lifted up; now I will be elevated

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. These two phrases have basically the same meaning and emphasize Yahweh being exalted. Alternate translation: “now I will exalt myself and show that I deserve for everyone to honor me” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹⁰ “Now will I arise,” says Yahweh; “now I will be lifted up; now I will be elevated.

UST

¹⁰ Yahweh says, “Now I will arise and show that I deserve for everyone to honor me.

Isaiah 33:11

You conceive chaff, and you give birth to stubble

This speaks of the Assyrians making plans as if they were conceiving and giving birth to their plans as a mother gives birth to a baby. This speaks of their plans being useless by comparing them to chaff. Alternate translation: "You make plans that are as useless as chaff and straw" (See: [Metaphor](#))

stubble

The dry pieces of plants that are left in the ground after the stalks have been cut.

your breath is a fire that will consume you

Here the Assyrians' plans are referred to as their "breath." This speaks of their plans causing them to die as if their plans would literally burn up their bodies. Alternate translation: "your plans will cause you to die" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 You conceive chaff, and you give birth to stubble; your breath is a fire that will consume you.

UST

11 You people of Assyria make plans that are as useless as chaff and straw. Your breath will become a fire that will burn you up.

Isaiah 33:12

The peoples will be burned to lime, as thornbushes are cut down and are burned

This compares how the peoples' dead bodies will be burned to the way thornbushes are burned. Also, If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Fire will burn the peoples' bodies to lime in the same way that a farmer cuts down thornbushes and burns them" (See: [Simile](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

lime

the ashes from burned bones

ULT

¹² The peoples will be burned to lime, {as} thornbushes are cut down and are burned.

UST

¹² Your people will be burned until only ashes remain, like thornbushes are cut down and burned up.

Isaiah 33:13

**You who are far away, hear what I have done;
and, you who are near, acknowledge my
might**

Yahweh uses the words “far away” and “near” to mean all people. The word “might” can be expressed with the adjective “mighty.” Alternate translation: “All people everywhere hear what I have done and acknowledge that I am mighty” (See: [Merism](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹³ You {who are} far away, hear what I have done; and, you {who are} near, acknowledge my might.”

UST

¹³ You people who live far away and you people who live nearby, pay attention to what I have done and realize that I am very powerful.”

Isaiah 33:14

trembling has seized the godless ones

This speaks of the godless people trembling as if their trembling were an enemy that had seized them. Alternate translation: "the godless ones are overwhelmed with trembling" (See: [Personification](#))

Who among us ... burnings?

It is implied that the sinners in Zion ask these questions. Alternate translation: "They say, 'Who among us ... burnings?'" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Who among us can sojourn with a raging fire? Who among us can sojourn with everlasting burnings?

These rhetorical questions have basically the same meaning and emphasize that no one can live with fire. Here fire represents Yahweh's judgment. Alternate translation: "No one can live with raging fire! No one can live with everlasting burns!" or "No one can live bearing Yahweh's judgment, it is like an everlasting fire!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Metonymy](#))

sojourn

live in a place that is not one's home

ULT

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless ones. Who among us can sojourn with a raging fire? Who among us can sojourn with everlasting burnings?

UST

14 The sinners in Jerusalem will tremble because they are very afraid; godless people will be terrified. They say, "None of us can remain alive because this fire is burning everything; it is like the fire on Yahweh's altar that will burn forever!"

Isaiah 33:15

He who walks

Here walking refers to living. Alternate translation: “He who lives” (See: [Idiom](#))

who despises the gain of oppression

The noun phrase “the gain of oppression” can be expressed as a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “who hates the riches that come from harming other people” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

15 He who walks righteously and speaks honestly; who despises the gain of oppression, who shakes his hand so that it will not accept a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed, and who shuts his eyes from looking on evil—

UST

15 Those who act honestly and say what is right, those who do not try to become rich by forcing money from people, those who do not try to get bribes, those who refuse to listen to people who are planning to murder someone, those who do not join others who urge them to do what is wrong,

Isaiah 33:16

**this is the man who will dwell on the heights,
his place of defense will be the fortress
among the cliffs**

This speaks of the man being safe as if he lived in a home on a high hill. These two phrase are parallel and the second phrase describes the place where the man lives. Alternate translation: “he will be safe, like a man who home is built on a high hill, in a rocky place that is easy to defend” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Parallelism](#))

the heights

This refers to a high hill or mountainside. Alternate translation: “the high hill” or “the mountainside” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the fortress among the cliffs

This speaks of rocky areas that are easy to defend as if they were actually fortresses. Alternate translation: “the large piles of rocks” (See: [Metaphor](#))

will be in steady supply

Alternate translation: “will always be available”

ULT

¹⁶ this is the man who will dwell on the heights, his {place} of defense {will be} the fortress among the cliffs, his food will be given, and his water {will be} in steady supply.

UST

¹⁶ they are the people who will live safely; they will find places to be safe in the caves in the mountains. They will have plenty of food and water.

Isaiah 33:17

Your eyes will see ... they will see

This refers the audience by their “eyes.” Alternate translation: “You will see ... you will see” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the king in his beauty

The king’s royal robes are referred to as “his beauty.” Alternate translation: “the king in his beautiful robes” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

17 Your eyes will see the king in his beauty; they will see a land off in the distance.

UST

17 You people of Judah will see the king wearing all his beautiful robes, and you will see that he rules a land that extends far away.

Isaiah 33:18

Your heart will recall the terror

This refers to the audience by their “hearts.” “The terror” refers to their war with the Assyrians. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “You will remember the terror that the Assyrians caused you when they attacked” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

where is the scribe, where is he who weighed the money? Where is he who counted the towers?

These rhetorical question are asked to emphasize that the Assyrian officials are gone. These questions may be written as statements. Alternate translation: “The officers of Assyria who counted the tax money that we were forced to pay to them have disappeared! Those men who counted our towers are gone!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

weighed the money

Money was valuable metal; its value was determined by its weight.

ULT

18 Your heart will recall the terror; where {is} the scribe, where {is} he who weighed the money? Where {is} he who counted the towers?

UST

18 When you see that, you will think about when you were previously terrified, and you will say, “The officers of Assyria who counted the tax money that we were forced to pay to them have disappeared! Those men who counted our towers are gone!”

Isaiah 33:19

the defiant people, a people of a strange language that you do not understand

Alternate translation: "a fierce people who speak a language that you do not understand"

ULT

¹⁹ You will no longer see the defiant people, a people of a strange language {that you} {do} not understand.

UST

¹⁹ Those arrogant people who spoke a language that we could not understand are no longer here!"

Isaiah 33:20

the city of our feasts

This means that they have their festival and feasts at this city.
Alternate translation: “the city where we have our feasts” or “they city where we celebrate our festivals” (See: [Possession](#))

your eyes will see

The people are referred to by their “eyes” to emphasize what they are seeing. Alternate translation: “you will see” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

a tent that will not be removed

This speaks of Zion being secure and well establish as if it were secure tent. This can be stated in active form and written as a new sentence. Alternate translation: “it will be secure, like a tent that no one will ever remove” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

whose stakes will never be pulled up nor will any of its cords be broken

This is part of the metaphor that compares Zion to a secure tent. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “whose stakes no one will ever pull up and whose cords no one will ever break” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁰ Look at Zion, the city of our feasts; your eyes will see Jerusalem as a quiet habitation, a tent {that} will not be removed, whose stakes will never be pulled up nor will any of its cords be broken.

UST

²⁰ At that time, you will see Mount Zion, the place where we celebrate our festivals; You will see that Jerusalem has become a place that is calm and safe. It will be secure, like a tent that cannot be moved because its ropes are tight and its stakes are firmly in the ground.

Isaiah 33:21

Yahweh in majesty will be with us, in a place of broad rivers and streams

Here “us” refers to Isaiah and includes the people of Judah. This speaks of the safety of living with Yahweh as if it were a place that has rivers around it so that enemies cannot attack it. Alternate translation: “Yahweh who is majestic will be with us, and we will be safe as if we were in a place surrounded by broad rivers” (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#) and [Metaphor](#))

will travel it

Alternate translation: “will travel the river”

ULT

²¹ Instead, Yahweh in majesty {will be} with us, in a place of broad rivers {and} streams. No warship with oars will travel it, and no large ships will sail by.

UST

²¹ Yahweh will be our mighty God; he will be like a mighty river that will protect us because our enemies will not be able to cross it; no one will be able to row across it and no warships will be able to sail across it.

Isaiah 33:22

our ... us

This refers to Isaiah and includes the people of Judah. (See: [Exclusive](#) and [Inclusive 'We'](#))

ULT

²² For Yahweh {is} our judge, Yahweh {is} our lawgiver, Yahweh {is} our king; he will save us.

UST

²² Yahweh is our judge; he is the one who gives us laws, and he is our king. He will rescue us.

Isaiah 33:23

Your riggings are slack; they cannot hold the mast in place; they cannot spread the sail

This could mean: (1) The Assyrian army is like a boat that is unable to move through the water: the ropes that support the mast and sail have come loose and no longer support the mast, so the sail is useless ([Isaiah 33:1](#)) or (2) the people of Judah are no longer at war: "You have loosened the cords that supported your flagpole; the flag no longer flies" ([Isaiah 33:17-Isaiah 22](#)). (See: [Metaphor](#))

mast

tall poles that support the sail

sail

a large cloth that fills with wind and moves a boat through the water

when the great spoil is divided

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "when they divide the treasure" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the lame

This refers to people who are cannot walk. Alternate translation: "those who are lame" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

²³ Your riggings are slack; they cannot hold the mast in place; they cannot spread the sail; when the great spoil is divided, even the lame will drag off the spoil.

UST

²³ The ropes on our enemies' boats will hang loose, their masts will not be fastened firmly, and their sails will not be spread out. The treasures that they have seized will be divided among us, God's people, and even lame people among us will get some.

Isaiah 33:24

the people who live there will be forgiven for their iniquity

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will forgive the sins of the people who live there" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁴ The inhabitants will not say, "I am sick;" the people who live there {will be} forgiven for {their} iniquity.

UST

²⁴ And the people in Jerusalem will no longer say, "We are sick," because Yahweh will forgive the sins that have been committed by the people who live there.

Isaiah 34

Isaiah 34 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Destruction

There are many images used in this chapter which describe destruction. Here each of these metaphors describes complete destruction. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Prophecy

This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. It pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator does not need to add an explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore](#), [restoration](#) and [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Isaiah 34:1

General Information:

Yahweh is speaking in poetry. (See: [Parallelism](#))

The earth and all that fills it must listen, the world, and all things that come from it

Here the earth is spoken of as being required to listen to Yahweh to emphasize that it is under Yahweh's authority. These two parallel phrases are metonyms for all the people who live in the world. Alternate translation: "In all places everywhere on earth, everyone must listen to what I say" (See: [Personification](#) and [Metonymy](#))

the world, and all things that come from it

This is the second of two parallel phrases. The understood words may be supplied in this phrase. Alternate translation: "the world, and all things that come from it must listen" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

¹ Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you people! The earth and all that fills it must listen, the world, and all {things} that come from it.

UST

¹ You people of all nations, come near and listen; pay careful attention. I want the world and everything that is in it to hear what I say.

Isaiah 34:2

he has completely destroyed them, he has handed them over to the slaughter

Often prophets speak of things that will happen in the future as if they have already happened. This emphasizes the event will certainly happen. Alternate translation: "he will completely destroy them, he will give them over to the slaughter" (See: [Predictive Past](#))

ULT

² For Yahweh is angry with all the nations, and furious against all their armies; he has completely destroyed them, he has handed them over to the slaughter.

UST

² Yahweh is angry with the people of all nations; he is furious with all their armies. He has decided that they must be destroyed, and he will slaughter them.

Isaiah 34:3

The bodies of their dead will be thrown out

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “No one will bury their dead” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

their dead

This refers to the dead people. Alternate translation: “those who died” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

the mountains will soak up their blood

Alternate translation: “the mountains will be covered in their blood”

ULT

³ The bodies of their dead will be thrown out. The stench of the dead bodies will be everywhere; and the mountains will soak up their blood.

UST

³ Their corpses will not be buried, and as a result their bodies will stink, and the mountains will collapse because of their blood.

Isaiah 34:4

the sky will be rolled up like a scroll

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. This compares what Yahweh will do to the sky to a person rolling up a scroll. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will roll up the sky in the same way that a person rolls up a scroll” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Simile](#))

all their stars will fade away, as the leaf fades from off the vine, and as the overripe figs from the fig tree

This emphasizes even the things in the sky that people thought would be there forever will fall as easily as a leaf. Alternate translation: “all the stars will fall from the sky like a leaf falls from a vine or a fig falls from a tree” (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

⁴ All the stars of the sky will fade away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; and all their stars will fade away, as the leaf fades from off the vine, and as the overripe figs from the fig tree.

UST

⁴ The sky will disappear like a scroll that is rolled up and thrown away. Stars will fall from the sky like withered leaves fall from grapevines, or like shriveled figs fall from fig trees.

Isaiah 34:5

when my sword will have drunk its fill in heaven

Yahweh describes himself as a warrior bearing a sword. The phrase “drunk its fill” speaks of Yahweh’s sword as if it were a person who has eaten and become satisfied. Yahweh uses this imagery to emphasize that there will be a lot of destruction in heaven and to state its completion. Alternate translation: “when I am finished destroying things in heaven” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

look

This word is used here to draw the listener’s attention and to have them imagine the things being said. Alternate translation: “listen” or “and then”

it will now come down on Edom, on the people I am setting apart for destruction

The word “it” refers to Yahweh’s sword. This continues the metaphor about Yahweh destroying things with a sword. Alternate translation: “I will come to punish the people of Edom, the people whom I have set aside for me to destroy” (See: [Metaphor](#))

on Edom

Edom refers to the people who live there. Alternate translation: “on the people of Edom” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁵ For when my sword will have drunk its fill in heaven; look, it will now come down on Edom, on the people I am setting apart for destruction.

UST

⁵ When Yahweh has finished his work of destroying objects in the sky, he will punish the people of Edom, the people group that he has said must be destroyed.

Isaiah 34:6

The sword of Yahweh is dripping with blood and covered with fat ... of rams

This speaks of Yahweh killing the people as if he were a priest sacrificing animals. He does this by describing the sword of a priest. Alternate translation: “Yahweh sacrifices them as a priest sacrifices animals, whose sword drips with the blood and fat of lambs, goats, and rams” (See: [Metaphor](#))

For Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom

The words “sacrifice” and “slaughter” may be expressed here as verbs. Alternate translation: “For Yahweh will sacrifice many people in Bozrah and kill many people in the land of Edom” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Bozrah

This is an important city in Edom. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁶ The sword of Yahweh is dripping with blood and covered with fat, dripping with the blood of lambs and goats, covered with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

UST

⁶ It is as though Yahweh will have a sword that is covered with blood and fat — the blood of lambs and goats and the fat of the kidneys of rams to be sacrificed. It is as though Yahweh will offer a sacrifice in Bozrah and kill many people in other cities in Edom.

Isaiah 34:7

will fall

Alternate translation: "will die"

Their land will be drunk with blood

This describes the amount of blood that will soak into the ground by comparing the land to a drunk person. Alternate translation: "Their land will be soaked with blood" (See: [Personification](#))

their dust made fat with fatness

Here "dust" means the dirt on the ground. This describes the amount of fat that will soak into the dirt by comparing it to a person that has become fat from eating so much animal fat. Alternate translation: "the dirt will be full of the fat of the animals" (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

⁷ Wild oxen will fall with them, and young bulls with the older ones. Their land will be drunk with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

UST

⁷ Even wild oxen will be killed, as well as young calves and big bulls. The ground will be soaked with blood, and the dirt will be covered with the fat of those animals.

Isaiah 34:8

it will be a day of vengeance for Yahweh

Here “day” is an idiom for a point in time; it is not a literal “day.”
Alternate translation: “it will be the time when Yahweh gets revenge”
(See: [Idiom](#))

he will pay them back for the cause of Zion

This means that he will take revenge on them for how they had previously waged war against the people of Jerusalem. Alternate translation: “he will give them the punishment they deserve for what they had done to the people of Zion” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ For {it will be} a day of vengeance for Yahweh and a year when he will pay them back for the cause of Zion.

UST

⁸ That will be the time when Yahweh gets revenge for what those people did to the people of Judah.

Isaiah 34:9

The streams of Edom will be turned into pitch ... become burning pitch

The water and land becoming useless for drinking or growing food because it is burnt and covered in pitch and sulfur is spoken of as if their streams and land will actually become pitch and sulfur.

Alternate translation: "The streams in Edom will be full of pitch and the ground will be covered with burning sulfur and burning pitch"
(See: [Metaphor](#))

her dust ... her land

Alternate translation: "Edom's dust ... Edom's land"

pitch

a thick, black substance that burns for a long time

ULT

⁹ The streams of Edom will be turned into pitch, her dust into sulfur, and her land will become burning pitch.

UST

⁹ The streams in Edom will be full of burning pitch, and the ground will be covered with burning sulfur and burning pitch.

Isaiah 34:10

It will burn night and day

This means all of the time. Alternate translation: “It will burn throughout the night and the day” or “It will burn constantly, all night and all day” (See: [Merism](#))

from generation to generation

The phrase “generation to generation” refers to all generations of people who will live in the future. See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 13:20](#). Alternate translation: “forever” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

10 It will burn night and day; its smoke will rise forever; from generation to generation it will be a wasteland; no one will pass through it forever and ever.

UST

10 Yahweh will never finish punishing Edom with fire; the smoke will rise forever. No one will ever live in that land, and no one will even travel through it.

Isaiah 34:11

will live there

Alternate translation: “will live in the land of Edom”

owl

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 13:21](#).

raven

This is a large black bird. It is difficult to identify some of the precise kinds of birds mentioned in this passage. However, they were all birds that preferred to live in places where there were no people, so they symbolize deserted places.

in it

“there.” This refers to Edom.

He will stretch over it the measuring line of ruin and the plumbline of destruction

This speaks of Yahweh as if he were a careful builder as he causes destruction in Edom. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will measure that land carefully; he will measure it to decide where to cause ruin and destruction” (See: [Metaphor](#))

measuring line ... plumbline

These are builders’ tools. See how you translated similar words in [Isaiah 28:17](#).

ULT

11 But wild birds and animals will live there; the owl and the raven will make their nest in it. He will stretch over it the measuring line of ruin and the plumbline of destruction.

UST

11 Ravens and various kinds of owls and small animals will live there. Yahweh will measure that land carefully; he will measure it to to decide where to cause chaos and destruction.

Isaiah 34:12

Her nobles ... her princes

Alternate translation: "The nobles of Edom ... the princes of Edom"

all her princes will be nothing

This exaggerates the princes losing their royal status by saying that they will become nothing. Alternate translation: "all her princes will no longer rule" (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

12 Her nobles will have nothing left to call a kingdom, and all her princes {will be} nothing.

UST

12 There will be no more princes; the people who have authority will have no kingdom to rule; the princes will disappear.

Isaiah 34:13

Thorns ... nettles ... thistles

These are all weeds with thorns. Nettles' thorns have poison that causes itching.

jackals

Translate the name of this animal the same as you did in [Isaiah 13:22](#).

ostriches

Translate the name of this animal the same as you did in [Isaiah 13:21](#).

ULT

¹³ Thorns will overgrow her palaces, nettles and thistles her fortresses. It will be a habitation of jackals, a place for ostriches.

UST

¹³ The deserted palaces and fortified buildings will be full of thorns and thistles. The ruins will be places for jackals and ostriches to live.

Isaiah 34:14

wild animals

Translate this the same as you did in [Isaiah 13:21](#).

hyenas

Translate the name of this animal as you did in [Isaiah 13:22](#).

Nocturnal animals

animals that are awake and active at night

ULT

¹⁴ The wild animals and the hyenas will meet there, and the wild goats will cry to one another. Nocturnal animals will settle there and find for themselves a place of rest.

UST

¹⁴ Animals that live in the desert and hyenas will be there, and wild goats will bleat to each other. There will also be creatures that roam around at night and rest there.

Isaiah 34:15

Owls

Translate this word the same as you did in [Isaiah 13:21](#).

hawks

birds that kill small animals for food

ULT

¹⁵ Owls will make nests, lay and hatch their {eggs}, hatch and protect their young. Yes, there hawks will gather, each one with its mate.

UST

¹⁵ Owls will make their nests there and lay their eggs in the nests; and when the eggs hatch, the mother birds will cover them with their wings. There will also be hawks there, each with its mate.

Isaiah 34:16

Search through the scroll of Yahweh

The phrase “the scroll of Yahweh” means that it contains the messages spoken by Yahweh. Alternate translation: “Read carefully what is written in this scroll that contains the messages of Yahweh” (See: [Possession](#))

not one of these

Alternate translation: “not one of the animals”

None will lack for a mate

This can be written as a positive statement. Alternate translation: “Each animal will have a mate” (See: [Double Negatives](#))

for his mouth has commanded it

Yahweh is referred to by his “mouth” to emphasize what he has said. Alternate translation: “for Yahweh has commanded it” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

16 Search through the scroll of Yahweh; not one of these will be missing. None will lack for a mate; for his mouth has commanded it, and his spirit has gathered them.

UST

16 If you read what is written in the book that contains messages from Yahweh, you will find out what he will do to Edom. All of those animals and birds will be there, and each one will have a mate, because that is what Yahweh has promised, and his spirit will cause them all to gather there.

Isaiah 34:17

He has cast lots for their places

This speaks of Yahweh deciding where to cause the animals to live as if he actually cast lots for their places. Alternate translation: “He has determined where they will live” (See: [Metaphor](#))

his hand has measured it out for them by a cord

This refers to the way that people measured things in biblical times. Alternate translation: “he has given the animals their places” (See: [Metaphor](#))

from generation to generation they will

The phrase “generation to generation” refers to all generations of people who will live in the future. See how you translated the phrase “from generation to generation” in [Isaiah 13:20](#). Alternate translation: “forever they will” or “they will always” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

17 He has cast lots for their places, and his hand has measured it out for them by a cord. They will possess it forever; from generation to generation they will live there.

UST

17 He has decided what parts of the land of Edom each will live in, and those are the places where each bird or animal will live. Their descendants will possess those areas forever, throughout all generations.

Isaiah 35

Isaiah 35 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Reign of the Messiah

This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. It pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator does not need to add an explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. (See: [restore](#), [restoration](#) and [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [Christ](#), [Messiah](#))

Isaiah 35:1

The wilderness and the Arabah will be glad; and the desert will rejoice

These two phrases have basically the same meaning. These places are described as being glad, like a person is glad, because they have received water and are blossoming. Alternate translation: "It will be like the wilderness and the Arabah are glad and the desert will rejoice" (See: [Personification](#) and [Parallelism](#))

blossom

This speaks of the plants in the desert blossoming as if the desert itself were blossoming. Alternate translation: "its plants will blossom" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹ The wilderness and the Arabah will be glad; and the desert will rejoice and blossom. Like the rose,

UST

¹ Some day, it will be as though the desert and other very dry areas are glad; the desert will rejoice and flowers will blossom. Like the rose,

Isaiah 35:2

it will blossom abundantly

This compares the way the plants of the desert blossom to the way a rose (verse 1) has many blossoms. Alternate translation: "The desert will grow many new plants and trees" (See: [Simile](#))

and rejoice with joy and singing

This speaks of the desert as if it were happy and singing like a person. Alternate translation: "it will be as though everything is rejoicing and singing" (See: [Personification](#))

the glory of Lebanon will be given to it

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. This speaks of Yahweh making the desert look as glorious as Lebanon as if he were giving the desert Lebanon's glory. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will give it the glory of Lebanon" or "Yahweh will make it as glorious as Lebanon" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Metaphor](#))

the splendor of Carmel and Sharon

This speaks of Yahweh making the desert look beautiful as Carmel and Sharon as if he were giving the desert their splendor. The understood information may be supplied. Alternate translation: "the splendor of Carmel and Sharon will be given to it" or "Yahweh will make it as splendid as Carmel and Sharon" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

the glory of Yahweh, the splendor of our God

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize Yahweh's appearance. (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

² it will blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of Yahweh, the splendor of our God.

UST

² the desert will produce flowers abundantly; it will be as though everything is rejoicing and singing! The deserts will become as beautiful as the trees in Lebanon, as fertile as the plains of the Sharon and the area of Carmel. There people will see the glory of Yahweh; they will see that he is magnificent.

Isaiah 35:3

General Information:

Isaiah is speaking to the people of Judah.

Strengthen the weak hands, and steady the knees that shake.

The words “weak hands” and “knees that shake” represent a person who is fearful. Alternate translation: “Strengthen those whose hands are weak and whose knees shake from fear” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

³ Strengthen the weak hands, and steady the knees that shake.

UST

³ So encourage those who are tired and weak.

Isaiah 35:4

those with a fearful heart

Here people are referred to by their hearts, which emphasize their inner feelings. Alternate translation: “to those who are fearful” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Look

This is used here to draw the listeners’ attention to what is said next. Alternate translation: “Listen”

your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God

This can be reworded so that the abstract nouns “vengeance” and “recompense” are expressed as the verb “punish.” The words “vengeance” and “recompense” mean the same thing and emphasize that God will punish Judah’s enemies. Alternate translation: “your God will punish your enemies for what they have done” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁴ Say to those {with a} fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Look, your God will come {with} vengeance, {with} the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”

UST

⁴ Say to those who are afraid, “Be strong and do not be afraid, because our God is going to come to get revenge on his enemies; he will pay them back for what they have done, and he will rescue you.”

Isaiah 35:5

General Information:

These verses begin a description of the glorious future for God's people.

the eyes of the blind will see

"The blind" refers to people who are blind. They are referred to by their "eyes" to emphasize their healing. Alternate translation: "blind people will see" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

the ears of the deaf will hear

"The deaf" refers to people who cannot hear. They are referred to by their "ears" to emphasize their healing. Alternate translation: "deaf people will hear" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind will see, and the ears of the deaf will hear.

UST

⁵ When he does that, he will enable blind people to see and enable deaf people to hear.

Isaiah 35:6

the lame man will leap like a deer

Deer can jump far and high. Jumping like a deer is an exaggeration for being able to move about quickly and easily. Alternate translation: “the lame man will jump high” (See: [Simile](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

the mute tongue will sing

This refers to people who cannot speak. They are referred to by their “tongues” to emphasize their healing. Alternate translation: “mute people will sing” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

streams in the wilderness

The understood verb may be supplied. Alternate translation: “streams will flow in the wilderness” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

⁶ Then the lame man will leap like a deer, and the mute tongue will sing, for water breaks out in the Arabah, and streams in the wilderness.

UST

⁶ Lame people will leap like deer, and those who have been unable to speak will sing joyfully. Water will gush out from springs in the desert, and streams will flow in the desert.

Isaiah 35:7

The burning sand will become a pool

This means that a pool of water will appear in the hot sand. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "A pool will appear in the burning sand" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the thirsty ground

Here the dry ground is described as being thirsty. Alternate translation: "the dry ground" (See: [Personification](#))

the thirsty ground springs of water

This means that springs will appear in the dry ground. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "springs of water will appear in the thirsty ground" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

jackals

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 13:22](#).

reeds and rushes

These are plants that grow in wet areas.

ULT

⁷ The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where they once lay, {will be} grass with reeds and rushes.

UST

⁷ The very hot and dry ground will become a pool of water, and springs will provide water for the dry land. Grass and reeds and papyrus will grow in places where the jackals lived previously.

Isaiah 35:8

General Information:

These verses continue the description of the glorious future for God's people.

A highway will be there called The Holy Way

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "A highway will be there that has the name The Holy Way" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

highway

See how you translated this word in [Isaiah 11:16](#).

The unclean

This refers to unclean people. A person who God considers spiritually unacceptable or defiled is spoken of as if the person were physically unclean. Alternate translation: "Those who are unclean" or "People who are not acceptable to God" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#) and [Metaphor](#))

him who walks in it

This is an idiom. Here "walking" refers to "living." This refers to the person who lives a holy life. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "who lives in the holy way" or "who lives a holy life" (See: [Idiom](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ A highway will be there called The Holy Way. The unclean will not travel it. But it will be for him who walks in it. No fool will go on it.

UST

⁸ There will be a highway through that land; it will be called 'the Holy Highway.' People who are not acceptable to God will not walk on that road; it will be only for those who conduct their lives as God wants them to, and no wicked fools will walk on that road.

Isaiah 35:9

they will not be found there

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “no one will find them there” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the redeemed

This refers to people who God has redeemed. Alternate translation: “those who are redeemed” or “those who God has redeemed” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

⁹ No lion will be there, no ferocious beast will be on it; they will not be found there, but the redeemed will walk there.

UST

⁹ There will not be any lions there or any other dangerous animals along that road. Only those whom Yahweh has set free will walk on it.

Isaiah 35:10

The ransomed of Yahweh

To “ransom” means to “rescue.” This refers to people whom Yahweh has rescued. Alternate translation: “Those whom Yahweh has rescued” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

everlasting joy will be on their heads

This uses a person’s head to mean the person as a whole. Alternate translation: “they will have everlasting joy” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

gladness and joy ... sorrow and sighing

The words “gladness” and “joy” mean basically the same thing, as do “sorrow” and “sighing.” Together they emphasize the intensity of these emotions. (See: [Doublet](#))

gladness and joy will overtake them

This speaks of the people being overwhelmed by gladness and joy by giving these emotions the human quality of being able to overtake someone by force. Alternate translation: “they will be overwhelmed by joy and gladness” (See: [Personification](#))

sorrow and sighing will flee away

This speaks of the people no longer being sorrowful and sighing by giving these emotions the human ability to run away. Alternate translation: “they will no longer be sorrowful and sighing” (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

10 The ransomed of Yahweh will return and come with singing to Zion, and everlasting joy will be on their heads; gladness and joy will overtake them; sorrow and sighing will flee away.

UST

10 Those whom Yahweh has freed will return to Jerusalem; they will sing as they enter the city, and they will be extremely joyful forever. No longer will they be sad or mourn; they will be completely joyful and glad.

Isaiah 36

Isaiah 36 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The previous chapters have been constructed as prophecy and contain many poetic elements. This chapter switches to a narrative and is a discussion between the officials from Assyria and Judah. To make the meaning clear here, it may be helpful to set apart the extended quotations by setting them farther to the right on the page than the rest of the text. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Trust

The people of Judah were to trust in Yahweh because only he could provide them with protection. The people of Jerusalem were protected because they trusted in Yahweh. (See: [trust](#), [trusted](#), [trustworthy](#), [trustworthiness](#))

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

The Assyrian commanders use rhetorical questions in this chapter to mock or insult Judah and their God, Yahweh. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Isaiah 36:1

the fourteenth year

“year 14” (See: [Ordinal Numbers](#))

King Hezekiah

See how you translated the name of this king in [Isaiah 1:1](#).

Sennacherib

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

Sennacherib ... attacked all the fortified cities

Here Sennacherib represents himself and his army. Alternate translation: “Sennacherib and his army ... attacked all the fortified cities” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹ In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.

UST

¹ When King Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost fourteen years, King Sennacherib of Assyria came with his army to attack the cities in Judah that had walls around them. They did not conquer Jerusalem, but they conquered all the other cities.

Isaiah 36:2

the chief commander

Some versions of the Bible translate this as “the Rabshakeh.” This is the Assyrian word for one of the highest ranking military leaders in Assyria.

Lachish

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

conduit

man-made ditch or tunnel through which water flows. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 7:3](#).

the launderers’ field

This could mean: (1) this is the proper name by which the people called the field or (2) this is the common noun that the people used to talk about the field, “the launderers’ field” or “the field where men wash wool” or “the field where women wash clothes.” See how you translated this in [Isaiah 7:3](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

the launderers’ field

Here, **the launderers** are either: (1) men who wash wool that someone has cut from the sheep, “wool washers field,” or (2) women who wash dirty clothes, “clothes washers field.” See how you translated this in [Isaiah 7:3](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

² Then the king of Assyria sent the chief commander from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a great army. He approached the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the launderers’ field, and stood by it.

UST

² Then the king of Assyria sent a large army with some of his important officials from the city of Lachish to persuade King Hezekiah to surrender. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they stood alongside the aqueduct in which water flows into the upper pool into Jerusalem, near the road to the field where the women wash clothes.

Isaiah 36:3

Hilkiah ... Eliakim

See how you translated these men's names in [Isaiah 22:20](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Shebna

See how you translated this man's name in [Isaiah 22:15](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Asaph ... Joah

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

ULT

³ The Israelite officials who went out of the city to talk with them were Hilkiah's son Eliakim, the palace administrator, Shebna the king's secretary, and Asaph's son Joah, who wrote down the government decisions.

UST

³ The Israelite officials who went out of the city to talk with them were Hilkiah's son Eliakim, the palace administrator, Shebna the king's secretary, and Asaph's son Joah, who wrote down the government decisions.

Isaiah 36:4

said to them

Alternate translation: "said to Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah"

What is the source of your confidence?

The king of Assyria uses this question to challenge Hezekiah and to say that he does not have a good source for confidence. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "You have no reliable source for your confidence." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁴ The chief commander said to them, "Tell Hezekiah that the great king, the king of Assyria, says, 'What is the source of your confidence?'

UST

⁴ Then one of Sennacherib's important officials told them to take a message to Hezekiah from the king of Assyria, the great king. In the message, the king said to the people of Jerusalem, "What are you trusting in to rescue you?"

Isaiah 36:5

there is counsel and strength for war

“you have the council and the strength to go to war.” The phrase “strength for war” refers to having a large enough and strong enough army with weapons. Alternate translation: “you have enough military council, strong men, and weapons to go to war” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Now in whom are you trusting? Who has given you courage to rebel against me?

The king of Assyria uses questions to ridicule Hezekiah for believing he has the strength to rebel. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “No matter in whom you trust, you will not have the courage to rebel against me.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁵ You speak only useless words, saying there is counsel and strength for war. Now in whom are you trusting? Who has given you courage to rebel against me?

UST

⁵ You say that you have weapons to fight us and that some other nation has promised to help you, but that is only talk. Who do you think will help you to rebel against my soldiers from Assyria?

Isaiah 36:6

Look

Sennacherib uses this word to draw Hezekiah's attention to what he says next. Alternate translation: "Listen"

trusting in Egypt

Here "Egypt" refers to the Egyptian army. Alternate translation: "trusting in the Egyptian army" (See: [Metonymy](#))

that splintered reed that you use as a walking staff, but if a man leans on it, it will stick into his hand and pierce it

This speaks of Egypt, specifically its army and its Pharaoh, as if it were a splintered reed to emphasize that relying on them would not help them but would only harm them. Alternate translation: "that is like walking with a splintered reed for a staff. If a man leans on it, it will stick into his hand and pierce it" (See: [Metaphor](#))

splintered reed

A reed is the long, thin stem of a plant like tall grass. If it is splintered or damaged it cannot carry any weight.

walking staff

This is a stick that someone would use for support when walking, made of whatever kind of tree limb that is found along the way.

ULT

⁶ Look, you are trusting in Egypt, that splintered reed that you use as a walking staff, but if a man leans on it, it will stick into his hand and pierce it. That is what Pharaoh king of Egypt {is} to anyone who trusts in him.

UST

⁶ Listen to me! You are relying on the army of Egypt. But that is like when a man tries to walk while leaning on a broken reed for a walking stick. But it would pierce the hand of anyone who would lean on it! That is what the king of Egypt is like for anyone who relies on him for help.

Isaiah 36:7

is not he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah has taken away ... Jerusalem”?

The king of Assyria uses this question to ridicule the people and to imply that Yahweh was angry about what Hezekiah did and would not protect them. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “he is the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah has taken away ... Jerusalem.” or “he is the one whom Hezekiah insulted by tearing down his high places and altars ... Jerusalem.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, “You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem”?

This can be written as an indirect quote. “Judah” and “Jerusalem” refer to the people who live in them. Alternate translation: “has told the people of Judah and Jerusalem that they must worship only at this altar in Jerusalem.” (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ But if you say to me, “We are trusting in Yahweh our God,” {is} not he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, “You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem”?

UST

⁷ But perhaps you will say to me that you are relying on Yahweh your God to help you. In that case, I would answer that Yahweh is the one whom Hezekiah insulted by tearing down his high places and altars and forcing everyone in Jerusalem and other places in Judah to worship only in front of the altar in Jerusalem.”

Isaiah 36:8

two thousand horses

"2,000 horses" (See: [Numbers](#))

if you are able to find riders for them

The chief commander continues to ridicule Hezekiah and his army by implying that he did not have many soldiers. (See: [Irony](#))

ULT

⁸ Now therefore, I want to make you a good offer from my master the king of Assyria. I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able to find riders for them.

UST

⁸ The Assyrian official talking in front of the city continued: "So I suggest that you make a deal with my master, the king of Assyria. I will give you two thousand horses, but I do not think that you can find two thousand of your own men who can ride on them!"

Isaiah 36:9

How could you resist even one captain ... servants?

The chief commander continues to ridicule Hezekiah and his army. When he says “you,” referring to Hezekiah, he is actually referring to Hezekiah’s army. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “Your army could not even defeat one captain ... servants.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ How could you resist even one captain of the least of my master’s servants? You have put your trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen!

UST

⁹ You are expecting the king of Egypt to send chariots and men riding horses to assist you. But they certainly would not be able to resist even the most insignificant official in the army of Assyria!

Isaiah 36:10

Now then, have I traveled up here without Yahweh to fight against this land and destroy it?

The chief commander uses another question to ridicule Hezekiah and the people of Judah. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "I came here with Yahweh's command to destroy Jerusalem." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

without Yahweh

Here "Yahweh" refers to Yahweh's orders. Alternate translation: "without Yahweh's command" (See: [Metonymy](#))

against this land and destroy it ... Attack this land and destroy it

This means to fight against the people and cause destruction in the place where they live. The land referred to here is Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "against this people and destroy their land ... Attack these people and destroy their land" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Now then, have I traveled up here without Yahweh to fight against this land and destroy it? Yahweh said to me, "Attack this land and destroy it.""

UST

¹⁰ Furthermore, do not think that we have come here to attack and destroy this land without Yahweh's orders! It is Yahweh himself who told us to come here and destroy this land!"

Isaiah 36:11

Eliakim ... Hilkiyah ... Shebna

See how you translated these men's names in [Isaiah 22:20](#).

Shebna

See how you translated this man's name in [Isaiah 22:15](#).

Joah

See how you translated this man's name in [Isaiah 36:3](#)

chief commander

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 36:2](#).

Please speak to your servants

Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah refer to themselves as the chief commander's servants. This is a polite way to speak to someone who has greater authority.

the Aramean language, Aramaic

"Aramean" is the name of a people group. "Aramaic" is the name of their language. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

in the ears of the people who are on the wall

The idiom "to speak in someone's ear" means to speak where they can hear you. Alternate translation: "where the people who are on the wall may hear us" (See: [Idiom](#))

who are on the wall

This means that they are standing on the wall. The top of the wall was wide and a place where people could sit or stand. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "who are standing on the wall" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

11 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, and Shebna, and Joah said to the chief commander, "Please speak to your servants in the Aramean language, Aramaic, for we understand {it}. Do not speak with us in the language of Judah in the ears of the people who are on the wall."

UST

11 Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the official from Assyria, "Please speak to us in your Aramaic language, because we understand it. Do not speak to us in our Hebrew language, because the people who are standing on the wall will understand it and become frightened."

Isaiah 36:12

Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words?

The chief commander uses this question to emphasize that his message is for all the people of Judah. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "Certainly, my master has sent me to speak this message to you and to all who can hear." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Has he not sent me to the men who sit on the wall, who will have to ... you?

The chief commander uses this question to emphasize his insult. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "My master has sent me to everyone who hears this, who will have to ... you." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

will have to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you

This is a very offensive statement. He is implying that they will need to eat these things because they will have nothing else to eat because their city will be under attack. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "will soon need to eat their own dung and drink their own urine, just as you will, because you will have nothing else to eat" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹² But the chief commander said, "Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words? Has he not sent me to the men who sit on the wall, who will have to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?"

UST

¹² But the official replied, "Do you think that my master sent me to say these things only to you, and not to the people standing on the wall? If you reject this message, the people in this city will soon need to eat their own dung and drink their own urine, just as you will, because you will have nothing else to eat. "

Isaiah 36:13

the chief commander

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 36:2](#).

ULT

13 Then the chief commander stood and shouted in a loud voice in the Jews' language, saying, "Listen to the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

UST

13 Then the official stood up and shouted in the Hebrew language to the people sitting on the wall. He said, "Listen to this message from the great king, the king of Assyria!

Isaiah 36:14

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁴ The king says, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to rescue you.'

UST

¹⁴ He says, 'Do not allow Hezekiah to deceive you! He will not be able to rescue you!'

Isaiah 36:15

this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will not give Jerusalem into the hand of the king of Assyria" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the hand of the king

The king's "hand" refers to his "control." Alternate translation: "the control of the king" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in Yahweh, saying, "Yahweh will surely rescue us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."

UST

¹⁵ Do not allow him to persuade you to trust in Yahweh, saying that Yahweh will rescue you, and that the army of the king of Assyria will never capture this city!

Isaiah 36:16

Make peace with me

This idiom means to agree officially to act peacefully towards one another. Alternate translation: "Let us agree to have peace" (See: [Idiom](#))

come out to me

This idiom means to surrender. Alternate translation: "surrender to me" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

16 Do not listen to Hezekiah, for this is what the king of Assyria says: 'Make {peace} with me and come out to me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and from his own fig tree, and drink from the water in his own cistern.

UST

16 Do not pay attention to what Hezekiah says! This is what the king of Assyria says: "Come out of the city and surrender to me. If you do that, I will arrange for each of you to drink the wine from your own grapevines and to eat figs from your own trees, and to drink water from your own well.

Isaiah 36:17

until I come and take

Here the king of Assyria is referring to his army as himself. Alternate translation: “until my army comes and takes” (See: [Metonymy](#))

a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards

These two phrase have the same meaning and are used together to emphasize how prosperous the land will be. (See: [Parallelism](#))

a land of grain ... a land of bread

This means that they land is full of natural resources, such as grain. Alternate translation: “a land where there is plenty of grain ... a land where there is plenty of bread” (See: [Possession](#))

ULT

17 You will do this until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.’

UST

17 You will be able to do that until we come and take you to a land that is like your land—a land where there is grain to make bread and vineyards to produce grapes for making new wine and, where we make plenty of bread.”

Isaiah 36:18

Has any of the gods of the peoples rescued them from ... Assyria?

The chief commander uses this question to ridicule the people of Judah. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "None of the gods of the peoples rescued them from ... Assyria." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

the hand of the king

The king's control is referred to as his "hand." Alternate translation: "the control of the king" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁸ Do not let Hezekiah mislead you, saying, 'Yahweh will rescue us.' Has any of the gods of the peoples rescued them from the hand of the king of Assyria?

UST

¹⁸ Do not allow Hezekiah to trick you by saying, "Yahweh will rescue us." The gods that people of other nations worship have never rescued any of them from the power of the king of Assyria!

Isaiah 36:19

**Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?
Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they
rescued Samaria from my power?**

The chief commander uses these questions to ridicule the people of Judah. These questions may be combined and written as a statement. Alternate translation: “The gods of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, and Samaria did not rescue their people from my power.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Hamath ... Arpad

Translate the names of these cities the same as you did in [Isaiah 10:9](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Sepharvaim

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

ULT

¹⁹ Where {are} the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where {are} the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they rescued Samaria from my power?

UST

¹⁹ Why were the gods of Hamath and Arpad cities, and the gods of Sepharvaim unable to rescue Samaria from my power?

Isaiah 36:20

is there any god who has rescued ... as if Yahweh could save Jerusalem from my power?

The chief commander uses this question to ridicule the people of Judah. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "there is no god who has rescued ... and Yahweh will not save you in Jerusalem from my power." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

his land

This refers to the people who live in the land. Alternate translation: "his people" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁰ Among all the gods of these lands, is there any god who has rescued his land from my power, as if Yahweh could save Jerusalem from my power?"

UST

²⁰ No, no god of any nation which our armies have attacked has been able to rescue their people from me. So why do you think that Yahweh will rescue you people of Jerusalem from my power?"

Isaiah 36:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ But the people remained silent and did not respond, for the king's order was, "Do not answer him."

UST

²¹ But the Hebrew soldiers who were listening were silent. No one said anything, because King Hezekiah had commanded them, "When the official from Assyria talks to you, do not answer him."

Isaiah 36:22

Eliakim ... Hilkiyah ... Shebna ... Joah ... Asaph

Translate the names of these men the same as you did in [Isaiah 36:3](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

over the household

This idiom means that he was in charge of the affairs of the palace household. Alternate translation: “in charge of the palace” (See: [Idiom](#))

with their clothes torn

Hezekiah’s officials tore their clothes as a sign of mourning and distress. The meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: “with their clothes torn because they were extremely distressed” (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

²² Then Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, who {was} over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with {their} clothes torn, and reported to him the words of the chief commander.

UST

²² Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah returned to Hezekiah with their clothes torn because they were extremely distressed. They told him what the official from Assyria had said.

Isaiah 37

Isaiah 37 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 37:22-38.

Special concepts in this chapter

Tearing clothes and putting on sackcloth

This was a sign of great distress. While it is often accompanies repentance, in this chapter it is intended to show the king's anger at the blasphemy of the Assyrians when they spoke against Yahweh. (See: [sign](#), [proof](#), [reminder](#) and [repent](#), [repentance](#) and [blasphemy](#), [blaspheme](#), [blasphemous](#))

Prayer

Hezekiah was different from the other kings because when he was threatened by Assyria, he went to Yahweh in prayer. He did not trust in his army or make an alliance with Egypt. (See: [trust](#), [trusted](#), [trustworthy](#), [trustworthiness](#))

Isaiah 37:1

It came about that

This phrase is used here to mark an important event in the story. If your language has a way for doing this, you could consider using it here. (See: [Introduction of a New Event](#))

he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth

This is a sign of mourning and distress. Alternate translation: “he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth because he was very distressed” (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

¹ It came about that when King Hezekiah heard {their report}, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Yahweh.

UST

¹ When King Hezekiah heard what they reported, he tore his clothes and put on clothes made of rough sackcloth because he was very distressed. Then he went into the temple of Yahweh and prayed.

Isaiah 37:2

Eliakim ... Shebna

Translate the names of these men the same as you did in [Isaiah 36:3](#).
(See: [How to Translate Names](#))

over the household

This is an idiom that means that he was in charge of the affairs of the palace household. Alternate translation: “in charge of the palace”
(See: [Idiom](#))

all covered with sackcloth

This is a sign of mourning and distress. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

ULT

² He sent Eliakim, who {was} over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, all covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah son of Amoz, the prophet.

UST

² Then he sent Eliakim, Shebna, and the older priests, who were also wearing clothes made of rough sackcloth, to talk to Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz.

Isaiah 37:3

They said to him

Alternate translation: "The men sent by Hezekiah said to Isaiah"

like when a child is ready to be born, but the mother has no strength to give birth to her child

This comparison is made to emphasize that they are in a time of extreme difficulty. Alternate translation: "It is as terrible as the day when a child is ready to be born, but the mother has no strength to give birth to her child" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

³ They said to him, "Hezekiah says, 'This day {is} a day of distress, rebuke, and disgrace, like when a child is ready to be born, but the mother {has} no strength to give birth to her child.'

UST

³ They told him, "Say this to Isaiah: 'King Hezekiah says that this is a day when we have great distress. Other nations are insulting and shaming us. We are like a woman who is about to give birth to a baby, but she does not have the strength that she needs to do it.'

Isaiah 37:4

It may be Yahweh your God will hear the words

Hezekiah is indirectly suggesting that if the people pray Yahweh may listen and act upon what the chief commander had said. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "Maybe if you pray to Yahweh your God will hear the message" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the chief commander

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 36:2](#).

his master

This phrase means that the king is the chief commander's master.

will rebuke the words which Yahweh your God has heard

Here the phrase "the words which Yahweh your God has heard" refers to what the king of Assyria had said. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "Yahweh your God will rebuke the king of Assyria for what he has said" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

lift up your prayer

Praying to Yahweh is described this way to emphasize that Yahweh is in heaven. A prayer is spoken of as if they were objects that could be lifted high into the sky. Alternate translation: "pray" (See: [Metaphor](#))

for the remnant that is still here

This refers to the people who are left in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "for the few of us that are still here" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ It may be Yahweh your God will hear the words of the chief commander, whom the king of Assyria his master has sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which Yahweh your God has heard. Now lift up {your} prayer for the remnant that is still here."

UST

⁴ But perhaps Yahweh our God has heard what the official from Assyria said. Perhaps God knows that the king of Assyria has sent his official to insult him, the all-powerful God. Perhaps Yahweh will punish the king of Assyria for what he said. And I, Hezekiah, request that you pray for the few of us who are still alive here in Jerusalem."

Isaiah 37:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah,

UST

⁵ After those men gave Isaiah that message,

Isaiah 37:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁶ and Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master: 'Yahweh says, "Do not be afraid of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have insulted me."

UST

⁶ he told them to say to the king that Yahweh says: "Those lackeys from the king of Assyria have said evil things about me. But do not let them worry you."

Isaiah 37:7

I will put a spirit in him, and he will hear a certain report and go back to his own land

The phrase “put a spirit in him” means that God will influence him to make a specific decision. The word “spirit” here means a strong attitude or feeling. Alternate translation: “I will influence him so that when he hears a certain report, he will go back to his own land” (See: [Idiom](#))

Look

This word is used here to draw the peoples’ attention to what is said next. Alternate translation: “Listen”

I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land

The phrase “fall by the sword” is an idiom that means that his enemy will kill him with a sword. Alternate translation: “And there in his own land, I will cause his enemies to kill him with their swords” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁷ Look, I will put a spirit in him, and he will hear a certain report and go back to his own land. I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”

UST

⁷ Listen to this: I will make Sennacherib hear some news from his own country that will worry him very much. So he will go back there, and I will make other men to assassinate him with their swords.”

Isaiah 37:8

Lachish

See how you translated the name of this city in [Isaiah 36:2](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Libnah

This is a city in southern Judah. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁸ Then the chief commander returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had gone away from Lachish.

UST

⁸ The official from Assyria learned that his king and the army of Assyria had left the city of Lachish and were now attacking Libnah, a nearby city. So the official left Jerusalem and went to Libnah to report to the king what had happened in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 37:9

Sennacherib

See how you translated this man's name in [Isaiah 36:1](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Tirhakah king of Cush and Egypt had mobilized to fight against him

"Tirhakah" is the name of a man. He had mobilized his army so that they were ready to fight. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "Tirhakah king of Cush and Egypt had mobilized his army" (See: [How to Translate Names](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

to fight against him

The word "him" represents Sennacherib. Here Sennacherib represents his army. Alternate translation: "to fight against the army of Sennacherib" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ Then Sennacherib heard that Tirhakah king of Cush and Egypt had mobilized to fight against him, so he sent messengers again to Hezekiah with a message:

UST

⁹ Soon after that, King Sennacherib received a report that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was leading his army to attack them. So he sent other messengers to Hezekiah with a letter. In the letter he wrote this to Hezekiah:

Isaiah 37:10

Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. The word “hand” refers to the king’s military power. Alternate translation: “The king of Assyria and his army will not conquer you in Jerusalem” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁰ “Say to Hezekiah, king of Judah, ‘Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, “Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.”

UST

¹⁰ “Do not allow your god, on whom you are relying, to deceive you by promising that he will keep my army from capturing Jerusalem.”

Isaiah 37:11

See, you have heard

The word “see” here is used to add emphasis to what is said next.
Alternate translation: “You have certainly heard”

So will you be rescued?

The king of Assyria uses this question to ridicule Hezekiah and his army. Alternate translation: “So you too will not be saved.” or “So of course no one will rescue you either!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

11 See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them completely. So will you be rescued?

UST

11 You have certainly heard what the armies of the kings of Assyria before me did to all the other countries; our armies destroyed them completely. So you really do not think that you will escape from me, do you?

Isaiah 37:12

Have the gods of the nations rescued them ... Tel Assar?

The king of Assyria uses this question to ridicule Hezekiah and his army. Alternate translation: “The nations’ god did not rescue the nations that my fathers destroyed ... Tel Assar!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

that my fathers destroyed

These men destroyed the cities listed by conquering them with their armies. Here the word “fathers” refers to his father and his other ancestors who were kings. Alternate translation: “that my fathers destroyed with their armies” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Gozan ... Haran ... Rezech ... Eden ... Tel Assar

These are places that the Assyrians had conquered. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹² Have the gods of the nations rescued them, the nations that my fathers destroyed: Gozan, Haran, Rezech, and the people of Eden in Tel Assar?

UST

¹² Did the gods of those nations rescue them? Did they rescue the region of Gozan, or the cities of Haran and Rezech in northern Aram, or the people of the region of Eden in the city of Tel Assar?

Isaiah 37:13

Hena ... Ivvah

These are places that the Assyrians had conquered. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Where is the king ... Ivvah?

The king of Assyria uses this question to ridicule Hezekiah and his army. Alternate translation: "We also conquered the king ... Ivvah!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Hamath ... Arpad ... Sepharvaim

Translate the names of these cities the same as you did in [Isaiah 36:19](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

13 Where {is} the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the cities of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah?"

UST

13 What happened to the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad? What happened to the kings of the cities of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Did their gods rescue them?"

Isaiah 37:14

from hand of the messengers

Here the messengers are referred to by their “hand” to emphasize that they personally gave it to the king. Alternate translation: “that the messengers gave him” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

he went up to the house of Yahweh

The house of Yahweh was at the highest place in Jerusalem, so it is spoken of as “up.”

spread it before him

“spread out the letter in front of Yahweh.” Being in the house of Yahweh is considered the same as being in Yahweh’s presence. The letter was a scroll that could be unrolled and spread out.

ULT

14 Hezekiah received this letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the house of Yahweh and spread it before him.

UST

14 Hezekiah received the letter that the messengers gave him, and he read it. Then he went up to the temple and spread out the letter in front of Yahweh.

Isaiah 37:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed to Yahweh:

UST

¹⁵ Then Hezekiah prayed this:

Isaiah 37:16

you who sit above the cherubim

You may need to make explicit that the cherubim are those on the lid of the ark of the covenant. The biblical writers often spoke of the ark of the covenant as if it were Yahweh's footstool upon which he rested his feet as he sat on his throne in heaven above. Alternate translation: "you who sit on your throne above the cherubim on the ark of the covenant" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

you are God alone

Alternate translation: "only you are God"

over all the kingdoms

This idiom means to have authority and to rule over all the kingdoms. Alternate translation: "have authority over all the kingdoms" (See: [Idiom](#))

You made the heavens and the earth

This means that he created everything. Alternate translation: "You made everything" (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

16 "Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, you who sit above the cherubim, you are God alone over all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and the earth.

UST

16 "Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies, the God to whom we Israelites belong, you are seated on your throne above the statues of the cherubim, above the sacred chest. Only you are truly God. You rule all the kingdoms on this earth. You are the one who created everything on the earth and in the sky.

Isaiah 37:17

which he has sent

Hezekiah is referring to the letter from Sennacherib. The meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: “in the message he has sent” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Turn your ear

“Incline your ear” or “Turn your head.” This means to turn your head so that you can hear something better.

Sennacherib

See how you translated this man’s name in [Isaiah 36:1](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

17 Turn your ear, Yahweh, and listen. Open your eyes, Yahweh, and see, and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God.

UST

17 So, Yahweh, please listen to what I am saying, and look at what is happening! And listen to what Sennacherib has said to insult you, the all-powerful God!

Isaiah 37:18

all the nations and their lands

This is a generalization. The kings had destroyed many of the nearby lands, but not necessarily all lands. Alternate translation: “many of the nations and their lands” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

18 It is true, Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have destroyed all the nations and their lands.

UST

18 Yahweh, it is true that the armies of the kings of Assyria have completely destroyed many nations and ruined their land.

Isaiah 37:19

for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, just wood and stone

This emphasizes that humans made these idols with their own hands and are therefore worthless. Alternate translation: "because they were false gods that men made out of wood and stone" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹⁹ They have put their gods into the fire, for they {were} not gods but the work of men's hands, just wood and stone. So the Assyrians have destroyed them.

UST

¹⁹ And they have thrown all the idols of those nations into fires and burned them. But they were not really gods. They were only idols made of wood and stone, and that is why they were able to be destroyed.

Isaiah 37:20

from his power

Alternate translation: "from the king of Assyria's power"

all the kingdoms

This refers to the people in the kingdoms. Alternate translation: "all the people in the kingdoms" (See: [Metonymy](#))

you are Yahweh alone

Alternate translation: "only you, Yahweh, are God"

ULT

²⁰ So now, Yahweh our God, save us from his power, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you {are} Yahweh alone."

UST

²⁰ So now, Yahweh our God, please rescue us from the power of the king of Assyria, in order that the people in all the kingdoms of the world may know that you, Yahweh, are the only one who is truly God."

Isaiah 37:21

sent a message

This means that he sent a messenger to give a message to the king.

Alternate translation: "sent someone to give a message" (See:

[Metonymy](#))

ULT

21 Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah, saying, "Yahweh, the God of Israel says, 'Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria,

UST

21 Then Isaiah sent a message to tell Hezekiah that Yahweh, whom the Israelites worshiped, said this to him: "Because you prayed about what King Sennacherib of Assyria said,

Isaiah 37:22

is the word that Yahweh has spoken

Alternate translation: "is what Yahweh has said"

laughs you to scorn

Alternate translation: "laughs at you" or "makes fun of you"

shakes her head

This is a gesture of scorn. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

The virgin daughter of Zion ... the daughter of Jerusalem

These are idioms. Both of these phrases have the same meaning. The "daughter" of a city means the people who live in the city. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 1:8](#). Alternate translation: "The people of Zion ... the people of Jerusalem" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²² this {is} the word that Yahweh has spoken about him: "The virgin daughter of Zion despises you and laughs you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem shakes {her} head at you."

UST

²² this is what I say to him: 'The people of Jerusalem despise you and make fun of you. They will wag their heads to mock you while you flee from here.'

Isaiah 37:23

Whom have you defied and insulted?...Against the Holy One of Israel.

Yahweh uses these rhetorical questions to ridicule the king of Assyria. These can be written as statements. Alternate translation: "You have defied and insulted Yahweh, you have shouted at and acted pridefully against the Holy One of Israel!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

have you exalted your voice

This refers to speaking loudly as if the person's voice were an object that they lifted high. Alternate translation: "have you shouted" (See: [Metaphor](#))

lifted up your eyes in pride

This is an idiom that means to look at something pridefully, considering yourself more important than you should. Alternate translation: "looked at pridefully" or "acted pridefully" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²³ Whom have you defied and insulted?
Against whom have you exalted {your}
voice and lifted up your eyes in pride?
Against the Holy One of Israel.

UST

²³ Who do you think you have been
despising and ridiculing? Who do you
think you were shouting at? Who do you
think you were looking at very proudly?
It was I, the Holy One whom the
Israelites worship!

Isaiah 37:24

By your servants

This refers to the servants that he had sent to Hezekiah with a message. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "In the messages you sent with your servants" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

I have gone ... I will cut ... I will enter

Here Sennacherib speaks of himself conquering many things. He is actually conquering them with the armies and chariots that he commands. Alternate translation: "We have gone ... We will cut ... we will enter" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

its tall cedars

Alternate translation: "Lebanon's tall cedars"

its most fruitful forest

Here the word "fruitful" refers to the forest being dense and full of healthy trees. The understood information may be supplied. Alternate translation: "and into its most fruitful forest" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

²⁴ By your servants you have defied the Lord and have said, 'With the multitude of my chariots I have gone up to the heights of the mountains, to the highest elevations of Lebanon. I will cut down its tall cedars and choice cypress trees there, and I will enter into its farthest high places, its most fruitful forest.'

UST

²⁴ The messengers whom you sent made fun of me. You said, "With my many chariots I have gone to the highest mountains, to the highest mountains in Lebanon. We have cut down its tallest cedar trees and its nicest pine trees. We have been to the most distant peaks and to its densest forests."

Isaiah 37:25

I have dug ... I dried ... my feet

Here Sennacherib speaks of himself conquering many things. He is actually conquering them with the armies and chariots that he commands. Alternate translation: "We have dug ... we dried ... our feet" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

I dried up all the rivers of Egypt under the soles of my feet

Here Sennacherib is exaggerating his conquest and travels across the rivers of Egypt by claiming to have dried up the rivers when he marched his army through them. Alternate translation: "I have marched through all the rivers of Egypt as if they were dry under my feet" (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

²⁵ I have dug wells and drunk water; ^[1] I dried up all the rivers of Egypt under the soles of my feet.'

UST

²⁵ We have dug wells in many countries and drunk water from them. And by marching through the streams of Egypt, we dried them all up!"

Isaiah 37:26

Have you not heard how ... times?

Yahweh uses this rhetorical question to remind Sennacherib of information that he should already be aware of. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “Certainly you have heard how ... times.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

You are here to reduce impregnable cities into heaps of ruins

Yahweh had planned for Sennacherib's army to destroy the cities that they had destroyed. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “I planned that your army would destroy cities and cause them to become piles of rubble” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

impregnable

strong and heavily guarded

I am bringing it to pass

The idiom “to bring something to pass” means to cause a specific thing to happen. Alternate translation: “I am causing it to happen” or “I am causing these things to take place” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁶ Have you not heard how I determined it long ago and worked it out in ancient times? Now I am bringing it to pass. You are here to reduce impregnable cities {into} heaps of ruins.

UST

²⁶ But I reply to him, ‘Have you never heard that long ago I determined those things; I planned it long ago, and now I have been causing it to occur. I planned that your army would destroy cities and cause them to become piles of rubble.

Isaiah 37:27

of little strength

Alternate translation: "who are weak"

shattered

broken into small pieces. This is a metaphor for being greatly discouraged. (See: [Metaphor](#))

They are plants in the field, green grass, the grass on the roof or in the field, before the east wind

This speaks of how weak and vulnerable the cities are before the Assyrian army by comparing the cities to grass. Alternate translation: "The cities are as weak as the grass in the fields before your armies. They are as weak as the grass that grows on the roofs of houses and is scorched by the hot east wind" (See: [Metaphor](#))

before the east wind

The east wind is hot and dry from the desert and plants die when it blows.

ULT

²⁷ Their inhabitants, of little strength, are shattered and ashamed. They are plants in the field, green grass, the grass on the roof or in the field, before the east wind.

UST

²⁷ The people in those cities have no power, and as a result they are dismayed and discouraged. They are as frail as grass and plants in the fields, as frail as grass that grows on the roofs of houses and is scorched by the hot east wind.

Isaiah 37:28

But I know your sitting down, your going out, your coming in

This refers to all activities of life. Alternate translation: "I know everything you do" (See: [Merism](#))

and your raging against me

The word "raging" can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: "how you rage against me" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁸ But I know your sitting down, your going out, your coming in, and your raging against me.

UST

²⁸ But I know everything about you; I know when you are in your house and when you go outside; I also know that you are raging against me.

Isaiah 37:29

your arrogance

Here the king's "arrogance" refers to his arrogant speech. Alternate translation: "your arrogant speech" (See: [Metonymy](#))

your arrogance has reached my ears

This speaks of Yahweh hearing the king's speech as if the king's speech were something that traveled to his ear. Alternate translation: "I have heard you speaking arrogantly" (See: [Metaphor](#))

I will put my hook in your nose, and my bit in your mouth

A person uses a hook and bit to lead an animal around. This speaks of Yahweh controlling the king as if the king were an animal Yahweh controlled with a bit and hook. Alternate translation: "I will control you like a man controls his animal by place a hook in its nose and a bit in its mouth" (See: [Metaphor](#))

I will turn you back the way you came

This refers to causing the king to return to his own home country. The meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: "I will force you to return to your own country" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

29 Because of your raging against me, and because your arrogance has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose, and my bit in your mouth; I will turn you back the way you came."

UST

29 So because you have raged against me and because I have heard you speak very proudly, it will be as though I will put a hook in your nose and an iron bit in your mouth in order that I can take you where I wish, and I will force you to return to your own country, on the same road on which you came here, without conquering Jerusalem."

Isaiah 37:30

sign for you

“sign for you, Hezekiah.” Here “you” is singular and refers to Hezekiah. (See: [Forms of You](#))

you will eat ... you must plant

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

in the second year what grows

This describes what the people will eat. The words “you will eat” are understood from the previous phrase Alternate translation: “in the second year you will eat what grows” or “next year you will eat what grows” (See: [Ellipsis](#) and [Ordinal Numbers](#))

what grows from that

Alternate translation: “what grows wild from that” or “what grows wild”

in the third year

This refers to the year after the second year. Alternate translation: “the year after that” or “in the following year” (See: [Ordinal Numbers](#))

ULT

³⁰ This {will be} the sign for you: This year you will eat what grows wild, and in the second year what grows from that. But in the third year you must plant and harvest, plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

UST

³⁰ “This will prove to you, Hezekiah that it is I, Yahweh, who will make all this happen: This year, you will eat only the crops that grow by themselves, and next year the same thing will happen. But in the third year you will plant crops and harvest them; you will take care of your vineyards and eat the grapes.

Isaiah 37:31

remnant

A “remnant” is a part of something that remains after the rest is gone. Here this refers to the people who are left in Judah.

the house of Judah

Here Judah’s “house” refers to his descendants. Alternate translation: “the descendants of Judah” (See: [Metonymy](#))

will again take root and bear fruit

This speaks of the people of Judah becoming prosperous as if they were plants that would root and bear fruit. Alternate translation: “will prosper like a plant that takes root and produces fruit” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

31 The remnant of the house of Judah that survives will again take root and bear fruit.

UST

31 You people who are still here in Judah, will be strong and prosper again.

Isaiah 37:32

For from Jerusalem a remnant will come out; from Mount Zion survivors will come

These two phrases have the same meaning and are used together to emphasize the remnant of people who will survive. (See: [Parallelism](#))

The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this

This speaks of Yahweh doing something because of his zeal as if his "zeal" were actually doing the action. Alternate translation: "Because of his zeal, Yahweh of hosts will do this" or "Yahweh of hosts will do this because of his zeal" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³² For from Jerusalem a remnant will come out; from Mount Zion survivors will come. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this."

UST

³² A small number of my people will survive, and they will spread out from Jerusalem. That will happen because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is desiring very much to accomplish it."

Isaiah 37:33

He will not come ... He will not come

Here the Assyrian king refers to both him and his army. Alternate translation: "His army will not come ... They will not come" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

with shield

Alternate translation: "with shields"

siege ramp

a large mound of dirt built against the wall of a city that better enables an army to attack the city

ULT

33 Therefore Yahweh says this about the king of Assyria: "He will not come into this city and he will not shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build up a siege ramp against it.

UST

33 "This is what Yahweh says about the king of Assyria: 'His armies will not enter Jerusalem; they will not even shoot a single arrow into it. His soldiers will not bring one shield up to Jerusalem, and they will not build high mounds of dirt against the walls of the city to enable them to attack the city.

Isaiah 37:34

he came ... he will not enter

Here the Assyrian king refers to both him and his army. Alternate translation: “they came ... they will not enter” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

this is Yahweh’s declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Translate as in [Isaiah 30:1](#). Alternate translation: “this is what Yahweh has declared” or “this is what I, Yahweh, have declared” (See: [First](#), [Second](#) or [Third Person](#))

ULT

³⁴ The way by which he came will be the same way he will leave; he will not enter this city—this is Yahweh’s declaration.

UST

³⁴ Instead, their king will return to his own country on the same road on which he came here. He will not enter this city! That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!

Isaiah 37:35

for my own sake and for David my servant's sake

Alternate translation: "so that things will be better for me and for my servant David"

ULT

³⁵ For I will defend this city and rescue it, for my own sake and for David my servant's sake."

UST

³⁵ For the sake of my own reputation and because of what I promised King David, who served me well, I will defend this city and prevent it from being destroyed."

Isaiah 37:36

putting to death

This idiom means to kill. Alternate translation: “killing” (See: [Idiom](#))

185,000 soldiers

“one hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers” (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

³⁶ Then the angel of Yahweh went out and attacked the camp of the Assyrians, putting to death 185,000 soldiers. When {the men} arose early in the morning, dead bodies lay everywhere.

UST

³⁶ That night, an angel from Yahweh went out to where the army of Assyria had set up their tents and killed 185,000 of their soldiers. When the rest of the soldiers woke up the next morning, they saw that there were corpses everywhere.

Isaiah 37:37

Sennacherib king of Assyria left Israel and went home and stayed in Nineveh

Here Sennacherib refers to both him and his army. They all left Israel and returned home to Assyria. Sennacherib returned to the city Nineveh. Alternate translation: “Sennacherib and his army left Israel and went home, and Sennacherib stayed in Nineveh” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Sennacherib

See how you translated this man’s name in [Isaiah 36:1](#). (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

³⁷ So Sennacherib king of Assyria left Israel and went {home} and stayed in Nineveh.

UST

³⁷ Then King Sennacherib left and returned home to Nineveh in Assyria and stayed there.

Isaiah 37:38

as he was worshipping

Alternate translation: "as Sennacherib was worshipping"

Nisrok

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

Adrammelek ... Sharezer ... Esarhaddon

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

with the sword

Alternate translation: "with their swords"

ULT

³⁸ Later, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisrok his god, his sons Adrammelek and Sharezer killed him with the sword. Then they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

UST

³⁸ One day, when he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his two sons, Adrammelek and Sharezer, killed him with their swords. Then they escaped and went to the region of Ararat northwest of Nineveh. And another of Sennacherib's sons, Esarhaddon, became the king of Assyria.

Isaiah 38

Isaiah 38 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 38:10-20.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Poetry

This chapter is written as a narrative, but the section including Hezekiah's prayer is written as poetry. The tone of this prayer shifts from sorrow to praise.

Isaiah 38:1

Set your house in order

This means to prepare your family and those in charge of your affairs so that they know what to do after you die. This can be written clearly. Alternate translation: "You should tell the people in your palace what you want them to do after you die" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹ In those days Hezekiah was sick to the point of dying. So Isaiah son of Amoz, the prophet, came to him, and said to him, "Yahweh says, 'Set your house in order; for you will die, not live.'"

UST

¹ About that time, Hezekiah became very ill and was close to dying. So Isaiah went to see him and gave him this message: "This is what Yahweh says: 'You should tell the people in your palace what you want them to do after you die because you will not recover from this illness. You are going to die'"

Isaiah 38:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to Yahweh.

UST

² Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed this:

Isaiah 38:3

call to mind

This idiom means to remember. Alternate translation: “remember” (See: [Idiom](#))

faithfully walked before you

This is an idiom. Here “walk” means to “live.” The phrase means to live in a way the pleases Yahweh. Alternate translation: “faithfully lived before you” or “faithfully served you” (See: [Idiom](#))

with my whole heart

Here the “heart” refers to the inner-being which represents a person’s complete devotion. Alternate translation: “with all my inner being” or “with my complete devotion” (See: [Metonymy](#))

what was good in your sight

The sight of Yahweh represents Yahweh’s judgment or evaluation. Alternate translation: “what pleases you” or “what you consider to be good” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ He said, “Please, Yahweh, call to mind how I have faithfully walked before you with my whole heart, and how I have done {what was} good in your sight.” Then Hezekiah wept loudly.

UST

³ “Yahweh, do not forget that I have always served you faithfully with all my inner being, and I have done things that pleased you!” Then Hezekiah started to cry loudly.

Isaiah 38:4

the word of Yahweh came

This is an idiom that is used to introduce something that God told his prophets or his people. Alternate translation: “Yahweh spoke this message” or “Yahweh spoke these words” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁴ Then the word of Yahweh came to Isaiah, saying,

UST

⁴ Then Yahweh gave Isaiah this message:

Isaiah 38:5

See

This is used to ask the listener to pay attention to what is said next.
Alternate translation: "Listen"

fifteen years

"15 years" (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

⁵ "Go and say to Hezekiah, the leader of my people, 'This is what Yahweh, the God of David your ancestor, says: I have heard your prayer, and I have seen your tears. See, I am about to add fifteen years to your life.

UST

⁵ "Go back to Hezekiah and tell him that this is what I, the God to whom your ancestor King David belonged, say: 'I have heard what you prayed, and I have seen you crying. So listen: I will enable you to live fifteen years more.

Isaiah 38:6

the hand of the king of Assyria

Here the king's "hand" refers to his power. Alternate translation: "the power of the king of Assyria" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ Then I will rescue you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.

UST

⁶ And I will rescue you and this city from the power of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city.

Isaiah 38:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ This will be the sign to you from Yahweh, that I will do what I have promised.

UST

⁷ And this is what I will do to prove to you that I will do what I have just now promised.

Isaiah 38:8

Look

Yahweh uses this word to draw the listener's attention to what is said next. Alternate translation: "Listen"

stairs of Ahaz

These stairs are referred to this way because they were built while Ahaz was king. You can make this information clear. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ Look, I will cause the shadow on the stairs of Ahaz to go back ten steps." So the shadow went back ten steps of the stairs on which it had advanced.

UST

⁸ I will cause the shadow of the sun to move ten steps backward on the stairs that were built by King Ahaz." So the shadow of the sun on the stairs moved backward ten steps.

Isaiah 38:9

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁹ This was the written prayer of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and then recovered:

UST

⁹ When King Hezekiah was almost well again, he wrote this:

Isaiah 38:10

that halfway through my life

“that before I have grown old.” This refers to dying at middle age, before growing old.

I will go through the gates of Sheol

This speaks of dying as if Sheol were a kingdom that has gates that one enters. Alternate translation: “I will die and go to Sheol” (See: [Metaphor](#))

I am sent there for the rest of my years

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “before I have lived all of my years I will go to the grave” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

10 “I said that halfway through my life I will go through the gates of Sheol; I am sent there for the rest of my years.

UST

10 I said to myself, “In the middle of my life I am about to walk through the gates of death, and Yahweh is taking from me the rest of my years.

Isaiah 38:11

in the land of the living

“The living” refers to people who are alive. Alternate translation: “in the land where people are alive” or “in this world where people are alive” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

11 I said that I will no longer see Yahweh, Yahweh in the land of the living; I will no longer look on mankind or the inhabitants of the world. ^[1]

UST

11 I said, “I will not see Yahweh again in this world where people are alive. I will not see my friends again, or be with others who now are alive in this world.”

Isaiah 38:12

My life is removed and carried away from me like a shepherd's tent

This speaks of how Yahweh is ending Hezekiah's life quickly by comparing it to how a shepherd removes his tent from the ground. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has taken my life away from me quickly like a shepherd packs up his tent and carries it away" (See: [Simile](#))

My life is removed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has taken my life" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

I have rolled up my life like a weaver; you are cutting me off from the loom

This speaks of Yahweh quickly ending Hezekiah's life by comparing it to how a weaver cuts his cloth from the loom and rolls it up. Alternate translation: "you are ending my life quickly, like a weaver cuts his cloth from the loom when it is finished" (See: [Simile](#))

you are cutting

Here "you" is singular and refers to God. (See: [Forms of You](#))

loom

a device used to weave thread together to make cloth

ULT

¹² My life is removed and carried away from me like a shepherd's tent; I have rolled up my life like a weaver; you are cutting me off from the loom; between day and night you are ending my life.

UST

¹² It is as if my life had been taken away like a tent whose pegs have been pulled up by a shepherd and taken away. I have to roll up my life like a weaver, like a piece of cloth that a weaver cuts and rolls up, Yahweh has cut off my life." Between morning and evening he will kill me off.

Isaiah 38:13

like a lion he breaks all my bones

Hezekiah speaks of how he is in extreme pain by comparing it to having his body torn apart by lions. Alternate translation: "my pain was as though I were being torn apart by lions" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

13 I cried out ^[2] until the morning; like a lion he breaks all my bones. Between day and night you are ending my life.

UST

13 I waited patiently all during the night, but my pain was as though I were being torn apart by lions. Between morning and evening he will kill me off.

Isaiah 38:14

Like a swallow I chirp; I coo like a dove

Both of these clauses mean the same thing and they emphasize how sad and pitiful Hezekiah's cries were. A swallow and a dove are types of birds. Alternate translation: "My cries are pitiful--they sound like the chirp of a swallow and the coo of a dove" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Simile](#))

my eyes

Here Hezekiah refers to himself by his "eyes" to emphasize that he is looking for something. Alternate translation: "I" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

with looking upward

This refers to Hezekiah looking to heaven for God to help him. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "of waiting for help to come from heaven" or "of waiting for you to help me" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

I am oppressed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "My sickness oppresses me" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

14 Like a swallow I chirp; I coo like a dove; my eyes grow tired {with} {looking} upward. Lord, I am oppressed; help me.

UST

14 I was delirious; I chirped like a swift or a swallow and moaned like a dove. My eyes became tired looking up toward heaven for help. I cried out, 'Yahweh, help me, because I am distressed!'

Isaiah 38:15

What shall I say?

Hezekiah uses a question to emphasize he has nothing left to say. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "I have nothing left to say." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

I will walk slowly

This is an idiom. Here "walking" refers to living. Alternate translation: "I will live humbly" (See: [Idiom](#))

all my years

This refers to the rest of his life. The meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: "the rest of my life" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

because I am overcome with grief

Alternate translation: "because I am full of grief" or "because I am very sad"

ULT

¹⁵ What shall I say? He has both spoken to me, and has done {it}; I will walk slowly all my years because I am overcome with grief.

UST

¹⁵ But there was really nothing that I could say and ask him to reply to me, because it was Yahweh who sent this illness. So now I will live humbly during my remaining years because I am very anguished within myself.

Isaiah 38:16

may my life be given back to me

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “may you give my life back to me” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁶ Lord, the sufferings you send are good for me; may my life be given back to me; you have restored my life and health.

UST

¹⁶ Yahweh, the sufferings that you give are good, because what you do and what you say bring new life and health to me. And you have restored me and allowed me to continue to live!

Isaiah 38:17

from the pit of destruction

Hezekiah did not die but he was close to dying. This refers Yahweh saving him from dying. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: “from dying and going to the pit of destruction” or “so that I did not die” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

for you have thrown all my sins behind your back

Hezekiah speaks of Yahweh forgiving his sins as if they were objects that Yahweh threw behind himself and forgot about. Alternate translation: “for you have forgiven all my sins and no longer think about them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁷ {It was} for {my} benefit that I experienced such grief. You have {rescued} me from the pit of destruction; for you have thrown all my sins behind your back.

UST

¹⁷ Truly, my suffering was good for me; you loved me, and as a result you have rescued me from dying and have also forgiven all my sins.

Isaiah 38:18

For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you

Here “Sheol” and “death” refer to “dead people.” Alternate translation: “For those in Sheol do not thank you; dead people do not praise you” (See: [Metonymy](#))

those who go down into the pit

Alternate translation: “those who go down to the grave”

do not hope in your trustworthiness

“do not have hope in your faithfulness.” Here “your” is singular and refers to Yahweh. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

¹⁸ For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down into the pit do not hope in your trustworthiness.

UST

¹⁸ Dead people cannot praise you; they cannot sing to praise you. Those who have descended to their graves cannot expect you to faithfully do things for them.

Isaiah 38:19

The living person, the living person

Hezekiah repeats this phrase to emphasize that only a living person, not a dead person, can give thanks to Yahweh. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

19 The living person, the living person, he is the one who gives you thanks, as I {do} this day; a father makes known to children your trustworthiness.

UST

19 Only people who are still alive, like I am, can praise you. Fathers tell their children how you are faithful, and if I remain alive, I will do the same thing.

Isaiah 38:20

save me

This refers to him being saved from dying. It can be made more explicit. Alternate translation: “save me from dying” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

we will celebrate

Here “we” refers to Hezekiah and the people of Judah. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

ULT

20 Yahweh {is about} to save me, and we will celebrate with music all the days of our lives in the house of Yahweh.”

UST

20 Yahweh will fully heal me, so we will sing praise to him while others praise him playing musical instruments. We will do that every day of our lives in the temple of Yahweh.”

Isaiah 38:21

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the main story line. This gives background information about Isaiah and Hezekiah. (See: [Background Information](#))

Let them

Alternate translation: "Let Hezekiah's servants"

a lump of figs

This was used as an ointment. The meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: "use an ointment of mashed figs" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

boil

a painful area on the skin that is infected

ULT

²¹ Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a lump of figs and put {it} on the boil, and he will recover."

UST

²¹ Isaiah had previously said to Hezekiah's servants, "Prepare an ointment from mashed figs, and spread it on his boil, and then he will recover." So they did that, and Hezekiah recovered.

Isaiah 38:22

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²² Hezekiah also had said, “What {will be} the sign that I should go up to the house of Yahweh?”

UST

²² And Hezekiah had previously asked, “What will Yahweh do to prove that I will recover and be able to go to his temple?”

Isaiah 39

Isaiah 39 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Pride

Although it is not said why it was sinful for Hezekiah to show the king of Babylon his riches, the sin was probably because of his pride. It can be viewed as bragging to another king about how rich and powerful he was without giving proper credit to Yahweh. Because of this sin, Yahweh punished him. (See: [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Babylon

At this time, Babylon was not very powerful, but was little more than a city. In a short time, however, Babylon became a very powerful nation and conquered Assyria.

Isaiah 39:1

Marduk-Baladan ... Baladan

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

ULT

¹ At that time Marduk-Baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah; for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick and had recovered.

UST

¹ Soon after that, Baladan's son Marduk-Baladan, the king of Babylon, heard a report that Hezekiah had been very sick but that he had recovered. So he wrote some letters and gave them to some messengers to take to Hezekiah, along with a gift.

Isaiah 39:2

Hezekiah was pleased by these things

This can be made more explicit. Alternate translation: “When the king’s messengers arrived, Hezekiah was pleased with what they brought to him” (See: [Assumed Knowledge](#) and [Implicit Information](#))

showed the messengers his storehouse of valuable things

Alternate translation: “he showed the messengers everything of value he had”

storehouse

a building where goods are kept

all that was found in his storehouses

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “everything that was in his storehouses” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

There was nothing in his house, nor in all his kingdom, that Hezekiah did not show them

This is a slight exaggeration as Hezekiah showed them many things, but not everything. Also, this can be expressed positively. Alternate translation: “Hezekiah showed them almost everything in his house and in his kingdom” (See: [Double Negatives](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

² Hezekiah was pleased by these things; he showed the messengers his storehouse of valuable things—the silver, the gold, the spices and precious oil, the storehouse of his weapons, and all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house, nor in all his kingdom, that Hezekiah did not show them.

UST

² When the messengers arrived, Hezekiah welcomed them gladly. Then he showed them everything that was in his treasure houses—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the nice-smelling olive oil. He also took them to see the place where they kept their soldiers’ weapons, and he showed them the other valuable things that were in the storehouses. Hezekiah showed them everything that was in the palace or in other places.

Isaiah 39:3

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³ Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did these men say to you? Where did they come from?" Hezekiah said, "They came to me from the distant country of Babylon."

UST

³ Then Isaiah went to King Hezekiah and asked him, "Where did those men come from, and what did they want?" He replied, "They came from the far away land of Babylon."

Isaiah 39:4

They have seen everything in my house. There is nothing among my valuable things that I have not shown them

These two sentences mean the same thing and are used together to emphasize how much Hezekiah showed the men. (See: [Parallelism](#))

everything in my house

This is a generalization, as Hezekiah showed them many things, but not necessarily everything in the palace. Alternate translation: “almost everything in my house” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

There is nothing among my valuable things that I have not shown them

This can be expressed positively. Alternate translation: “I showed them all the valuable things in my palace” (See: [Double Negatives](#))

ULT

⁴ Isaiah asked, “What have they seen in your house?” Hezekiah answered, “They have seen everything in my house. There is nothing among my valuable things that I have not shown them.”

UST

⁴ Isaiah asked him, “What did they see in your palace?” Hezekiah replied, “They saw everything. I showed them absolutely everything that I own—all my valuable things.”

Isaiah 39:5

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

the word

Alternate translation: “the message”

ULT

⁵ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Listen to the word of Yahweh of hosts:

UST

⁵ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Listen to this message from Yahweh, commander of the angel armies:

Isaiah 39:6

Look

This word is used here to draw Hezekiah's attention to what is said next. Alternate translation: "Listen"

when everything in your palace ... will be carried to Babylon

This can be expressed positively. Alternate translation: "when the enemy army will take everything in your palace ... back to Babylon" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁶ 'Look, the days are about to come when everything in your palace, the things that your ancestors stored away until this present day, will be carried to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says Yahweh.

UST

⁶ There will be a time when everything in your palace, all the valuable things that your ancestors stored there up until the present time, will be carried away to Babylon. Yahweh says that there will be nothing left.

Isaiah 39:7

The sons born from you

Alternate translation: "Your sons"

they will take them

Alternate translation: "the Babylonians will take them"

ULT

⁷ The sons born from you, whom you yourself have fathered—they will take them away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

UST

⁷ Furthermore, some of your sons will be forced to go to Babylon. They will be castrated in order that they can become servants in the palace of the king of Babylon."

Isaiah 39:8

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁸ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of Yahweh that you have spoken {is} good." For he thought, "There will be peace and stability in my days."

UST

⁸ Then Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, "The message from Yahweh that you have given to me is good." He said that because he was thinking, "Even if that happens, there will be peace and safety here during the time that I am alive."

Isaiah 40

Isaiah 40 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

Yahweh uses many rhetorical questions in this chapter. These rhetorical questions help to prove the point he is making and convince the reader. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“She has received double from Yahweh’s hand for all her sins”

It is common in many languages to use the feminine “she” to refer to a nation, rather than the word “it,” which is neither masculine or feminine. The translator should use the pronoun that aligns with the common usage in the target language. Therefore, it is acceptable to use “he,” “she,” or “it” in reference to a nation.

The phrase “received double” indicates that Jerusalem was punished more severely than the other nations. This is because they had the privilege of a special relationship to Yahweh and had more knowledge than the other nations.

Reign of Yahweh

This chapter appears to prophesy about a time of restoration when the Messiah will reign. It pictures a time of great peace and harmony in the world. The translator does not need to add an explanation, but should try to maintain the tense of the original text, as a future or uncompleted action. It does not appear that this prophecy was fulfilled in the days of Isaiah. (See: [restore](#), [restoration](#), [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [Christ](#), [Messiah](#) and [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Isaiah 40:1

Comfort, comfort

The word “comfort” is repeated for emphasis.

says your God

Here “your” is plural and refers to those whom the prophet tells to comfort God’s people. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

¹ “Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God.

UST

¹ Our God says, “Encourage my people! Encourage them!”

Isaiah 40:2

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem

The prophet speaks of Jerusalem as if it were a woman whom Yahweh has forgiven. As such, Jerusalem represents the people who live in that city. Alternate translation: "Speak tenderly to the people of Jerusalem" (See: [Personification](#) and [Metonymy](#))

proclaim to her ... her warfare ... her iniquity ... she has received ... her sins

These pronouns refer to Jerusalem but may be changed if "the people of Jerusalem" is adopted as a translation. Alternate translation: "proclaim to them ... their warfare ... their iniquity ... they have received ... their sins" (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

her warfare

Possible meanings are that the word **warfare** refers: (1) to military battle or (2) to forced labor.

her iniquity is pardoned

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has pardoned her iniquity" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

from Yahweh's hand

Here the word "hand" represents Yahweh himself. Alternate translation: "from Yahweh" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

² "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem; and proclaim to her that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received double from Yahweh's hand for all her sins."

UST

² Speak kindly to the people of Jerusalem; tell them that their suffering is ended Yahweh has forgiven them for the sins that they have committed. He has fully punished them for their sins."

Isaiah 40:3

A voice cries out

The word “voice” represents the person who cries out. Alternate translation: “Someone cries out” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

In the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh; make straight in the Arabah a highway for our God

These two lines are parallel and mean basically the same thing. The people preparing themselves for Yahweh’s help is spoken of as if they were to prepare roads for Yahweh to travel upon. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Arabah

See how you translated this word in [Isaiah 35:1](#).

ULT

³ A voice cries out, “In the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh; make straight in the Arabah a highway for our God.” ^[1]

UST

³ Someone is shouting, “In the desert plain make the way straight for Yahweh to come to you; make a smooth road for our God.”

Isaiah 40:4

Every valley will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill will be leveled

These phrases explain how the people are to prepare a highway for Yahweh. They can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Lift up every valley, and level every mountain and hill" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Every valley will be lifted up

Making the valleys level with the rest of the ground is spoken of as if it were lifting up the valleys. Alternate translation: "Every valley will be filled in" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Every valley will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill will be leveled; and the rugged land will be made level, and the rough places a plain;

UST

⁴ Fill in the valleys; flatten every hill and every mountain. Make the uneven ground smooth, and make the rough places smooth.

and the rugged land will be made level, and the rough places a plain

These phrases explain how the people are to prepare a highway for Yahweh. They can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "make the rugged land level, and make the rough places into a plain" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

Isaiah 40:5

the glory of Yahweh will be revealed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will reveal his glory” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken it

The word “mouth” represents Yahweh himself. Alternate translation: “for Yahweh has spoken it” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁵ and the glory of Yahweh will be revealed, and all people will see {it} together; for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken it.

UST

⁵ If you do that, it will become known that Yahweh is glorious, and all people will realize it at the same time. Those things will surely happen because it is Yahweh who has said it.”

Isaiah 40:6

All flesh is grass

The word “flesh” refers to people. The speaker speaks of humans as if they are grass, because they both die quickly. Alternate translation: “All people are like grass” (See: [Metaphor](#))

all their covenant faithfulness is like the flower of the field

The speaker compares the covenant faithfulness of people to flowers that bloom and then die quickly. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **faithfulness**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “faithful.” See how you translated “covenant faithfulness” in [Isaiah 16:5](#). Alternate translation: “they quickly stop being faithful to the covenant, just like a flower of the field dies quickly” (See: [Simile](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

covenant faithfulness

This could mean: (1) covenant faithfulness or (2) beauty.

ULT

⁶ A voice says, “Cry.” Another answers, “What should I cry?” “All flesh {is} grass, and all their covenant faithfulness {is} like the flower of the field.

UST

⁶ Someone said to me, “Shout!” I replied, “What should I shout?” He replied, “Shout that people are like grass; their faithfulness fades as quickly as flowers in the field.

Isaiah 40:7

when the breath of Yahweh blows on it

This could mean: (1) “when Yahweh blows his breath on it” or (2) “when Yahweh sends a wind to blow on it.”

humanity is grass

The speaker speaks of humans as if they are grass, because they both die quickly. Alternate translation: “people die as quickly as grass” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ The grass withers and the flower wilts when the breath of Yahweh blows on it; surely humanity {is} grass.

UST

⁷ Grass withers and flowers dry up when Yahweh causes a hot wind from the desert to blow on them. And all people are like that.

Isaiah 40:8

the word of our God will stand forever

The speaker speaks of what God says lasting forever as if his word stands forever. Alternate translation: “the things that our God says will last forever” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ The grass withers, the flower wilts, but the word of our God will stand forever.”

UST

⁸ The grass withers and the flowers dry up, but what our God promises will last forever.”

Isaiah 40:9

Go up on a high mountain, Zion, bearer of good news

The writer speaks of Zion as if it were a messenger who declares good news from a mountain top. (See: [Personification](#))

Go up on a high mountain

Messengers would often stand on elevated land, such as mountains, so that many people could hear what they proclaimed. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Zion

This refers to the people who live in Zion. Alternate translation: “you people of Zion” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Jerusalem. You who bring good news

The writer speaks of Jerusalem as if it were a messenger who declares good news. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

⁹ Go up on a high mountain, Zion, bearer of good news. ^[2] Shout out loud, Jerusalem. You who bring good news, {raise your voice}, do not be afraid. ^[3] Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”

UST

⁹ All of you who bring good news to Zion, shout it from the high mountain! Every one of you who brings good news to the people who live in Jerusalem, shout out loud the message you have to tell! Shout it out! Do not be afraid! Say to the people living in the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”

Isaiah 40:10

his strong arm rules for him

Here the word “arm” represents God’s power. Alternate translation: “he rules with great power” (See: [Metonymy](#))

his reward is with him ... those he has rescued go before him

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The ones he rescued are his “reward.” Alternate translation: “he is bringing those he rescued with him as his reward” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

10 Look, the Lord Yahweh comes as a victorious warrior, and his strong arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and those he has rescued go before him.

UST

10 Yahweh your God will be coming with power, he will rule powerfully. When he comes, he will bring with him the people whom he has freed from being slaves in Babylonia.

Isaiah 40:11

He will feed his flock like a shepherd

The writer speaks of Yahweh's people as if they were sheep and of Yahweh as if he were their shepherd. Alternate translation: "He will care for his people like a shepherd feeds his flock" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather in his arm the lambs, and carry {them} close to his heart, {and} will gently lead the ewes nursing their young.

UST

11 He will take care of his people like a shepherd takes care of his sheep, and carries the young lambs in his arms. He carries them close to his chest and he gently leads the female sheep that are nursing their young lambs.

Isaiah 40:12

Who has measured ... or the hills in a balance?

These rhetorical questions anticipate a negative answer and emphasize that only Yahweh is able to do these things. Alternate translation: "No one but Yahweh has measured ... and the hills in a balance." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

measured the waters in the hollow of his hand

Yahweh knowing how much water is in the oceans is spoken of as if Yahweh held the water in his hand. (See: [Metaphor](#))

measured the sky with the span of his hand

A "span" is the measure of length between the thumb and little finger when the hand is outstretched. Yahweh knowing the length of the sky is spoken of as if he measured it with his hand. (See: [Metaphor](#))

held the dust of the earth in a basket

Yahweh knowing how much dust there is on the earth is spoken of as if he carried it in a basket. (See: [Metaphor](#))

weighed the mountains in scales, or the hills in a balance?

Yahweh knowing how heavy the mountains are is spoken of as if he weighed them in scales and balances. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, measured the sky with the span of his hand, held the dust of the earth in a basket, weighed the mountains in scales, or the hills in a balance?

UST

¹² There is no one like Yahweh! Who else has measured the water in the oceans in the palm of his hand? Who else has measured the sky? Who else knows how much soil is in the earth? Who else has weighed the mountains and hills on scales?

Isaiah 40:13

Who has comprehended the mind of Yahweh, or instructed him as his counselor?

This rhetorical question anticipates a negative answer and emphasizes that no one is able to do these things. Alternate translation: "No one has comprehended the mind of Yahweh, and no one has instructed him as his counselor." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

comprehended the mind of Yahweh

Here the word "mind" refers not only to Yahweh's thoughts, but also to his desires and motivations.

ULT

¹³ Who has comprehended the mind of Yahweh, or instructed him {as} his counselor?

UST

¹³ And who else can advise Yahweh?
Who can teach him or advise him what he should do?

Isaiah 40:14

From whom did he ever receive instruction?

This rhetorical question anticipates a negative answer and emphasizes that no one has ever done this. Alternate translation: "He has never received instruction from anyone." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Who taught him the correct way to do things, and taught him knowledge, or showed to him the way of understanding?

This rhetorical question anticipates a negative answer and emphasizes that no one has ever done these things. Alternate translation: "No one taught him the correct way to do things. No one taught him knowledge. No one showed to him the way of understanding." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁴ {From whom} did he ever receive instruction? Who taught him the correct way to do things, and taught him knowledge, or showed to him the way of understanding?

UST

¹⁴ Has Yahweh ever consulted anyone else to get advice? Does he need someone to tell him what is right to do and how to act justly?

Isaiah 40:15

Look ... see

These words add emphasis to what follows.

the nations are like a drop in a bucket, and are regarded like the dust on the scales

The prophet compares the nations to a drop of water and to dust in order to emphasize how small and insignificant they are to Yahweh. (See: [Simile](#))

like a drop in a bucket

This could mean: (1) a drop of water that falls into a bucket or (2) a drop of water that drops out of a bucket.

are regarded like the dust on the scales

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh regards them as dust on the scales" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Look, the nations {are} like a drop in a bucket, and are regarded like the dust on the scales; see, he weighs the isles as a speck.

UST

¹⁵ Yahweh considers that the nations are as insignificant as one drop from a bucket full of water. They are as insignificant as dust on scales. He is able to weigh islands as though they weighed no more than specks of dust.

Isaiah 40:16

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁶ Lebanon {is} not sufficient fuel, nor its wild animals sufficient for a burnt offering.

UST

¹⁶ There would be not enough wood from all the trees in Lebanon to make a suitable fire for sacrificing animals to him, and there are not enough animals in Lebanon to offer as sacrifices to him.

Isaiah 40:17

they are regarded by him as nothing

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "he regards them as nothing" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

17 All the nations {are} insufficient before him; they are regarded by him as nothing.

UST

17 The nations of the world are completely insignificant to him; he considers that they are worthless and less than nothing.

Isaiah 40:18**To whom then will you compare God? To what idol will you liken him?**

Isaiah uses two similar questions to emphasize that there is no idol that can compare with God. Alternate translation: “There is no one to whom you can compare God. There is no idol to which you can liken him.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Parallelism](#))

you

This is plural and refers to all of God’s people. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

¹⁸ To whom then will you compare God?
To what idol will you liken him?

UST

¹⁸ So to whom can you compare God?
What image resembles him?

Isaiah 40:19

A craftsman casts it: The goldsmith overlays it with gold and forges silver chains for it

Alternate translation: "A skilled worker forms it, another covers it with gold and makes a silver chain for it"

ULT

¹⁹ An idol! A craftsman casts it: The goldsmith overlays it with gold and forges silver chains for it.

UST

¹⁹ Can you compare him to an idol that is made in a mold, and then is covered with a thin sheet of gold and decorated with silver chains?

Isaiah 40:20

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁰ To make an offering one chooses a wood {that} will not rot; he seeks a skillful artisan to make an idol {that} will not fall over.

UST

²⁰ A man who is poor cannot buy silver or gold for his idol; so he selects a piece of wood that will not rot, and he gives it to a craftsman to carve an idol that will not fall over!

Isaiah 40:21

**Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the
foundations of the earth?**

Isaiah uses these questions to emphasize that the people should know Yahweh's greatness as the creator. Alternate translation: "You certainly know and have heard! It has been told to you from the beginning; you have understood from the foundations of the earth!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Parallelism](#))

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Have people not told you from the beginning?" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

from the foundations of the earth

The prophet speaks of Yahweh creating the earth as if the earth were a building for which Yahweh laid the foundation. Alternate translation: "from the time that Yahweh created the earth" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²¹ Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

UST

²¹ Have you not heard this? Do you not understand it? Are you unable to hear what God said long ago— messages that he gave before he created the earth?

Isaiah 40:22

He is the one who sits above the horizon of the earth

The prophet speaks of Yahweh ruling the earth as if Yahweh were seated on a throne above the earth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the inhabitants are like grasshoppers before him

The prophet compares the way Yahweh considers humans to the way humans would consider grasshoppers. Just as grasshoppers are small to humans, humans are small and weak before God. (See: [Simile](#))

He stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out as a tent to live in

These two lines share similar meanings. The prophet speaks of Yahweh creating the heavens as if he had erected a tent in which to live. Alternate translation: "He spreads out the heavens as easily as a person would stretch out a curtain or erect a tent in which to live" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

²² He is the one who sits above the horizon of the earth; and the inhabitants {are} like grasshoppers before him. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out as a tent to live in.

UST

²² God sits on his throne above the earth, and the people on the earth below seem to be as small as grasshoppers. He spreads out the sky like a curtain; it is like a tent for him to live in.

Isaiah 40:23

He reduces

Alternate translation: "Yahweh reduces"

ULT

²³ He reduces rulers to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth insignificant.

UST

²³ He causes kings to have no more power, and he causes the rulers to be worth nothing.

Isaiah 40:24

They are barely planted ... and they wither

The prophet speaks of rulers being helpless before Yahweh as if they were new plants that wither away when a hot wind blows on them. (See: [Metaphor](#))

They are barely planted, barely sown

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and refer to the point at which the plants or seeds are placed into the ground. They can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "As soon as someone plants them ... as soon as someone sows them" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

he blows upon them

The prophet speaks of Yahweh removing the rulers from power as if Yahweh were a scorching wind that blows upon the plants and causes them to wither. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the wind carries them away like straw

This simile extends the metaphor of the rulers as plants and Yahweh as the wind that causes them to wither. The wind of Yahweh's judgement will remove the withered plants as easily as wind blows away straw. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

24 They are barely planted, barely sown, their stem has barely taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them and they wither; and the wind carries them away like straw.

UST

24 They start to rule, like small plants start to grow and form roots; but then he gets rid of them as though they withered when he blew on them, like chaff that is blown away by the wind.

Isaiah 40:25

To whom then will you compare me, whom do I resemble?

Yahweh uses two similar rhetorical questions to emphasize that there is no one like him. Alternate translation: "There is no one to whom you can compare me. There is no one whom I resemble." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

²⁵ "To whom then will you compare me, {whom} do I resemble?" says the Holy One.

UST

²⁵ The Holy One asks, "To whom will you compare me? Is anyone equal to me?"

Isaiah 40:26

Who has created all these stars?

This is a leading question that anticipates the answer, Yahweh. Alternate translation: “Yahweh has created all these stars!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

He leads out their formations

Here the word “formations” refers to military formations. The prophet speaks of the stars as if they were soldiers whom Yahweh commands to appear. (See: [Metaphor](#))

By the greatness of his might and by the strength of his power

The phrases “the greatness of his might” and “the strength of his power” form a doublet that emphasizes Yahweh’s power. Alternate translation: “By his great might and powerful strength” (See: [Doublet](#))

not one is missing

This negative statement emphasizes the positive. Alternate translation: “every one is present” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

²⁶ Look up at the sky! Who has created all these stars? He leads out {their} {formations} and calls them all by name. By the greatness of his might and by the strength of {his} power, not one is missing.

UST

²⁶ Look up toward the sky: consider who created all the stars. Yahweh created them, and at night he causes them to appear; he calls each one by its name. Because he is extremely powerful, all of the stars are there when he calls out their names.

Isaiah 40:27

Why do you say, Jacob, and declare, Israel ... vindication”?

The question emphasizes that they should not say what they say. Alternate translation: “You should not say, O people of Israel ... vindication’.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Why do you say, Jacob, and declare, Israel

These two phrases both refer to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “Why do you say, O people of Israel” (See: [Doublet](#))

My way is hidden from Yahweh

Yahweh not knowing what happens to them is spoken of as if Yahweh could not see the road upon which they travel. Alternate translation: “Yahweh does not know what happens to me” (See: [Metaphor](#))

my God is not concerned about my vindication

This could mean: (1) “my God is not concerned about others treating me unjustly” or (2) “my God is not concerned about treating me justly.”

ULT

²⁷ Why do you say, Jacob, and declare, Israel, “My way is hidden from Yahweh, and my God is not concerned about my vindication”?

UST

²⁷ You people of Israel, why do you complain that Yahweh does not see the troubles that you are experiencing? Why do you say that he does not act fairly toward you?

Isaiah 40:28

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

Isaiah uses these questions to emphasize that the people should know Yahweh's greatness. See how you translated these in [Isaiah 40:21](#). Alternate translation: "You certainly know and have heard!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

the ends of the earth

The places on the earth that are very far away are spoken of as if they were the places where the earth ends. This phrase also forms a merism and refers to everywhere in between the ends. AT "the farthest places of the earth" or "the entire earth" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Merism](#))

ULT

28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not get tired or weary; there is no limit to his understanding.

UST

28 Have you never heard and have you never understood that Yahweh is the everlasting God? He is the one who created the earth, even the most distant places on the earth. He never becomes weak or weary, and no one can find out how much he understands.

Isaiah 40:29

He gives strength to the tired; and to the weak he gives renewed energy

These two lines share similar meanings and emphasize that Yahweh strengthens those who have no strength. (See: [Parallelism](#))

He gives strength

Alternate translation: "Yahweh gives strength"

ULT

²⁹ He gives strength {to the tired}; and to the weak he gives renewed energy.

UST

²⁹ He strengthens those who feel weak and tired.

Isaiah 40:30

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁰ Even young people become tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall:

UST

³⁰ Even youths become faint and weary, and young men will fall when they are exhausted.

Isaiah 40:31

they will soar with wings like eagles

People receiving strength from Yahweh is spoken of as if the people were able to fly like eagles fly. An eagle is a bird often used as a symbol for strength and power. (See: [Metaphor](#))

they will run and not be weary; they will walk and not faint

These two lines share similar meanings. People receiving strength from Yahweh is spoken of as if they were able to run and walk without tiring. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

31 but those who wait for Yahweh will renew {their} strength; they will soar with wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary; they will walk and not faint.

UST

31 But those who trust in Yahweh will become strong again; it will be as though they will soar as eagles do. They will run for a long time and not become weary; they will walk long distances and not faint.

Isaiah 41

Isaiah 41 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Mocking

Yahweh tells the people to present their best arguments in favor of honoring their idols. In this Yahweh challenges the people. Yahweh mocks or insults these false gods because they are not real and have no power. (See: [god](#), [false god](#), [goddess](#), [idol](#), [idolater](#), [idolatrous](#), [idolatry](#))

Isaiah 41:1

Listen before me in silence

Here “me” refers to God.

you coastlands

This refers to the people who live on the islands and in the lands bordering or beyond the Mediterranean Sea. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Apostrophe](#))

renew their strength

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 40:31](#).

let them come near and speak; let us come near together to argue a dispute

These two phrases share similar meanings. The second explains the reason for the first. Alternate translation: “then let them come near so they may speak and reason with me” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹ “Listen before me in silence, you coastlands; let the nations renew {their} strength; let them come near and speak; let us come near together to argue a dispute.

UST

¹ Yahweh says, “You people who live on islands in the ocean, be silent in front of me while I ask you some questions! Then you can be courageous and talk to me. We will meet together and decide which one of us is right.

Isaiah 41:2

Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service?

Yahweh uses this question to emphasize that he is the one who caused this ruler from the east to be victorious. Alternate translation: "I am the one who called this powerful ruler from the east and put him in my good service." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

He hands nations over to him

Alternate translation: "I give the nations over to him" or "The one who does these things hands nations over to him"

He turns them to dust with his sword, like windblown stubble with his bow

Turning them to dust and stubble is a metaphor or exaggeration for completely destroying everything the people of these nations have made. The armies of one from the east will conquer these nations and scatter the people easily. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

² Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service? He hands nations over to him and helps {him} subdue kings. He turns {them} to dust with his sword, like windblown stubble with his bow.

UST

² Who has raised up this king to come from the east? He is the one who does what is right with every step. He hands nations over to him and he defeats them, and he tramples their kings under his feet. He cuts their enemies and they are destroyed so they are like the dust, and his army shoots them with bows and arrows so that they are like the chaff when the wind blows.

Isaiah 41:3

He pursues them and passes by safely

Alternate translation: "The ruler from the east pursues the nations"

by a swift path that his feet scarcely touch

This could mean: (1) this is a metaphor in which he and his army moving very quickly is spoken of as if his feet barely touch the ground. Alternate translation: "by a path on which he moves with great speed" or (2) "feet" represents the whole person and the phrase indicates that this is a path that they have not traveled before. Alternate translation: "by a path that he has never traveled before" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

³ He pursues them {and} passes by safely, by a swift path {that} his feet scarcely touch.

UST

³ Even though they are in danger, they go very swiftly as they pursue their enemies, and nothing stops them.

Isaiah 41:4

Who has performed and accomplished these deeds?

Yahweh uses this question to emphasize that he is the one who has done these things. Alternate translation: "I have performed and accomplished these deeds." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Who has summoned the generations from the beginning?

Here the word "generations" represents all of human history, which Yahweh created and directed throughout history. The rhetorical question anticipates the answer, Yahweh. Alternate translation: "I have summoned the generations of humanity from the beginning." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

performed and accomplished

These two words mean basically the same thing and emphasize that Yahweh is the one who has done these things. (See: [Doublet](#))

the first, and with the last ones

This could mean: (1) that Yahweh existed before creation and will exist at the end of creation or (2) that Yahweh was before the first generation of humanity and will be at the last generation of humanity.

ULT

⁴ Who has performed and accomplished {these deeds}? Who has summoned the generations from the beginning? I, Yahweh, the first, and with the last ones, I {am} he.

UST

⁴ Who has enabled rulers to do mighty deeds like that? Who has done that throughout all generations? It is I, Yahweh! I was the first one to do things like that, and I will be the last one to do them.

Isaiah 41:5

The isles ... the ends of the earth

These phrases represent the people who live in those places.
Alternate translation: "People who live on the isles ... people who live at the ends of the earth" (See: [Metonymy](#))

The isles

You can translate "isles" the same way you translated "coastlands" in [Isaiah 41:1](#).

the ends of the earth

The places on the earth that are very far away are spoken of as if they were the places where the earth ends. AT "the farthest places of the earth" (See: [Metaphor](#))

they approach and come

This doublet means that the people gather together. Alternate translation: "they come together" (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁵ The isles have seen and are afraid; the ends of the earth tremble; they approach and come.

UST

⁵ People who live on islands in the ocean are afraid while they watch. People in remote areas tremble and gather together.

Isaiah 41:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁶ Everyone helps his neighbor, and every one says to one another, 'Be encouraged.'

UST

⁶ They encourage each other and say to each other, 'Be strong!'

Isaiah 41:7

anvil

an iron block on which a person shapes metal with a hammer

saying of the welding

Here the word "welding" refers to the process of fastening the gold to the wood as the workers finish making the idol.

They fasten it with nails so it will not topple over.

Here "it" refers to the idol that they have made.

ULT

⁷ So the carpenter {encourages} the goldsmith, and he who works with the hammer encourages him who works with an anvil, saying of the welding, 'It {is} good.' They fasten it with nails {so} it will not topple over.

UST

⁷ The woodworkers encourage those who make things from gold, and the men who flatten metal encourage those who hammer it on an anvil. They all say, 'The idol has been well made!' Then they carefully nail down the idol in order that it will not topple over!"

Isaiah 41:8

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁸ But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham my friend,

UST

⁸ Yahweh continues to say, “You people of Israel are my servants; you are descendants of Jacob, whom I chose; you are descendants of Abraham, who I said was my friend.

Isaiah 41:9

you whom I am bringing back from the ends of the earth, and whom I called from the far away places

These two lines mean basically the same thing and emphasize that Yahweh is bringing the people of Israel back to their land from distant countries. (See: [Parallelism](#))

the ends of the earth

The places on the earth that are very far away are spoken of as if they were the places where the earth ends. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 41:5](#). AT “the farthest places of the earth” (See: [Metaphor](#))

I have chosen you and not rejected you

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The second states in negative terms what the first states in positive terms. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Litotes](#))

ULT

⁹ {you} whom I am bringing back from the ends of the earth, and whom I called from the far away places, and to whom I said, ‘You {are} my servant;’ I have chosen you and not rejected you.

UST

⁹ I summoned you from very distant places on the earth, and I said, ‘I want you to serve me.’ I have chosen you, and I will not reject you.

Isaiah 41:10

I will uphold you with my righteous right hand

Yahweh strengthening his people is spoken of as if he were holding them with his hand. (See: [Metaphor](#))

my righteous right hand

Here “right hand” represents Yahweh’s power. This could mean: (1) Yahweh’s right hand is righteous in that he will always do the right thing. Alternate translation: “my righteous power” or (2) Yahweh’s right hand is victorious in that he will always succeed in what he does. Alternate translation: “my victorious power” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Do not fear, for I {am} with you. Do not be anxious, for I {am} your God. I will strengthen you, and I will help you, and I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

UST

¹⁰ Do not be afraid, because I will be with you. Do not be discouraged, because I am your God. I will enable you to be strong, and I will help you; I will hold you up with my powerful arm by which I will rescue you, and I will be completely right to do so!

Isaiah 41:11

they will be ashamed and disgraced, all who have been angry with you

Alternate translation: "all who have been angry with you will be ashamed and disgraced"

ashamed and disgraced

These two words mean basically the same thing and emphasize the greatness of their shame. (See: [Doublet](#))

they will be as nothing and will perish, those who oppose you

Alternate translation: "those who oppose you will be as nothing and will perish"

ULT

¹¹ See, they will be ashamed and disgraced, all who have been angry with you; they will be as nothing and will perish, those who oppose you.

UST

¹¹ It is certain that all those who are angry with you Israelite people will be disgraced. Those who oppose you will be wiped out; they will all die.

Isaiah 41:12

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹² You will seek and will not find those who contended with you; those who warred against you will be like nothing, absolutely nothing.

UST

¹² If you search for those who tried to conquer you, you will not find them, because they will all disappear. Those who attacked you will not exist anymore,

Isaiah 41:13

I ... will hold your right hand

Yahweh helping the people of Israel is spoken of as if he were holding their right hand. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

13 For I, Yahweh your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Do not fear; I am helping you.'

UST

13 because it will be as though I will hold you up by your right hand. I am Yahweh, your God, and I say to you, 'Do not be afraid, because I will help you.'

Isaiah 41:14

Jacob you worm, and you men of Israel

Here “Jacob” and “men of Israel” mean the same thing. Alternate translation: “you people of Israel who are like worms” (See: [Doublet](#))

Jacob you worm

This could mean: (1) that this refers to the opinions of other nations regarding the people of Israel or (2) that this refers to Israel’s own opinion of themselves. Yahweh speaks of their insignificance as if they were a worm. (See: [Metaphor](#))

this is Yahweh’s declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Translate as in [Isaiah 30:1](#). Alternate translation: “this is what Yahweh has declared” or “this is what I, Yahweh, have declared” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

ULT

14 Do not fear, Jacob you worm, and you men of Israel; I will help you—this is Yahweh’s declaration, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

UST

14 Although others have treated you people of Israel like worms, do not be afraid of your enemies, because I will help you!” This is what Yahweh solemnly says—the one who rescues you, the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 41:15

I am making you like a sharp threshing sledge ... you will make the hills like chaff

Yahweh speaks of enabling Israel to defeat their enemies as if he were making the nation a threshing sledge that will level mountains. (See: [Metaphor](#))

a sharp threshing sledge

A threshing sledge was a board with sharp spikes that someone would drag over the wheat to separate the grain from the chaff.

two-edged

This refers to the edges of the spikes that were attached to the threshing sledge. That they are “two-edged” means that they are very sharp.

you will thresh the mountains and crush them

This is a double metaphor. The mountains are a metaphor for grain, and threshing grain is a metaphor for the Israelites defeating the powerful enemy nations near them. Alternate translation: “you will thresh your enemies and crush them as if they were grain, even though they appear to be as strong as mountains” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

you will make the hills like chaff

The hills are a metaphor for the powerful enemy nations near Israel. People having the wind blow the chaff away after they have threshed the grain is a metaphor for them allowing Yahweh to destroy their enemies. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Look, I am making you like a sharp threshing sledge, new and two-edged; you will thresh the mountains and crush them; you will make the hills like chaff.

UST

¹⁵ He continues to say, “I will cause you to be like a new threshing sledge, very sharp and two-edged. You will tear your enemies to bits causing them to be like bits of chaff on the mountains.

Isaiah 41:16

Connecting Statement:

Yahweh continues to use the metaphor of separating grain from chaff to describe how Israel will defeat their enemies.

You will winnow them ... the wind will scatter them

Here the word “them” refers to the mountains and hill in [Isaiah 41:15](#). This represents the next step in the process of threshing grain, in which the grain is winnowed to get rid of the chaff. Israel's enemies will disappear like chaff blown away by the wind. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the wind will carry them away; the wind will scatter them

These two phrases mean the same thing. Alternate translation: “the wind will blow them away” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

16 You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away; the wind will scatter them. You will rejoice in Yahweh, you will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

UST

16 You will toss them up into the air, and a strong wind will blow them away. When that happens, you will rejoice about what I have done for you; you will praise me, Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 41:17

General Information:

Yahweh speaks of people who are in extreme need as if they are extremely thirsty, and of his provision for them as if he caused water to appear in places where it normally would not appear. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

17 The oppressed and needy look for water, but {there is} none, and their tongues are parched for thirst; I, Yahweh, will respond to their prayers; {I}, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

UST

17 When poor and needy people need water and they have no water, and their tongues are very dry because they are very thirsty, I, Yahweh, will come and help them. I, the God to whom you Israelite people belong, will never abandon them.

Isaiah 41:18

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

18 I will make streams to flow down the slopes, and springs in the middle of the valleys; I will make the desert into a pool of water, and the dry land into springs of water.

UST

18 I will cause rivers to flow for them on the barren hills. I will give them fountains in the valleys. I will fill the desert with pools of water. Water from springs will flow into rivers, and the rivers will flow across the dry ground.

Isaiah 41:19

the myrtle ... the pines and the cypress box trees

These are types of trees. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

¹⁹ In the wilderness I will set the cedar, the acacia, and the myrtle, and the olive tree. I will set the cypress in the desert plain, {with} the pines and the cypress box trees.

UST

¹⁹ I will plant cedars, acacia, and myrtle, in the wilderness— and olive trees I will plant in the desert plain— cypresses, pines, and boxtrees all together.

Isaiah 41:20

the hand of Yahweh has done this

Here the word "hand" represents Yahweh himself. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has done this" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁰ I will do this so that the people may see, recognize, and understand together, that the hand of Yahweh has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.

UST

²⁰ I will do that in order that people who see it will think about it, and they will know and understand that it is I, Yahweh, who has done it; it is what I, the Holy One of Israel, have done.

Isaiah 41:21

General Information:

In these verses, Yahweh is mocking the people and their idols. He is challenging the idols to tell what will happen in the future, but he knows they cannot. (See: [Irony](#))

ULT

21 "Present your case," says Yahweh, "present your best {arguments} for your idols," says the King of Jacob.

UST

21 I, Yahweh, the king of Israel am speaking to you nations: Come and tell me what your idols can do for you! Argue your best in defense of them.

Isaiah 41:22

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²² 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.

UST

²² Bring them here to tell us what is going to happen! Ask them to tell us what things happened long ago, in order that we may think about those things, and learn if those things that they predicted really happened. Or ask them to tell us about the future, in order for us to know what will happen.

Isaiah 41:23

Connecting Statement:

Yahweh continues to mock the idols and the people who worship them ([Isaiah 41:21-22](#)).

do something good or evil

The words “good” and “evil” form a merism and represent anything. Alternate translation: “do anything at all” (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

23 Tell things about the future, that we may know if you {are} gods; do something good or evil, that we may be frightened and impressed.

UST

23 Yes, those idols should tell us what will happen in the future. If they do that, we will know that they are really gods. Tell them to do something—either something good or something bad! Tell them to do something that will cause us to be amazed and afraid!

Isaiah 41:24

the one who chooses you

Here “you” is plural and refers to the idols. Alternate translation: “the person who chooses you idols” (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

²⁴ See, you idols {are} nothing and your deeds {are} nothing; {the one} {who} chooses you {is} detestable.

UST

²⁴ But that is impossible, because idols are absolutely worthless; they can do nothing, and I detest those who decide to worship idols.”

Isaiah 41:25

I have raised up one

Yahweh speaks of appointing a person as if he raised that person up.
Alternate translation: "I have appointed one" (See: [Metaphor](#))

from the sun's rising

This refers to the east, the direction from which the sun rises.
Alternate translation: "from the east" (See: [Idiom](#))

him who calls on my name

This could mean: (1) that this person invokes Yahweh for his success
or (2) that this person worships Yahweh.

he will trample the rulers

Conquering the rulers of other nations is spoken of as if it were
trampling them under foot. Alternate translation: "he will conquer the rulers" (See: [Metaphor](#))

like a potter who is treading on the clay

Yahweh compares the way in which this person will trample the other rulers with the way that a potter tramples on
clay to mix it with water. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

²⁵ I have raised up one from the north,
and he comes; from the sun's rising I
summon him who calls on my name,
and he will trample the rulers like mud,
like a potter who is treading on the clay.

UST

²⁵ "But I have incited a ruler who will
come with his army from the north. I
have summoned him to come from his
country, which is east of Israel, and he
will call on me for help. I will enable his
army to conquer other rulers; they will
trample those leaders like a man who
makes clay pots first tramples the clay.

Isaiah 41:26

Who announced this from the beginning, that we might know? Before this time, that we may say, "He is right"?

Yahweh uses these rhetorical questions to mock the idols that the people worship. The implied answers are: (1) that the idols have not done these things and (2) that Yahweh is the one who has done these things. Alternate translation: "None of the idols announced this from the beginning, that we might know. And none of them announced this before time, that we may say, 'He is right.'" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

Indeed none of them decreed it, yes, none heard you say anything

Alternate translation: "Indeed, none of the idols decreed it. Indeed, no one heard you idols say anything"

ULT

²⁶ Who announced this from the beginning, that we might know? Before this time, that we may say, "{He is} right"? Indeed none of them decreed it, yes, none heard you say anything.

UST

²⁶ Who told you people long ago that this would happen? Who predicted it, with the result that we can say, "What he predicted was correct!"? No one else said that it would happen.

Isaiah 41:27

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁷ {I} first {said} to Zion, "Look here they are;" I sent a herald to Jerusalem.

UST

²⁷ I was the first one to say to the people of Jerusalem: 'Listen to this! I have appointed a messenger to tell good news to you!'

Isaiah 41:28

not one among them

Alternate translation: "not one idol"

ULT

²⁸ When I look, {there is} no one, not one among them who can give good advice, who, when I ask, can answer a word.

UST

²⁸ None of your idols told you that. And when I asked them questions, none of them was able to give me any answers.

Isaiah 41:29

their cast metal figures are wind and emptiness

Yahweh speaks of the worthlessness of the idols as if the idols are wind and nothing at all. Alternate translation: “their idols are all worthless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁹ Look, all of them {are} nothing, and their deeds {are} nothing; their cast metal figures {are} wind and emptiness.

UST

²⁹ Think about it: Those idols are all useless, worthless things. They are as meaningless as the wind.”

Isaiah 42

Isaiah 42 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Many scholars believe that there are four songs or poems which Isaiah records about the Messiah. Isaiah 42:1-4 is the first of these songs. They are often called the “servant songs” because they focus on the Messiah being a servant. (See: [Christ, Messiah](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Servant

Israel is called Yahweh’s servant. The Messiah is also called the servant of Yahweh. It is likely that the two different usages of the word “servant” are intended to contrast with one another.

Isaiah 42:1

Behold, my servant

Alternate translation: "Look, my servant" or "Here is my servant"

in him I take delight

Alternate translation: "with whom I am very happy"

ULT

¹ Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen one, in him I take delight. I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring justice to the nations.

UST

¹ Yahweh says, "I want you people to know about my servant, whom I encourage. I have chosen him, and I am pleased with him. I have given him my Spirit, and he will make certain that all the people groups do what is right.

Isaiah 42:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² He will not cry out nor shout, nor
make {his voice} heard in the streets.

UST

² He will not show his power by
shouting or by talking very loudly.

Isaiah 42:3**A crushed reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench**

Yahweh speaks of weak and helpless people as if they were crushed reeds and dimly burning wicks. (See: [Metaphor](#))

crushed reed

A reed is the long, thin stem of a plant like tall grass. If it is crushed, it cannot carry any weight. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 36:6](#).

he will not break

Alternate translation: "My servant will not break"

ULT

³ A crushed reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench: he will faithfully execute justice.

UST

³ He will not get rid of anyone who is weak like a smashed reed, and he will not end the life of anyone who is helpless, like an oil lamp about to stop burning. He will faithfully make sure that judges decide cases justly.

Isaiah 42:4

the coastlands

This refers to the people who live on the islands and in the lands bordering or beyond the Mediterranean Sea. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 41:1](#). Alternate translation: “the people who live on the coastlands” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ He will not grow faint nor be discouraged until he has established justice on the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

UST

⁴ He will not become exhausted or discouraged all during the time that he is causing things to be done justly throughout the earth. Even people living on the islands in the oceans will confidently wait for him to teach them his laws.”

Isaiah 42:5

the one who created the heavens and stretched them out, the one who made the earth

The prophet speaks of Yahweh creating the heavens and the earth as if the heavens and earth were fabric which Yahweh stretched out. (See: [Metaphor](#))

gives breath to the people on it and life to those who live on it

These phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize that Yahweh gives life to every person. The word “breath” is a metonym for life. Alternate translation: “gives life to the people who live on the earth” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁵ This is what God Yahweh says— the one who created the heavens and stretched them out, the one who made the earth and all that it produces, the one who gives breath to the people on it and life to those who live on it:

UST

⁵ Yahweh our God created the sky and spread it out. He also created the earth and everything on it. He gives breath to all the people on the earth and causes them to live. And he is the one who says to his special servant,

Isaiah 42:6

have called you

Here “you” is singular and refers to Yahweh’s servant. (See: [Forms of You](#))

I will ... set you as a covenant for the people

Here the word “covenant” is a metonym for the one who establishes or mediates a covenant. Alternate translation: “I will ... make you be the mediator of a covenant with the people” (See: [Metonymy](#))

a light for the Gentiles

Yahweh speaks of making his servant the one who delivers the nations from bondage as if he were making him a light that shines in dark places for the Gentiles. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

6 “I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness and will hold your hand. I will keep you and set you as a covenant for the people, as a light for the Gentiles,

UST

6 “I, Yahweh, have chosen you to show people that I always act righteously. I will grasp your hand and protect you, and I will present you to my Israelite people to be the one who will put into effect my covenant with them. You will be like a light to the other nations.

Isaiah 42:7

to open the eyes of the blind

Causing blind people to see is spoken of as if it were opening their eyes. Also, Yahweh speaks of his servant delivering those who have been wrongly imprisoned as if his servant were restoring sight to blind people. Alternate translation: “to enable the blind to see” (See: [Metaphor](#))

to release the prisoners from the dungeon, and from the house of confinement those who sit in darkness

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The verb may be supplied in the second phrase. Alternate translation: “to release the prisoners from the dungeon, and to release those who sit in darkness from the house in which they are confined” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

⁷ to open the eyes of the blind, to release the prisoners from the dungeon, and from the house of confinement those who sit in darkness.

UST

⁷ For you will enable blind people to see, you will free those who are in prison and release those who are in dark dungeons.

Isaiah 42:8

nor my praise with carved idols

The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "nor will I share my praise with carved idols" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

my praise

This refers to the praise that Yahweh receives from people.

ULT

⁸ I {am} Yahweh, that {is} my name; and my glory I will not share with another nor my praise with carved idols.

UST

⁸ I am Yahweh; that is my name. I will not allow anyone else to receive the honor that only I deserve. And I will not allow others to praise idols, for they should praise only me.

Isaiah 42:9

I will tell you

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

ULT

⁹ See, the previous things came to pass, now I am about to declare new events. Before they begin to occur I will tell you about them.”

UST

⁹ Everything that I have prophesied has happened, and now I will tell about other things that will happen. I will tell you things that will happen before they happen.”

Isaiah 42:10

**the sea, and all that is in it, the coastlands,
and those who live there**

Alternate translation: "and all the creatures that live in the sea, and all those who live on the coastlands"

ULT

¹⁰ Sing to Yahweh a new song, {and} his praise from the end of the earth; you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, the coastlands, and those who live there.

UST

¹⁰ Sing a new song to Yahweh! Sing to praise him throughout the world! All you people who sail across the oceans, and all you creatures that live in the oceans, and all you people who live on islands far away, sing!

Isaiah 42:11

Let the desert and the cities cry out

This refers to the people who live in the desert and the cities. (See: [Metonymy](#))

Kedar

This is a city north of Arabia. See how this was translated in [Isaiah 21:16](#)

Sela

a city in Edom (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

11 Let the desert and the cities {cry out}, {the villages} where Kedar lives, shout for joy! Let the inhabitants of Sela sing; let them shout from the mountaintops.

UST

11 You people who live in towns in the desert, sing loudly! You people who live in the region of Kedar in the north of Arabia, you rejoice also! You people in the city of Sela in Edom, you also should sing joyfully; shout to praise him from the tops of your mountains!

Isaiah 42:12

Let them give glory

Here “them” refers to the people along the coastlands.

ULT

¹² Let them give glory to Yahweh and declare his praise in the coastlands.

UST

¹² Even people who live on distant islands should honor Yahweh and sing to praise him.

Isaiah 42:13

Yahweh will go out as a warrior; as a man of war

Yahweh is compared with a warrior who is ready to defeat his people's enemies. (See: [Simile](#) and [Parallelism](#))

he will stir up his zeal

Here "zeal" refers to the passion that a warrior experiences when he is about to fight a battle. Yahweh stimulating his zeal is spoken of as if he stirred it up like the wind stirs up waves of water. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹³ Yahweh will go out as a warrior; as a man of war he will stir up {his} zeal. He will shout, yes, he will roar his battle cries; he will show his enemies his power.

UST

¹³ It will be as though Yahweh will march out like a mighty soldier; he will show that he is very angry. He will shout a battle cry, and then he will defeat all his enemies.

Isaiah 42:14

I have kept quiet for a long time; I have been still and restrained myself

These two lines share similar meanings. Yahweh's inactivity is described as quietness and stillness. (See: [Parallelism](#))

I have been still and restrained myself

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and indicate that Yahweh has kept himself from acting. Alternate translation: "I have kept myself from doing anything" (See: [Doublet](#))

I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant

Yahweh's activity as a shouting warrior is compared with a pregnant woman who cries from labor pains. This emphasizes sudden unavoidable action after a period of inactivity. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁴ I have kept quiet for a long time; I have been still and restrained myself; {now} I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant.

UST

¹⁴ He will say, "I have remained silent for a long time; I have restrained myself from doing what I need to do. But now, like a woman who is giving birth to a baby, I will cry out and gasp and pant."

Isaiah 42:15

I will lay waste mountains ... will dry up the marshes

Yahweh uses this metaphorical language to describe his great power to conquer his enemies. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the marshes

A marsh is an area of soft, wet land with pools of water.

ULT

¹⁵ I will lay waste mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; and I will turn the rivers into islands and will dry up the marshes.

UST

¹⁵ I will level off the hills and mountains, and I will cause all the plants and trees to dry up. I will cause the rivers to become small streams, and little islands will appear in them, and I will cause all the pools to become dry.

Isaiah 42:16

I will bring the blind by a way that they do not know; in paths that they do not know I will lead them

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "I will lead the blind in paths that they do not know" (See: [Parallelism](#))

the blind

Yahweh speaks of his people being helpless as if they could not see because they were blind. (See: [Metaphor](#))

that they do not know

This could mean: (1) "that they have never traveled" or (2) "with which they are unfamiliar."

I will turn the darkness into light before them

Yahweh speaks of his people being helpless as if they could not see because they walked in darkness, and of his helping them as if he caused light to shine in the darkness. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁶ I will bring the blind by a way that they do not know; in paths that they do not know I will lead them. I will turn the darkness into light before them, and make the crooked places straight. These things I will do, and I will not abandon them.

UST

¹⁶ My people who have been taken into exile are like blind people, but I will lead them along a road on which they have not walked before, on a road that they have not seen before. They have felt very helpless, as though they were walking in the darkness, but I will take away that darkness and I will make smooth the road that is in front of them. Those are the things that I will do for them; I will not abandon them.

Isaiah 42:17

They will be turned back, they will be completely put to shame

Rejecting those who worship idols is spoken of as if it is forcing them to turn back and move the opposite direction. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will reject them and put them to shame" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁷ They will be turned back, they will be completely put to shame, those who trust in carved figures, who say to cast metal figures, "You {are} our gods."

UST

¹⁷ But those who trust in carved idols, and say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be completely humiliated."

Isaiah 42:18

you deaf ... you blind

Here “you” is plural and refers to the people of Israel. Yahweh speaks of their failure to listen to him and obey him as if they are deaf and blind. (See: [Forms of You](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

18 Listen, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see.

UST

18 You Israelite people who have acted toward God like deaf people, listen to what Yahweh says! “You who have been like blind people, look!

Isaiah 42:19

Who is blind but my servant? Or deaf like my messenger I send?

Yahweh asks these rhetorical questions to scold his people and to emphasize that no one is as blind or deaf as they are. Alternate translation: "No one is as blind as my servant. No one is as deaf as my messenger whom I send." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Who is as blind as my covenant partner, or blind as Yahweh's servant?

Yahweh asks these rhetorical questions to scold his people and to emphasize that no one is as blind or deaf as they are. Alternate translation: "No one is as blind as my covenant partner. No one is as blind as Yahweh's servant." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁹ Who {is} blind but my servant? Or deaf like my messenger I send? {Who} {is} as blind as my covenant partner, or blind as Yahweh's servant?

UST

¹⁹ No people are as blind as my people, who should have been serving me. No people are as much like deaf people as the Israelites, who should have been my messengers. No people are as much like blind people as those whom I chose to serve me in a covenant.

Isaiah 42:20

You see many things, but do not comprehend

Alternate translation: "Although you see many things, you do not understand what they mean"

ears are open, but no one hears

The ability to hear is spoken of as if the ears were open. Here the word "hears" refers to understanding what one hears. Alternate translation: "people hear, but no one understands what they hear" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

20 You see many things, but do not comprehend; ears are open, but no one hears.

UST

20 You see and know what are the right things to do, but you do not do them. You hear what I say to you, but you do not pay attention."

Isaiah 42:21

It pleased Yahweh to praise his justice and to make his law glorious

“Yahweh was pleased to honor his justice by making his law glorious.” The second part of the phrase explains how Yahweh accomplished the first part.

ULT

²¹ It pleased Yahweh to praise {his justice} and to make his law glorious.

UST

²¹ Because Yahweh is righteous, he has honored his glorious laws.

Isaiah 42:22

But this is a people robbed and plundered

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "But the enemy has robbed and plundered this people" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

robbed and plundered

These two words mean basically the same thing and emphasize how badly the enemy had plundered them. (See: [Doublet](#))

they are all trapped in pits, held captive in prisons

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "the enemy has trapped them all in pits and held them captive in prisons" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²² But this {is} a people robbed and plundered; they are all trapped in pits, held captive in prisons; they have become a plunder with no one to rescue them, and no one says, "Bring them back!"

UST

²² But armies have destroyed Jerusalem and have completely plundered all the valuable things, and they have captured Yahweh's people and taken them away and put them in prison. They have been captured easily, because there was no one to protect them; there was no one to say that they should be allowed to return home.

Isaiah 42:23

General Information:

Here Isaiah begins speaking.

Who among you

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

ULT

²³ Who among you will listen to this?

{Who} will listen and hear in the future?

UST

²³ Who among you will listen carefully to these things? Who will pay attention from now on?

Isaiah 42:24

Who gave Jacob over to the robber, and Israel to the looters?

These two phrases mean the same thing. Isaiah uses this as a leading question in order to emphasize the answer that he will give in the next phrase. Alternate translation: "I will tell you who gave the people of Israel over to robbers and looters." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Parallelism](#))

Was it not Yahweh ... refused to obey?

Isaiah uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that Yahweh alone was responsible for Israel's situation, and to explain the reason that Yahweh did it. Alternate translation: "It was certainly Yahweh ... refused to obey." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

against whom we have sinned

Here the word "we" refers to the people of Israel and to Isaiah. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

in whose ways they refused to walk, and whose law they refused to obey

The word "they" also refers to the people of Israel and to Isaiah. The two phrases mean the same thing. In the first, obeying Yahweh's laws is spoken of as if it were walking in the paths in which Yahweh commanded them to walk. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁴ Who gave Jacob over to the robber, and Israel to the looters? Was it not Yahweh, against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they refused to walk, and whose law they refused to obey?

UST

²⁴ Who allowed the valuable possessions of the people of Israel to be stolen? It was Yahweh, because he is the one against whom we had sinned; we did not conduct our lives like he wanted us to, and we did not obey his laws.

Isaiah 42:25

Therefore he

Alternate translation: "Therefore Yahweh"

he poured out on them his fierce anger

Isaiah speaks of Yahweh's anger as if it were a liquid that could be poured out. Alternate translation: "he showed them just how angry he was" (See: [Metaphor](#))

on them

"against us." Here "them" refers to the people of Israel, but Isaiah still included himself as part of the people.

and the violence of war

The word "devastation" can be translated with a verb. Alternate translation: "by devastating them with war" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Its flames encircled them ... it consumed them

Isaiah speaks of Yahweh's fierce anger as if it were a fire that burned the people. (See: [Metaphor](#))

they did not take it to heart

Paying attention to something and learning from it is spoken of as if it were placing that thing on one's heart. Alternate translation: "they did not pay attention" or "they did not learn from it" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ Therefore he poured out on them his fierce anger and the violence of war, Its flames encircled them, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take {it} to heart.

UST

²⁵ Therefore he was extremely angry with us, and he caused our soldiers to be destroyed in battles. It was as though he had lit a fire around us, but we did not understand what he was trying to tell us. His anger with us was like a fire that would burn us up, but we did not pay attention.

Isaiah 43

Isaiah 43 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Exodus

This chapter pictures Judah's eventual return from exile in Babylon as a kind of second exodus. It was reminiscent of their exodus from Egypt.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Exile

This chapter prophesies about the Jews return from Babylon, but the exile has yet to happen and is still more than a hundred years in the future. These events will show that Yahweh alone is God. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Isaiah 43:1

he who created you, Jacob, and he who formed you, Israel

Both clauses mean the same thing. Alternate translation: “the one who created you, O people of Israel” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹ But now this is what Yahweh says, he who created you, Jacob, and he who formed you, Israel: “Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called {you} by your name, you {are} mine.

UST

¹ But now, you people of Israel, listen to Yahweh, the one who established your nation. The one who caused you to become a nation says this: “Do not be afraid, because I have rescued you. I have called you by your name, in order that you may belong to me. Now you are mine.

Isaiah 43:2

When you pass through the waters ... the flames will not destroy you

Yahweh speaks of suffering and difficult experiences as if they are deep waters and fires through which the people walk. The words “waters” and “flames” form a merism and emphasize any difficult circumstance. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Merism](#))

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you

These two statements mean basically the same thing and emphasize that the people will experience no harm because Yahweh is with them. (See: [Parallelism](#))

you will not be burned

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “it will not burn you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

² When you pass through the waters, I {will be} with you; and through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire you will not be burned, and the flames will not destroy you.

UST

² When you experience dangerous situations, and you have hardships as terrible as deep rivers to cross, I will be with you. When you have very painful troubles, as painful as fire, you will be able to endure them, and they will not hurt you,

Isaiah 43:3

I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you

These two phrases share similar meanings and emphasize that Yahweh will allow Israel's enemy to conquer these nations instead of Israel. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Seba

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

ULT

³ For I {am} Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

UST

³ because I am Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, the one who rescues you. I will sacrifice Egypt in your place; and Ethiopia and Seba exchange for you.

Isaiah 43:4

Since you are precious and special in my sight

The words “precious” and “special” mean basically the same thing and emphasize how much Yahweh values his people. Alternate translation: “Because you are very precious to me” (See: [Doublet](#))

therefore I will give people in exchange for you, and other peoples in exchange for your life

Both phrases mean the same thing. Alternate translation: “therefore I will let the enemy conquer other peoples instead of you” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁴ Since you are precious and special in my sight, I love you; therefore I will give people in exchange for you, and other peoples in exchange for your life.

UST

⁴ I will cause other countries to be conquered instead of your country; I will trade them for you, in order that you will not be killed, because you are very precious to me and because I love you.

Isaiah 43:5

I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west

The directions “east” and “west” form a merism and represent from every direction. Alternate translation: “I will bring you and your offspring from every direction” (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

⁵ Do not be afraid, for I {am} with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west.

UST

⁵ Do not be afraid, because I am with you. Some day I will gather your descendants from the east and from the west.

Isaiah 43:6

say to the north ... to the south

Yahweh speaks to “the north” and “the south” as if commanding the nations in those locations. (See: [Personification](#) and [Metonymy](#))

my sons ... my daughters

Yahweh speaks of the people who belong to him as if they were his children. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ I will say to the north, ‘Hand them over;’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold any back;’ Bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the remote regions of the earth,

UST

⁶ I will command the rulers of the nations to the north and to the south, ‘Allow all the people of Israel to return to their country, from the most distant places on the earth.

Isaiah 43:7

everyone who is called by my name

Here to be called by someone's name represents belonging to that person. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "everyone whom I have called by my name" or "everyone who belongs to me" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

whom I have formed, yes, whom I have made

Both of these mean the same thing and emphasize that it is God who made the people of Israel. (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
whom I have created for my glory,
whom I have formed, yes, whom I have
made.

UST

⁷ Allow all those who belong to me to
return, because I have caused them to
become a nation in order that they
would honor me; I am the one who has
done that.'

Isaiah 43:8

the people who are blind ... the deaf

Yahweh speaks of those who do not listen to him or obey him as if they were blind and deaf. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes, and the deaf, even though they have ears.

UST

⁸ Summon the people who have eyes but act as though they were blind; summon those who have ears but act as though they were deaf.

Isaiah 43:9

Who among them could have declared this and announced to us earlier events?

This rhetorical question applies to the gods whom the people of the nations worship. The implied answer is that none of them could do this. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "None of their gods could have declared this or announced to us earlier events." (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

announced to us earlier events

This phrase refers to their ability to tell about events that happened in the past before they happened. Alternate translation: "announced to us earlier events before they happened" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Let them bring their witnesses to prove themselves right, let them listen and affirm, 'It is true.'

Yahweh challenges the gods whom the nations worship to provide witnesses who will testify that they have been able to do these things, although he knows that they cannot do so. Alternate translation: "These gods have no witnesses who will prove them right, witnesses who will listen and affirm, 'It is true'" (See: [Irony](#))

ULT

⁹ All the nations gather together, and the peoples assemble. Who among them could have declared this and announced to us earlier events? Let them bring their witnesses to prove themselves right, let them listen and affirm, 'It is true.'

UST

⁹ Gather people of all nations together, ones from all people groups, and ask them this: 'Has any of their idols foretold the things that are happening now? And can any of them predict what will happen in the future?' Then bring people who will testify and say 'I heard them predict things, and what they predicted was what happened,' but they will be lying."

Isaiah 43:10

You ... my servant

Here “you” is plural and refers to the people of Israel. The phrase “my servant” refers to the nation, as a whole. (See: [Forms of You](#))

Before me ... after me

In speaking this way, Yahweh is not saying that there was a time before which he did not exist or a time after which he will not exist. He is asserting that he is eternal and that the gods whom the people of other nations worship are not.

Before me there was no god formed

Here the word “formed” indicates that Yahweh is speaking of idols that people have made. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “None of the gods whom people have formed existed before me” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

there will be none after me

Alternate translation: “none of those gods will exist after me”

ULT

¹⁰ You {are} my witnesses,” declares Yahweh, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe in me, and understand that I am he. Before me there was no god formed, and there will be none after me.

UST

¹⁰ But Yahweh says, “You people of Israel are my witnesses, and you are the ones who serve me. I chose you in order that you would know me, believe in me, and understand that I am the only one who is truly God. There is no other true God. There was no other true God previously, and there will never be another true God.

Isaiah 43:11

I, I am Yahweh

The word "I" is repeated to emphasize the focus on Yahweh.
Alternate translation: "I alone am Yahweh" or "I myself am Yahweh"
(See: [Doublet](#))

there is no savior but me

This can be expressed positively. Alternate translation: "I am the only savior" or "I am the only one who can save you"

ULT

¹¹ I, I {am} Yahweh, and there is no savior but me.

UST

¹¹ I, only I, am Yahweh, and there is no other one who can save you.

Isaiah 43:12

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹² I have declared, saved, and proclaimed, and there is no other {god} among you. You {are} my witnesses," declares Yahweh, "I {am} God.

UST

¹² I said that I would rescue your ancestors, and then I rescued them, and I proclaimed that I had done it. No foreign god among you did that! And you are witnesses that only I, Yahweh, am God.

Isaiah 43:13

no one can rescue anyone from my hand

Here the word “hand” represents Yahweh’s power. Alternate translation: “no one can rescue anyone from my power” (See: [Metonymy](#))

who can turn it back?

Yahweh uses this question to say that no one can turn back his hand. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Turning back his hand represents stopping him from doing something. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 14:27](#). Alternate translation: “no one can turn it back.” or “no one can stop me.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

13 From this day on I am he, and no one can rescue anyone from my hand. I act, and who can turn it back?”

UST

13 I am God, the one who has existed forever and who will exist forever; no one can snatch people from my hand, and no one can change what I have done.”

Isaiah 43:14

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

I send to Babylon and lead them all down

The object of the verb “send” may be supplied in translation.

Alternate translation: “I send an army to Babylon” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

lead them all down as fugitives

Alternate translation: “lead all of the Babylonians down as fugitives”

fugitives

A fugitive is a person who runs away so that his enemy will not capture him.

ULT

¹⁴ This is what Yahweh says, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “For your sake I send to Babylon and lead them all down as fugitives, turning the Babylonians’ expressions of joy into songs of lamentation.

UST

¹⁴ Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, is the one who rescues you, and this is what he says: “For your sake, I will send an army to attack Babylon. They will force the people of the city to run away from their city, and to wail in song instead of rejoice in song.

Isaiah 43:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁵ I {am} Yahweh, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.”

UST

¹⁵ I am Yahweh, your Holy One, the one who caused Israel to become a nation, and the one who is really your king.

Isaiah 43:16

who opened a way ... mighty waters

Isaiah speaks of the events following the exodus from Egypt, when Yahweh divided the sea to let the Israelites walk through on dry ground but then drowned the Egyptian army. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

16 This is what Yahweh says (who opened a way through the sea and a path in the mighty waters,

UST

16 I am Yahweh, the one who opened a path through the water, making a road through the Sea of Reeds.

Isaiah 43:17

who led out ... a burning wick

Isaiah speaks of the events following the exodus from Egypt, when Yahweh divided the sea to let the Israelites walk through on dry ground but then drowned the Egyptian army. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

They fell down together; they will never rise again

Dying is spoken of as if it were falling down to the ground. Alternate translation: "They all died together; they will never live again" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Euphemism](#))

they are extinguished, quenched like a burning wick

The people dying is spoken of as if they were burning candle wicks that someone has extinguished. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "their lives have ended, like a person extinguishes the flame of a burning candle" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

17 who led out the chariot and horse, the army and the mighty host. They fell down together; they will never rise again; they are extinguished, quenched like a burning wick.)

UST

17 Then I summoned the great army of Egypt to come with all their chariots and horses. But when they tried to pursue my people, I caused the waves to flow over them and they drowned; their lives ended like the light of a candle ends when someone snuffs out the wick.

Isaiah 43:18

Do not think about these former things, nor consider the things of long ago.

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize that they are not to worry about what happened in the past. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹⁸ "Do not think about these former things, nor consider the things of long ago.

UST

¹⁸ But do not think only about what happened in the past, long ago.

Isaiah 43:19

Look

This word is used to draw attention to the important information that follows. Alternate translation: “Listen” or “Pay attention”

do you not perceive it?

Yahweh uses a question to teach the people of Israel. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “surely you have noticed it.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁹ Look, I am about to do a new thing; now it begins to happen; do you not perceive it? I will make a road in the desert {and} streams of water in the wilderness.

UST

¹⁹ Instead, consider the new thing that I am going to do. I have already started to do it; can you see it? I am going to make a road through the desert. And I will cause there to be streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 43:20

wild animals of the field will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches

Here animals honor Yahweh as if they were people. (See: [Personification](#))

the jackals and the ostriches

These are examples of the kinds of animals that will honor Yahweh. See how you translated the names of these animals in [Isaiah 13:21-22](#). The understood information can be supplied to make the meaning clear. Alternate translation: “the jackals and the ostriches will honor me” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

²⁰ The wild animals of the field will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I give water in the wilderness, {and} rivers in the desert, for my chosen people to drink,

UST

²⁰ The jackals and ostriches and other wild creatures will thank me for giving them water in the desert. I will cause streams to appear in the dry desert in order that my people, the ones whom I have chosen, will have water;

Isaiah 43:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ this people whom I formed for myself, that they might recount my praises.

UST

²¹ I will do that for the people whom I have created and chosen to belong to me, so that they will tell others about the wonderful things I have done for them.

Isaiah 43:22

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²² But you have not called on me, Jacob;
you have become tired of me, Israel.

UST

²² But now, you descendants of Jacob,
you refuse to request my help. You
people of Israel have become tired of
worshiping me.

Isaiah 43:23

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²³ You have not brought me any of your sheep as burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with grain offerings, nor wearied you with demands for incense.

UST

²³ You have not brought to me sheep or goats for offerings to burn up on my altar; you have not honored me with any sacrifices, even though the offerings of grain and incense that I asked you to bring to me were not a burden to you.

Isaiah 43:24

sweet-smelling cane

This is a plant with a pleasant smell used to make anointing oil. It did not grow in the land of Israel so the people had to buy it from other nations.

burdened me with your sins, you have wearied me with your evil deeds

These both mean the same thing and emphasize the complaint Yahweh has with his people. (See: [Parallelism](#))

burdened me with your sins

Alternate translation: "troubled me with your sins"

ULT

24 You have bought me no sweet-smelling cane with money, neither have you poured out to me the fat of your sacrifices; but you have burdened me with your sins, you have wearied me with your evil deeds.

UST

24 You have not bought for me any fragrant reeds, and you have not poured out to me the sweet-smelling fat from any animal sacrifices. But you have burdened me by all the sins that you have committed, and made me weary because of all your iniquities.

Isaiah 43:25

I, yes, I

The word "I" is repeated for emphasis. Alternate translation: "I alone" (See: [Doublet](#))

who blots out your offenses

Forgiving sins is spoken of as either: (1) blotting them out or wiping them away or (2) erasing a written record of the sins. Alternate translation: "who forgives your offenses like someone wiping something away" or "who forgives your offenses like someone who erases a record of sins" (See: [Metaphor](#))

for my own sake

Alternate translation: "for my own honor" or "for my own reputation"

call to mind

Alternate translation: "remember"

ULT

²⁵ I, yes, I, {am} he who blots out your offenses for my own sake; and I will not call to mind your sins any longer.

UST

²⁵ I am the one who is able to forgive you for all your sins; I am the only one who can do that, with the result that I will never think about them again.

Isaiah 43:26

present your cause, that you may be proved innocent

Yahweh challenges the people to offer proof that they are innocent of the charges that he has brought against them, although he knows that they cannot do so. Alternate translation: “present your case, but you cannot prove yourselves to be innocent” (See: [Irony](#))

that you may be proved innocent

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “that you may prove yourselves innocent” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁶ Remind me of what happened. Let us debate together; present {your cause}, that you may be proved innocent.

UST

²⁶ Tell me what I have done that you do not like. Do you think that when you state your case, you will prove that you are innocent?

Isaiah 43:27

Your first father sinned

This refers to the founder of Israel and may represent either Abraham or Jacob.

ULT

²⁷ Your first father sinned, and your leaders have transgressed against me.

UST

²⁷ No, what has happened is that the first ancestor of you Israelites sinned against me, and since then, all your leaders have rebelled against me.

Isaiah 43:28

I will hand Jacob over to complete destruction

Here to “hand over” represents putting someone under the power of another. The noun “destruction” can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “I will cause the enemy to completely destroy Jacob” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

Israel to abusive humiliation

The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase, with which this phrase is parallel. The noun “humiliation” can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “I will allow the enemy to abuse and humiliate Israel” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Ellipsis](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

28 Therefore I will defile the holy officials; I will hand Jacob over to complete destruction, and Israel to abusive humiliation.”

UST

28 That is why I will cause your priests to be disgraced; I will allow others to destroy you people of Israel and caused you to be despised.”

Isaiah 44

Isaiah 44 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Yahweh's power

There is a prophecy in this chapter that gives the name of the king who will end the exile of the Jews from Babylon and rebuild the temple, even though the exile has not yet even occurred. This emphasizes that Yahweh knows the future, so the translator should translate the name of Cyrus given here. There are many other aspects of this chapter that show Yahweh's power as well. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [temple](#), [house](#), [house of God](#))

Isaiah 44:1

Jacob my servant

This refers to Jacob's descendants. Alternate translation: "descendants of Jacob, my servants" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ Now listen, Jacob my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen:

UST

¹ But now, you people of Israel whom Yahweh has chosen to serve him, listen to me.

Isaiah 44:2

he who made you and formed you in the womb

Yahweh speaks of creating the nation of Israel as if it were forming the nation as a baby in its mother's womb. Alternate translation: "he who made you, as I form a baby in the womb" (See: [Metaphor](#))

you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen

The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen, do not fear" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

Jeshurun

This also refers to the people of Israel. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

² This is what Yahweh says, he who made you and formed you in the womb and {who} will help you: "Do not fear, Jacob my servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

UST

² Yahweh, the one who created you, watched over you while you were being born, and helps you, says this: "You dear people of Israel whom I have chosen, you who serve me, do not be afraid.

Isaiah 44:3

I will pour water on the thirsty ground, and flowing streams on the dry ground

Yahweh speaks of giving his Spirit to the people of Israel as if he were causing rain to fall and streams to flow on dry ground. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the thirsty ground

Dry ground is spoken of as if it were a thirsty person. Alternate translation: “the dry ground” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

I will pour my Spirit on your offspring

Yahweh speaks of giving his Spirit to the people as if his Spirit were liquid that he pours out on them. Alternate translation: “I will give my Spirit to your offspring” (See: [Metaphor](#))

my blessing on your children

The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: “I will pour out my blessing on your children” or “I will give my blessing to your children” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

³ For I will pour water on the thirsty ground, and flowing streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your children.

UST

³ I will pour water on your dry land and cause streams to flow. And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants and greatly bless them.

Isaiah 44:4

They will spring up among the grass, like willows by the streams of water

The people of Israel being prosperous and multiplying is spoken of as if they were plants that grow because they have plenty of water.
(See: [Metaphor](#))

willows

A willow is a tree with thin branches that grows near the water.

ULT

⁴ They will spring up among the grass, like willows by the streams of water.

UST

⁴ They will grow up like grass grows along the water, like willow trees grow well along a riverbank.

Isaiah 44:5

another will call out the name of Jacob

Alternate translation: "another person will say he is a descendant of Jacob"

name himself by the name of Israel

Alternate translation: "call himself a descendant of Israel"

ULT

⁵ {One} will say, 'I {belong to} Yahweh,' and another will call out the name of Jacob, and another will write {on} his hand {'Belonging to} Yahweh,' and name {himself} by the name of Israel."

UST

⁵ Some of them will say, 'I belong to Yahweh,' and others will say, 'We are descendants of Jacob,' and others will write on their hands, 'We belong to Yahweh,' and others will say, 'We are Israelites, and we belong to Yahweh.'"

Isaiah 44:6

his Redeemer

Alternate translation: "Israel's Redeemer"

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

I am the first, and I am the last

This phrase emphasizes Yahweh's eternal nature. This could mean: (1) "I am the one who began all things, and I am the one who ends all things" or (2) "I am the one who has always lived, and I am the one who always will live." (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

⁶ This is what Yahweh says—the King of Israel and his Redeemer, Yahweh of hosts: "I {am} the first, and I {am} the last; and {there is} no God but me.

UST

⁶ Yahweh, the King of Israel, the one who saves us, commander of the angel armies, says this: "I am the one who begins everything and who ends everything; there is no other God.

Isaiah 44:7

Who is like me? Let him announce

Yahweh uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that there is no one like him. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "If anyone thinks he is like me, let him announce" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁷ Who is like me? Let him announce it and explain to me the events that occurred since I established my ancient people, and let them declare the events to come.

UST

⁷ If there is anyone like me, he should proclaim it! He should speak and tell me now! He should tell what has happened since I caused my people of Israel to become a nation long ago; he should also explain why events in the past happened the way they did, and he should predict what will happen in the future.

Isaiah 44:8

Do not fear or be afraid

Yahweh uses two similar expressions in order to strengthen his encouragement. Alternate translation: “Do not be afraid” (See: [Doublet](#))

Have I not declared to you long ago, and announced it?

Yahweh uses this question to emphasize that he is the one who predicted the events that have now happened. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. The word “announced” means basically the same thing as “declared.” Alternate translation: “I declared these things to you long ago.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Doublet](#))

Is there any God besides me?

Yahweh uses a question again to emphasize that there is no other God. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “There is no God besides me.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

There is no other Rock

Yahweh speaks of himself as if he were a large rock under which people can find shelter. This means he has the power to protect his people. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ Do not fear or be afraid. Have I not declared to you long ago, and announced {it}? You {are} my witnesses: Is there any God besides me? {There is} no other Rock; I know of none.”

UST

⁸ My people, do not be afraid. Long ago I told you things that would happen; you know that I predicted them, and you can testify that I did that. There certainly is not any other God. There is no other God who is able to protect you.”

Isaiah 44:9

the things they delight in are worthless

Alternate translation: “the idols they delight in are worthless”

their witnesses cannot see or know anything

This phrase refers to those who worship these idols and who claim to be witnesses of the idols’ power. Yahweh speaks of their inability to understand the truth as if they were blind. Alternate translation: “those who serve as witnesses for these idols are like blind people who know nothing” (See: [Metaphor](#))

they will be put to shame

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “they will be ashamed” or “their idols will put them to shame” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁹ All who fashion idols are nothing; the things they delight in {are} worthless; their witnesses cannot see or know anything, and they will be put to shame.

UST

⁹ All those who make idols are foolish, and the idols that they think highly of are worthless. And the people who worship those idols—it is as though they were blind, and they will be ashamed for having worshiped those idols.

Isaiah 44:10

Who would form a god or cast an idol that is worthless?

Yahweh is using this question to rebuke those who make idols. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "Only fools would form a god or cast an idol that is worthless." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

cast an idol that is worthless

The word "worthless" does not distinguish worthless idols from idols that have worth, because all idols are worthless. Alternate translation: "cast worthless idols" (See: [Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Who would form a god or cast an idol that is worthless?

UST

¹⁰ Only foolish people would make idols in a mold, idols that would never help them at all.

Isaiah 44:11

all his associates

This could mean: (1) this refers to the associates of the craftsman who makes the idol. Alternate translation: “all of the craftsman’s associates” or (2) this refers to those who associate themselves with the idol by worshiping it. Alternate translation: “all those who worship the idol” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

be put to shame

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “will be ashamed” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Let them take their stand together

Alternate translation: “Let them all come together before me”

they will cower

“they will be terrified.” To “cower” is to bend over in fear.

ULT

11 Look, all his associates will be put to shame; the craftsmen {are} only men. Let them take their stand together; they will cower and be put to shame.

UST

11 Those who make idols and those who worship them will be ashamed. Those who make idols are only human beings, but they claim that they are making gods! They should stand in front of God in a courtroom, and when they hear what he says, they will be terrified, and they will all be disgraced.

Isaiah 44:12

forming it

Alternate translation: “forming the idol” or “creating the idol”

ULT

¹² The smith works with his tools, forming it, working over the coals. He shapes it with hammers and works it with his strong arm. He is hungry, and his strength wanes; he {drinks} no water and becomes faint.

UST

¹² Metalworkers stand in front of hot coals in order to make idols. They pound them with hammers and shape them. Because they work very hard, they become hungry and weak; they become very thirsty and feel exhausted.

Isaiah 44:13

with a line

A string was used to outline the shape of the idol in the wood.

stylus

This is a sharp tool to scratch the wood so the craftsman can see where to cut.

a compass

This is a tool with two points that spread out used to help mark the wood to make the idol.

ULT

13 The carpenter measures the wood with a line, and marks it with a stylus. He shapes it with {his} tools and marks it out with a compass. He shapes it after the figure of a man, like an attractive human, so it may stay in a house.

UST

13 Then a woodcarver takes a big block of wood and he measures it; then he marks it to show where he will cut it. He uses a chisel and other tools to carve it to resemble a human. He causes it to become a very beautiful idol, and then he puts it in a special house, where he will bow down to it.

Isaiah 44:14

He cuts down

Alternate translation: "The carpenter cuts down" or "the woodcarver cuts down"

cypress tree

a tall evergreen tree (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

14 He cuts down cedars, or chooses a cypress tree or an oak tree. He picks for himself trees in the forest. He plants a fir tree and the rain makes it grow.

UST

14 Before he carves an idol from that block of wood, he has already cut down a cedar tree, or he has selected a cypress tree or an oak tree and allowed it to grow tall in the forest. Or he has planted a pine tree, and the rain has watered it and caused it to grow tall.

Isaiah 44:15

Then a man uses it

Alternate translation: "The man uses the wood"

he makes an idol and bows down to it

This part of the sentence says basically the same as the first to emphasize it. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Then a man uses {it} for a fire and warms himself. Yes, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Then he makes from {it} a god and bows down to {it}; he makes an idol and bows down to {it}.

UST

¹⁵ After he uses part of the tree to make an idol, he uses the other part to make a fire, either to warm himself or to bake bread. But he uses part of the same tree to make for himself an idol to worship! He makes an idol, and then he bows down to worship it.

Isaiah 44:16

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁶ He burns part of the wood for the fire, roasting his meat over it. He eats and is satisfied. He warms {himself} and says, "Ah, I am warm, I have seen the fire."

UST

¹⁶ He burns part of the wood of that tree to cook his meat and eats it and becomes full, and he burns part of it to warm himself, and he says, "I feel warm while I am watching the flames in the fire."

Isaiah 44:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁷ With the rest of the wood he makes a god, his carved image; he bows down to it and reverences it, and prays to it saying, "Rescue me, for you {are} my god."

UST

¹⁷ Then he takes the rest of the wood and makes an idol which is to be his god. He bows down to it and honors it, and prays to it and says, "You are my god, so save me!"

Isaiah 44:18

for their eyes are blind and cannot see

Yahweh speaks of those who cannot understand the foolishness of worshiping idols as if they were blind. (See: [Metaphor](#))

for their eyes are blind

Here “their eyes” represents the whole person. Alternate translation: “for they are blind” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

their hearts cannot perceive

Here the people are represented by their “hearts.” Alternate translation: “they cannot understand” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

18 They do not know, nor do they understand, for their eyes are blind and cannot see, and their hearts cannot perceive.

UST

18 Those people are very stupid and ignorant. It is as though they were blind and unable to see, as though their minds were closed and unable to think well.

Isaiah 44:19

Now should I make ... something disgusting to worship? Should I bow down to a block of wood?

Yahweh says that these people should be asking themselves these rhetorical questions. The questions anticipate negative answers and emphasize how foolish it would be for a person to do these things. If your readers would misunderstand these questions, you can express them as statements. Alternate translation: "I should not now make ... something disgusting to worship. I should not bow down to a block of wood." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁹ No one thinks, nor do they comprehend and say, "I have burned part of the wood in the fire; yes, I have also baked bread upon its coals. I have roasted meat over its coals and eaten. Now should I make the other part of the wood into something disgusting to worship? Should I bow down to a block of wood?"

UST

¹⁹ They do not think about what they are doing, that they are taking a block of wood and burning half of it to warm themselves and using some of the rest to bake bread and roast some meat! They do not say to themselves, "It is stupid to take the rest of the wood to make a detestable idol! It does not make sense to bow down to a block of wood!"

Isaiah 44:20

It is as if he were eating ashes

Yahweh speaks of a person worshiping an idol as if that person were eating the burned ashes of the wood from which he made the idol. Just as eating ashes does not benefit a person, neither does worshiping an idol. (See: [Metaphor](#))

his deceived heart misleads him

The heart represents the inner person. Alternate translation: “he misleads himself because he is deceived” (See: [Metonymy](#))

He cannot rescue himself

Alternate translation: “The person who worships idols cannot save himself”

ULT

²⁰ It is as if he were eating ashes; his deceived heart misleads him. He cannot rescue himself, nor does he say, “This thing in my right hand {is} a false god.”

UST

²⁰ They might as well be eating the ashes from a fire! They trust in something that cannot save them; they do not admit, “In my hand I hold something that is not really a god!”

Isaiah 44:21

Jacob, and Israel

This refers to people descended from Jacob, Israel. Alternate translation: “you descendants of Israel” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Doublet](#))

you will not be forgotten by me

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “I will not forget you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

21 Think about these things, Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant: I have formed you; you are my servant: Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.

UST

21 Yahweh says, “You descendants of Jacob, you people of Israel who should be serving me, I created you, and I will not forget you.”

Isaiah 44:22

I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your rebellious deeds, and like a cloud, your sins

Both of these statements mean the same thing. God has removed their sins as quickly and easily as a wind can blow away a cloud. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Simile](#))

like a cloud, your sins

The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "like a cloud, I have blotted out your sins" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

²² I have blotted out, like a {thick} cloud, your rebellious deeds, and like a cloud, your sins; return to me, for I have redeemed you.

UST

²² I have gotten rid of your sins like the wind blows away a cloud. It is as though your transgressions were a morning mist that I have blown away. Return to me because I have rescued you."

Isaiah 44:23

Sing, you heavens ... glory in Israel

Here Isaiah speaks various parts of creation as if they were people and commands them to praise Yahweh. (See: [Apostrophe](#) and [Personification](#))

you depths of the earth

“you lowest parts of the earth.” This could mean: (1) that this refers to very deep places on the earth such as caves or canyons and forms a merism with “heavens” in the previous phrase or (2) that this refers to the place of the dead. (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

23 Sing, you heavens, for Yahweh has done {this}; shout, you depths of the earth. Break out into singing, you mountains, you forest with every tree in it; for Yahweh has redeemed Jacob, and will show his glory in Israel.

UST

23 The sun and moon and stars in the sky, should sing, and the very deepest places of the earth will should joyfully! All the mountains and forests, and all you trees, should sing loudly, because Yahweh has rescued the descendants of Jacob, and the people of Israel will praise him.

Isaiah 44:24

Redeemer

See how you translated this word in [Isaiah 41:14](#).

he who formed you from the womb

Yahweh speaks of creating the nation of Israel as if it were forming the nation as a baby in its mother's womb. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 44:2](#). Alternate translation: "he who made you, as I form a baby in the womb" (See: [Metaphor](#))

who alone stretched out the heavens

Yahweh speaks of creating the heavens as if they were fabric which he stretched out. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 42:5](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁴ This is what Yahweh says, your Redeemer, he who formed you from the womb: "I {am Yahweh,} who made {everything}, who alone stretched out the heavens, who alone fashioned the earth.

UST

²⁴ Yahweh, who saved you and created you, says this: "I am Yahweh, the one who created everything. I am the only one who stretched out the sky. There was no one who was with me when I created the earth.

Isaiah 44:25

omens

These are signs that people used to attempt to predict the future.

the empty talkers

This refers to people who say things that are meaningless.

ULT

²⁵ I who frustrate the omens of the empty talkers and who disgrace those who read omens; I who overturn the wisdom of the wise and make their advice foolish.

UST

²⁵ I show that the false prophets are liars, and I show that those who perform rituals to predict the future are fools. Some people who falsely think that they are wise say that they know much, but I show that they are foolish.

Isaiah 44:26

who confirmed the words of his servant and brings to pass the predictions of his messengers

Yahweh is saying the same thing twice to emphasize that it is only he, Yahweh, who causes the prophesies to be fulfilled. (See: [Parallelism](#))

the words of his servant ... the predictions of his messengers

The abstract nouns “words” and “predictions” can be translated as verbs. Alternate translation: “what his servant declares ... what his messengers announce” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

She will be inhabited

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “People will live there again” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

They will be built again

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “People will rebuild them” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

I will raise up their ruins

The phrase “ruins” refers to places that have been destroyed. Yahweh speaks of rebuilding them as if he were raising them up. Alternate translation: “I will rebuild what others have destroyed” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁶ I, Yahweh, who confirmed the words of his servant and brings to pass the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘She will be inhabited,’ and of the towns of Judah, ‘They will be built again, and I will raise up their ruins’;

UST

²⁶ But I always cause to happen what my prophets predict. I tell them to say to the people of Jerusalem, ‘Some day people will live here again.’ And I tell them to say to the people in other towns in Judah that I, Yahweh, say, ‘Your towns will be rebuilt; I will cause the places that are only ruins to be rebuilt.’

Isaiah 44:27

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁷ who says to the deep sea, 'Be dry,
and I will dry up your currents.'

UST

²⁷ When I say to the rivers, 'Dry up!' they
will become dry.

Isaiah 44:28

He is my shepherd

Yahweh speaks of Cyrus ruling and protecting the people of Israel as if Cyrus is their shepherd. (See: [Metaphor](#))

She will be rebuilt

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Let the people rebuild the city" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Let its foundations be laid

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Let the people lay its foundations" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

28 Yahweh is the one who says of Cyrus, '{He is} my shepherd, he will do my every wish; he will decree about Jerusalem, 'She will be rebuilt,' and about the temple, 'Let its foundations be laid.'"

UST

28 When I say about King Cyrus, 'He will take care of my people like a shepherd takes care of his sheep, he will do all that I want him to do,' he will say about Jerusalem, 'We must rebuild it!' and he will also say, 'We must rebuild the temple!'"

Isaiah 45

Isaiah 45 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Potter and clay

The potter and the clay are important images used in Scripture. They emphasize the power and control of God. This chapter connects this to the truth that Yahweh is the creator of all, which it repeatedly emphasizes. He is even able to “anoint” or chose a future, pagan king. (See: [anoint](#), [anointed](#), [anointing](#))

Isaiah 45:1

whose right hand I hold

Yahweh helping Cyrus and causing him to be successful is spoken of as if he were holding his right hand. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ This is what Yahweh says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I hold, in order to subdue nations before him, to disarm kings, and to open the doors before him, so that gates remain open:

UST

¹ Cyrus is the one whom Yahweh has appointed to be the emperor of Persia and to whom he will give great power; Yahweh will enable him to defeat other nations and to take away the power of their kings. He will cause gates of cities to be opened, and no one will ever be able to shut them.

Isaiah 45:2

level the mountains

Yahweh speaks of removing obstacles that would hinder Cyrus's success as if it were leveling mountains before him. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the mountains

The Hebrew word used in the text is rare and is of an uncertain meaning. Some modern versions have "rough places" or "crooked places."

their iron bars

This refers to the iron bars on the bronze gates.

ULT

² "I will go before you and level the mountains; I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut in pieces their iron bars,

UST

² This is what Yahweh says to him:
"Cyrus, I will go ahead of you and level the mountains. I will smash down bronze gates and cut through their iron bars.

Isaiah 45:3

the treasures of darkness

Here “darkness” refers to places that are secret. Alternate translation: “treasures in dark places” or “the treasures in secret places” (See:

[Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

³ and I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden away, that you may know that it is I, Yahweh, who call you by your name, I, the God of Israel.

UST

³ I will give you treasures that people have hidden in dark secret places. I will do that in order that you will know that I am Yahweh, the God to whom the Israelites belong, the God who calls you by your name.

Isaiah 45:4

Jacob ... Israel

These both refer to the descendants of Israel. (See: [Doublet](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called you by your name, giving you a title of honor, though you have not known me.

UST

⁴ I have summoned you, calling out your name, for the sake of the people of Israel whom I have chosen, who serve me. Even though you do not know me, I will give you a title that has great honor.

Isaiah 45:5

I will arm you for battle

This could mean: (1) "I will strengthen you for battle" or (2) "I will equip you for battle."

ULT

⁵ I am Yahweh, and there is no other; there is no God but me. I will arm you for battle, though you have not known me;

UST

⁵ I am Yahweh, and there is no other God. Even though you do not know me, I will give you power to wage war

Isaiah 45:6

from the rising of the sun, and from the west

Since the sun rises in the east, this phrase forms a merism and means everywhere on earth. Alternate translation: “from every place on earth” (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

⁶ that people may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that {there is} no god but me: I {am} Yahweh, and {there is} no other.

UST

⁶ in order that everyone in the world, from the east to the west, will know that there is no other God. I am Yahweh, and there is no other God.

Isaiah 45:7

I form the light and create darkness; I bring peace and create disaster

Both of these expressions form merisms that emphasize that Yahweh is sovereign creator of everything. (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

⁷ I form the light and create darkness; I bring peace and create disaster; I am Yahweh, who does all these things.

UST

⁷ I created the light and the darkness. I cause there to be peace and I cause there to be disasters. I, Yahweh, do all those things."

Isaiah 45:8

You heavens, rain down from above ... righteousness spring up together with it

Yahweh speaks of his righteousness as if it were rain that falls on the earth, and of his righteousness and salvation as plants that grow on the earth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

You heavens

Yahweh momentarily turns his attention from his people and begins to speak to the heavens. (See: [Apostrophe](#))

ULT

⁸ You heavens, rain down from above!
Let the skies rain down righteousness.
Let the earth absorb it, that salvation
may sprout up, and righteousness
spring up together with it. I, Yahweh,
have created them both.

UST

⁸ Yahweh also says, "Just like the rain
falls on the earth to help it, I will help
my people and rescue them; I will cause
them to be treated justly. I, Yahweh, am
the one who will cause both of those
things to happen.

Isaiah 45:9

any other earthen pot among all the earthen pots in the ground

Yahweh speaks of himself as if he were a potter, and of the one who would argue with him as if that person and the rest of humanity were all clay pots. Alternate translation: “like one piece of pottery among many other pieces of pottery scattered on the ground” (See: [Metaphor](#))

earthen pot

This could mean: (1) “clay pot” or (2) “piece of broken clay pottery.”

Does the clay say to the potter ... on it’?

Yahweh asks this question to rebuke those who argue with him about what he does. Alternate translation: “The clay should not say to the potter ... on it!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁹ Woe to anyone who argues with the one who formed him, to him who is like any other earthen pot among all the earthen pots in the ground! Does the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you making?’ or ‘Your work has no handles on it’?

UST

⁹ Terrible things will happen to those who argue with me, because I am the one who created them. They are like clay pots who are arguing with the Potter who made them; they are just like every other clay pot that is made, and yet they argue with the One who made them and formed them out of the clay. Can a lump of clay say to the potter who made him, ‘Why are you making me like this?’ The clay pot cannot say ‘What do you think you are doing, making me this way?’ or “You have no skill and your clay pots are not worth anything!”

Isaiah 45:10

Woe to him who says to a father,...'What are you giving birth to?'

Yahweh speaks of those who would argue him as if they were unborn children who argue with their own parents. (See: [Metaphor](#))

What are you fathering?...What are you giving birth to?

The unborn child asks these rhetorical questions to scold his parents for giving birth to him. These can be translated as statements. Alternate translation: "You should not be my father ... You should give birth to me." or "You are not fathering me correctly ... You are not giving birth to me correctly." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Woe to him who {says} to a father, 'What are you fathering?' or to a woman, 'What are you giving birth to?'

UST

¹⁰ And it would be terrible if an unborn baby would say to its father, 'Why are you causing me to be born?' or if it said to its mother, 'The result of your labor pains will be useless.'"

Isaiah 45:11

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

Why do you ask questions about what I will do for my children? Do you tell me what to do concerning the work of my hands?

Yahweh uses questions to scold those who argue with him about what he does. Alternate translation: "Do not question me about what I do for my children. Do not tell me ... my hands." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

my children

This refers to the people of Israel.

the work of my hands

Here the word "hands" represents Yahweh. Alternate translation: "the things that I have made" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹¹ This is what Yahweh says, the Holy One of Israel, his Maker: 'Why do you ask questions about what I will do for my children? Do you tell me what to do concerning the work of my hands?'

UST

¹¹ Yahweh, the Holy One of the Israelite people, the one who created Israel, says this to them: "Why do you ask questions about what I do for you, my children? Why do you instruct me about the work that I should do?"

Isaiah 45:12

It was my hands that

Here the word "hands" represents Yahweh. Alternate translation: "It was I who" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

stretched out the heavens

Yahweh speaks of creating the heavens as if they were fabric that he stretched out. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 42:5](#).

ULT

12 I made the earth and created man on it. It was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all the stars to appear.

UST

12 I am the one who created the earth and created people to live on it. I stretched out the sky with my hands, and I put the stars in their places.

Isaiah 45:13

I stirred Cyrus up in righteousness

Here the word “righteousness” refers to right action. This could mean: (1) that Yahweh has stirred up Cyrus to do the right thing or (2) that Yahweh was right to stir up Cyrus.

I stirred Cyrus

Yahweh speaks of causing Cyrus to act as if it were stirring him from slumber. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I will smooth out all his paths

Yahweh speaks of removing obstacles and causing Cyrus to be successful as if he were making the paths smooth on which Cyrus walks. (See: [Metaphor](#))

He will build my city

This refers to Jerusalem.

not for price nor bribe

Here the words “price” and “bribe” share similar meanings. Cyrus will not do these things for financial gain. Alternate translation: “he will not do these things for money” (See: [Doublet](#))

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

ULT

13 I stirred Cyrus up in righteousness, and I will smooth out all his paths. He will build my city; he will let my exiled people go home, and not for price nor bribe,” says Yahweh of hosts.

UST

13 And I have made Cyrus to desire to do things that are right, and I will enable him to do all those things easily. No one will be able to stop him. His workers will rebuild my city, and he will free my people who have been exiled. And he will do it without my rewarding him!” This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

Isaiah 45:14

The earnings of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush with the Sabeans, men of tall stature, will be brought to you

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The people of Egypt, Cush, and the tall people of Seba, will bring to you their earnings and their merchandise" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

The earnings of Egypt

Alternate translation: "The profits of Egypt"

Sabeans

These are people from the nation of Seba. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

to you

Here "you" refers to the people of Jerusalem. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

¹⁴ This is what Yahweh says, "The earnings of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush with the Sabeans, men of tall stature, will be brought to you. They will be yours. They will follow after you, coming in chains. They will bow down to you and plead with you {saying,} 'Surely God {is} with you, and {there is} no other except him.'"

UST

¹⁴ And this is also what I, Yahweh, say to you, my people: "You will rule the people of Egypt and Ethiopia, and the tall people of Seba will become your slaves. They will come to you bringing all the things that they sell, and it will all be yours. They will have chains on their arms as they follow you. They will bow down in front of you and say, 'God is with you and he is the only God; there is no other God.'"

Isaiah 45:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁵ Truly you {are} a God who hides yourself, God of Israel, Savior.

UST

¹⁵ God, although we cannot see you, you are the one to whom we Israelite people belong, the one who saves us.

Isaiah 45:16

They will all be ashamed and disgraced together; those who carve idols will walk in humiliation

These two lines share similar meanings, with the second clarifying the subject of the first. (See: [Parallelism](#))

They will all be ashamed and disgraced together

The words “ashamed” and “disgraced” mean basically the same thing and emphasize the intensity of shame. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Their idols will leave them all completely ashamed” (See: [Doublet](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

will walk in humiliation

Living in continual humiliation is spoken of as if it were walking in humiliation. Alternate translation: “will be continually humiliated” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁶ They will all be ashamed and disgraced together; those {who} {carve} idols will walk in humiliation.

UST

¹⁶ All those who make idols will be humiliated. They will all be disgraced together.

Isaiah 45:17

Israel will be saved by Yahweh

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will save the people of Israel” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

you will never again be ashamed or humiliated

Here “you” refers to the people of Israel. The words “ashamed” and “humiliated” mean basically the same thing. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “No one will ever humiliate you again” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Doublet](#))

ULT

17 {But} Israel will be saved by Yahweh with an everlasting salvation; you will never again be ashamed or humiliated.

UST

17 But you, Yahweh, will rescue us, your Israelite people, and we will be free forever. Never again, during all the future, will we again be humiliated and disgraced.

Isaiah 45:18

not as a waste

“not to be empty.” Here the word “waste” refers to an empty, barren place.

but designed it to be inhabited

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “but he designed it so people could live on it” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

18 This is what Yahweh says, who created the heavens, the true God who created the earth and made it, who established it. He created it, not as a waste, but designed it to be inhabited: “I {am} Yahweh, and {there is} no other.

UST

18 Yahweh is God; he is the one who created the sky and created and formed the earth. He did not want it to remain with nothing living on it; he wanted people to live on it. He says, “I am Yahweh; there is no other God.

Isaiah 45:19

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁹ I have not spoken in private, in some hidden place; I did not say to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek me in vain!' I am Yahweh, who speaks sincerely; I declare the {things} that are right.

UST

¹⁹ What I proclaimed, I did not speak secretly; I did not hide what I was saying by speaking in a dark place. When I spoke to the descendants of Jacob, I did not tell them 'It will be useless for you to seek for me!' I, Yahweh, speak only what is true and what is right.

Isaiah 45:20

refugees

people who have fled from their homes so the enemy will not capture or kill them

ULT

20 Assemble yourselves and come!
Gather together, you {refugees} from
among the nations! They have no
knowledge, those who carry carved
images and pray to gods {that} cannot
save.

UST

20 You people who are still alive after
experiencing great disasters, should
come and gather together and listen to
this: The people who carry around their
wooden idols and pray to them are
foolish, because those idols cannot
rescue them!

Isaiah 45:21

Let them conspire together

Here the word “them” refers to the refugees from among the nations who worship idols.

Who has shown this from long ago? Who announced it? Was it not I, Yahweh?

Yahweh uses questions to emphasize that he was the one who told them these things would happen. Alternate translation: “I will tell you who has shown this from long ago. I will tell you who announced it. It was I, Yahweh.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

21 Come close and declare it to me, bring {the} {evidence}! Let them conspire together. Who has shown this from long ago? {Who} announced it? Was it not I, Yahweh? {There is} no God except me, a just God and a Savior; {there is} no one besides me.

UST

21 Talk among yourselves and decide what you will say to prove that you should pray to idols. And when you do that, I will ask you, ‘Who predicted long ago what has now happened? Did any idol tell you that those things would happen?’ No, it was only I, Yahweh, who told you, because I am the only God; there is no other God. I am a God who acts righteously and saves people; there is no other one who does these things.

Isaiah 45:22

Turn to me and be saved

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Turn to me and I will save you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

all the ends of the earth

The places on the earth that are very far away are spoken of as if they were the places where the earth ends. This phrase also forms a merism and refers to everywhere in between the ends. AT “all the farthest places of the earth” or “the entire earth” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Merism](#))

all the ends of the earth

Here this phrase represents the people who live at “the ends of the earth.” Alternate translation: “you who live at the farthest places of the earth” or “all of you who live on the earth” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²² Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I {am} God, and {there is} no other.

UST

²² Everyone in the world should ask me to save them, because I am the only God who can do that; there is no other one.

Isaiah 45:23

To me every knee will bend, every tongue will swear

The words “knee” and “tongue” represent the people. Alternate translation: “Every person will kneel before me, and everyone will swear” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²³ By myself I swear, speaking my just decree, and it will not turn back: ‘To me every knee will bend, every tongue will swear.

UST

²³ I have solemnly declared, using my own name; I have spoken what is true, and I will never change what I have said: Some day, everyone will bow in front of me, and they will all solemnly promise to be loyal to me.

Isaiah 45:24

They will say

All the people on the earth are speaking.

ULT

²⁴ They will say of me, "In Yahweh alone are salvation and strength." They will all be ashamed who are angry at him.

UST

²⁴ They will declare, 'Yahweh is the one who enables us to live righteously and to be strong.'" And all those who have been angry at Yahweh will come to him, and they will be ashamed that they were angry with him.

Isaiah 45:25

In Yahweh all the descendants of Israel will be justified

Here the word “justified” does not refer to Yahweh forgiving their sins, but to proving to the nations that Israel was right to worship him. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will justify all the descendants of Israel” or “Yahweh will vindicate all the descendants of Israel” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁵ In Yahweh all the descendants of Israel will be justified; they will take pride in him.

UST

²⁵ Yahweh is the only one who will enable us Israelite people in all future times to defeat our enemies, and then we will boast about what he has done for us.

Isaiah 46

Isaiah 46 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Yahweh and the false gods

This chapter is intended to compare Yahweh with various false Gods whom the Israelites worship. There really is no comparison at all because Yahweh alone is God. (See: [god](#), [false god](#), [goddess](#), [idol](#), [idolater](#), [idolatrous](#), [idolatry](#))

Isaiah 46:1

Bel bows down, Nebo stoops; their idols ... for weary animals

Isaiah speaks of people placing the idols of Bel and Nebo into a cart for animals to transport as if these gods were made to “bow down” and “stoop.” These are both postures of humiliation. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Bel ... Nebo

These were the two primary gods whom the Babylonians worshiped. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

their idols

the idols that represented Bel and Nebo

ULT

¹ Bel bows down, Nebo stoops; their idols are carried by animals and beasts of burden. These idols that you carry {are} a heavy burden for weary {animals}.

UST

¹ It is as though Bel and Nebo, the statues of the gods of Babylonia, were bowing down as they are put on animals and carried away! The statues are heavy burdens and will cause the animals to become tired!

Isaiah 46:2

they cannot rescue the images

Alternate translation: "Bel and Nebo cannot rescue their images"

they themselves have gone off into captivity

Isaiah speaks of people carrying off these idols as if the false gods whom they represent are being carried off to captivity. (See:

[Metaphor](#))

ULT

² Together they bend low, kneel down; they cannot rescue the images, and they themselves have gone off into captivity.

UST

² Gods and animals are all bowed down; the gods can save neither themselves nor the beasts of burden; the gods themselves are going into exile!

Isaiah 46:3

Listen to me

Here “me” refers to Yahweh.

who have been carried by me from before your birth, carried from the womb

Yahweh speaks of the nation of Israel as if it were a person, and of the nation's beginning as if it were its birth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

who have been carried by me

Yahweh speaks of helping and rescuing the people of Israel as if he were carrying them. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “whom I have carried” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ Listen to me, house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been carried {by me} from before your birth, carried from the womb.

UST

³ Yahweh says, “You descendants of Jacob who were exiled, I am not like the gods of Babylonia that must be carried; instead, it is as though I have carried you since you first became a nation. I carried you even before you became a nation.

Isaiah 46:4

Even to your old age I am he, and until your hair is gray I will carry you

Yahweh speaks of the nation of Israel becoming very old as if it were an old man with gray hair. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Even to {your} old age I {am} he, and until your hair is gray I will carry {you}. I made you and I will bear you; I will carry {you} and I will rescue you.

UST

⁴ I will be your God, and I will carry you for many years, until it is as though your nation is an old man with gray hair. I caused you to become a nation, and I will sustain you and rescue you.

Isaiah 46:5

To whom will you compare me? Who do you think I resemble, so that we may be compared?

Yahweh uses questions to emphasize that there is no one like him. Alternate translation: "There is no one to whom you can compare me. I resemble no one, so that we might be compared." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

so that we may be compared

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "so that you may compare us" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ To whom will you compare me? Who do you think I resemble, so that we may be compared?

UST

⁵ There is certainly no one to whom I can be compared. There is no one who is equal to me.

Isaiah 46:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁶ People pour out gold from the bag and weigh silver on the scale. They hire a metalsmith, and he makes it into a god; they bow down and worship it.

UST

⁶ So it is stupid that some people pour out gold and silver from their bags and weigh it on a scale. Then they hire a man who makes things from gold to make an idol from it. After he makes an idol, they bow down and worship it!

Isaiah 46:7

They lift it

“They” refers to the people who make idols and “it” refers to the idol that they have created.

ULT

⁷ They lift it on their shoulder and carry it; they set it in its place, and it stands in its place and does not move from it. {They} cry out to it, but it cannot answer nor save anyone from his trouble.

UST

⁷ They lift it up and carry it on their shoulders. They put it in a special place, and it stays there. It cannot move! And when someone prays to it, it does not answer. So obviously it cannot rescue anyone from his troubles!

Isaiah 46:8

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁸ Think about these things; never ignore them, you rebels!

UST

⁸ You people of Judah, do not forget this; keep thinking about it, you sinful people!

Isaiah 46:9

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁹ Think about the earlier things, those of times past, for I {am} God, and {there is} no other, {I am} God, and {there is} no one like me.

UST

⁹ Think about the things that I did long ago. Only I am God; I am God, and there is no one like me.

Isaiah 46:10

I announce the end from the beginning, and beforehand what has not yet happened

This basically repeats the same idea for emphasis. The verb from the first phrase may be supplied for the second. Alternate translation: "I announce the end from the beginning, and I announce beforehand what has not yet happened" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

¹⁰ I announce the end from the beginning, and beforehand {what} has not {yet} happened; I say, "My plan will happen, and I will do as I desire."

UST

¹⁰ Only I can tell what will happen in the future before it occurs; I tell it long before it happens. I will accomplish everything that I plan to accomplish, and I will do everything that I want to do.

Isaiah 46:11

I call a bird of prey from the east

Yahweh speaks of Cyrus as if he were “a bird of prey.” As a bird swiftly captures its prey, so Cyrus will swiftly accomplish Yahweh's purpose to conquer the nations. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I have spoken; I will also accomplish it; I have purposed, I will also do it.

This repeats the same idea for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

11 I call a bird of prey from the east, the man of my choice from a distant land; yes, I have spoken; I will also accomplish it; I have purposed, I will also do it.

UST

11 So I will summon Cyrus to come from the east like a swift and powerful eagle; he will come from a distant country. He will accomplish what I want him to. He is the one who will do what I have said that I want him to do, what I have planned.

Isaiah 46:12

who are far from doing what is right

Yahweh speaks of the people stubbornly doing wrong as if they were physically far away from doing the right thing. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² Listen to me, you stubborn people, who {are} far from doing what is right.

UST

¹² You stubborn people of Israel, you who are completely unable to do what is right,

Isaiah 46:13

my salvation does not wait

Yahweh speaks of saving his people soon as if his salvation were a person who does not wait to act. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **salvation**, you could express the same idea with a verb. Alternate translation: "I will not wait to save you" (See: [Personification](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

13 I am bringing my righteousness near; it is not far away, and my salvation does not wait; and I will give salvation to Zion and my beauty to Israel.

UST

13 I will rescue you, and it will not be a long time before that happens. I will do it soon. I will rescue Jerusalem and show to you Israelite people that I am glorious."

Isaiah 47

Isaiah 47 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Babylon

This chapter prophesied the destruction of Babylon. At the time that the prophesy was written, Assyria was still in power and Babylon had not yet become a world power. The Chaldeans were not yet a powerful nation either. The people of Judah would become servants or slaves of Babylon and be forced to work very hard. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Isaiah 47:1

General Information:

In this chapter, Yahweh speaks to Babylon about her downfall as if she were a queen who is humiliated. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

sit in the dust, virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground ... daughter of the Chaldeans.

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Sitting in the dust was a sign of humiliation. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Symbolic Action](#))

virgin daughter of Babylon ... daughter of the Chaldeans

Both of these phrases refer to the city, Babylon, which is spoken of as if it were a daughter. That the city is a “daughter” indicates how people think fondly of her. (See: [Metaphor](#))

without a throne

Here “throne” refers to the power to rule. Alternate translation: “without the power to rule” (See: [Metonymy](#))

You will no longer be called dainty and delicate

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “People will no longer call you dainty and delicate” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

dainty and delicate

These two words share similar meanings. They describe one who is beautiful and lives in luxury. Alternate translation: “very beautiful” or “very luxurious” (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

¹ Come down and sit in the dust, virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, daughter of the Chaldeans. You will no longer be called dainty and delicate.

UST

¹ Yahweh also says, “You people of Babylon, you should go and sit in the dust, because your time to rule other countries is almost ended. People will never again say that Babylonia is beautiful like a very attractive young woman.”

Isaiah 47:2

millstone

a large stone used to grind grain

ULT

² Take the millstone and grind flour; remove your veil, strip off your flowing robe, uncover your legs, cross the streams.

UST

² You will be slaves, so take heavy stones and grind grain like slave women do. Take off your beautiful veils and take off your robes as you prepare to cross streams to go where you will be forced to go.

Isaiah 47:3

Yahweh continues to speak to Babylon about her downfall as if she were a queen who is humiliated. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

Your nakedness will be uncovered

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "You will be naked" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

your shame will be seen

Here the word "shame" is a euphemism for one's private parts. This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "people will see your shame" or "people will see your private parts" (See: [Euphemism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ Your nakedness will be uncovered, yes, your shame will be seen: I will take vengeance and will not spare a man.

UST

³ You will be naked and very ashamed. I will have vengeance on you and will not pity you."

Isaiah 47:4

Our Redeemer

“Our” refers to Isaiah and the people of Israel. See how you translated “Redeemer” in [Isaiah 41:14](#). (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#))

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:24](#).

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 5:16](#).

ULT

⁴ Our Redeemer, Yahweh of hosts {is} his name, the Holy One of Israel.

UST

⁴ The one who frees us people of Judah, whom we call ‘Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies,’ is the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 47:5

daughter of the Chaldeans

This phrase refers to the city, Babylon, which is spoken of as if it were a daughter. That the city is a “daughter” indicates how the Chaldeans think fondly of her. See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 47:1](#).

for you will no longer be called

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “for people will no longer call you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

queen of kingdoms

Yahweh speaks of Babylon being the capital city of the Babylonian empire as if it were a queen who ruled many kingdoms. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Sit in silence and go into darkness, daughter of the Chaldeans; for you will no longer be called queen of kingdoms.

UST

⁵ Yahweh says, “You people of Babylon, sit silently in the darkness, because no one will never again say that your city is like a queen that rules many kingdoms.”

Isaiah 47:6

Yahweh continues to speak to Babylon about her downfall as if she were a queen who is humiliated. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

I was angry

Here “I” refers to Yahweh.

I defiled my heritage

Yahweh speaks of the people of Israel being his special possession as if they were his heritage or inheritance. Alternate translation: “I defiled my people, who are my special possession” (See: [Metaphor](#))

gave them over into your hand

Here the word “hand” represents Babylon’s power or control. Alternate translation: “I put them under your power” (See: [Metonymy](#))

you placed a very heavy yoke on the old people

Yahweh speaks of the Babylonians oppressing the old people as if they had treated the old people like cattle and put heavy yokes on their necks. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ I was angry with my people; I defiled my heritage and gave them over into your hand, but you showed them no mercy; you placed a very heavy yoke on the old people.

UST

⁶ I was angry with the people who belong to me, and I punished them. I allowed you people of Babylon to conquer them. But when you conquered them, you did not act mercifully toward them. You oppressed even the old people.

Isaiah 47:7

I will rule forever as sovereign queen

Babylon speaks of permanently ruling over many nations as if she were a queen who would rule forever. (See: [Metaphor](#))

You did not take these things to heart

Yahweh speaks of thinking carefully about something as if it were placing that thing on one's heart. Alternate translation: "You did not consider these things" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ You said, "I will rule forever as sovereign queen." You did not take these {things} to heart, nor did you consider how they would turn out.

UST

⁷ You said, 'We will rule other nations forever; it is as though our city will be the queen of the world forever!' But you did not think about the things that you were doing, or think about what would result.

Isaiah 47:8

Yahweh continues to speak to Babylon about her downfall as if she were a queen who is humiliated. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

you who love pleasure

“you luxurious one.” This refers to the many luxuries that Babylon enjoyed.

sit securely

This refers to Babylon’s false sense of security in thinking that she will never lose her position of wealth and honor. Alternate translation: “who think you are safe” (See: [Idiom](#))

I will never sit as a widow ... loss of children

Babylon believing that other nations will never be able to conquer her is spoken of as if she will never become a widow or never have children die. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I will never sit as a widow

Alternate translation: “I will never become a widow”

ULT

⁸ So now hear this, {you who} love pleasure and sit securely; you who say in your heart, “I {exist}, and there is no one else like me; I will never sit as a widow, nor will I ever experience loss of children.”

UST

⁸ You people of Babylon who enjoy pleasures and who live in luxury, listen to this: You act as through you were gods, saying, “I am special, and there is no one better than I am,” None of our women will never become widows, and none of our children will never be killed in wars.’

Isaiah 47:9

in a moment in one day

Alternate translation: "suddenly at the same time"

ULT

⁹ But these two {things} will come to you in a moment in one day: the loss of children and widowhood; in full force they will come on you, despite your sorceries and your many incantations and amulets.

UST

⁹ But both of those things will happen to you suddenly: many of your women will become widows and many of your children will die, even though you perform much sorcery and many kinds of magic to prevent bad things from happening to you.

Isaiah 47:10

Yahweh continues to speak to Babylon about her downfall as if she were a queen who is humiliated. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

you say in your heart

Here the word “heart” refers to the inner person. Alternate translation: “you say to yourself” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

10 You have trusted in your wickedness; you have said, “No one sees me”; your wisdom and your knowledge lead you astray, but you say in your heart, “I {exist}, and {there is} no one else {like me}.”

UST

10 You felt safe even though you were doing many wicked things, and you said, ‘No one will see what we are doing!’ You thought that you were very wise and knew many things, and you said, ‘We are gods, and there are no others like us,’ but you deceived yourselves.

Isaiah 47:11

Disaster will overcome you

Yahweh speaks of disaster as if it were a person who captures Babylon. Alternate translation: "You will experience disaster" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Destruction will fall on you

Yahweh speaks Babylon being destroyed as if destruction were an object that falls upon the city. Alternate translation: "You will experience destruction" or "Others will destroy you" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Calamity will strike you

Yahweh speaks of Babylon experiencing calamity as if calamity were a person who strikes Babylon. Alternate translation: "You will experience calamity" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 Disaster will overcome you; you will not be able to drive it away with your incantations. Destruction will fall on you; you will not be able to ward it off. Calamity will strike you suddenly, before you know it.

UST

11 So you will experience terrible things, and you will not be able to prevent them by working magic. You will experience disasters, and you will not be able to pay any magician to keep those things from happening. A catastrophe will happen to you suddenly, something that you will not realize is about to happen.

Isaiah 47:12

Yahweh continues to speak to Babylon about her downfall as if she were a queen who is humiliated. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

Persist in casting your spells ... perhaps you will scare away disaster

Yahweh mocks Babylon by telling her to continue to practice her sorcery to keep bad things away, but he knows that it will not help her. (See: [Irony](#))

ULT

¹² Persist in casting your spells and your many sorceries {which} you have faithfully recited since your childhood; perhaps you will be successful, perhaps you will scare away disaster.

UST

¹² So continue to perform all your magic spells! Keep doing the many kinds of sorcery that you have been doing for many years! Perhaps doing those things will enable you to be successful; perhaps you will be able to cause your enemies to be afraid of you!

Isaiah 47:13

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

13 You are tired out with your many consultations; let those men stand up and save you—those who chart the heavens and look at the stars, those who declare the new moons—let them save you from what will happen to you.

UST

13 But all that has resulted from your doing all the things that the magicians have told you to do is that you have become tired! The men who look at the stars, announce every new moon, predict what will happen should come forward and rescue you from the disasters that you are about to experience.

Isaiah 47:14

Yahweh continues to speak to Babylon about her downfall as if she were a queen who is humiliated. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

they will become like stubble. The fire will burn them up

Yahweh compares the magicians and sorcerers to straw that burns quickly in a fire. This means that Yahweh will destroy them as easily as fire burns stubble, and so they are powerless to save Babylon. (See: [Simile](#))

the hand of the flame

Here the word “hand” represents strength. Alternate translation: “the power of the flame” (See: [Metonymy](#))

There are no coals to warm them and no fire for them to sit by

Yahweh emphasizes that this is a destructive fire by stating that it is not one that people will use to warm themselves.

ULT

¹⁴ See, they will become like stubble. The fire will burn them up. They will not save themselves from the hand of the flame. There are no coals to warm them and no fire for them to sit {by}!

UST

¹⁴ But they cannot do that, because they are like straw that is burning in a fire; they cannot save themselves from being burned up in the flames. They are unable to help you; they are as useless as stubble that burns, but that fire will burn them up rather than let them enjoy the heat.

Isaiah 47:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

15 This is what they have become to you — those with whom you have worked, and you have bought and sold with them since your youth— they wandered about each one in his own direction; there is no one who can rescue you.”

UST

15 And they will disappoint you, those with whom you faithfully worked and with whom you traveled and traded when you were younger, and yet all of them keep doing their own foolish things; and when you cry out for help, there is no one who can help you.”

Isaiah 48

Isaiah 48 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Yahweh and the false gods

This chapter is set up to compare Yahweh with various false Gods whom the Israelites worship. There really is no comparison between the two because Yahweh alone is God. (See: [god](#), [false god](#), [goddess](#), [idol](#), [idolater](#), [idolatrous](#), [idolatry](#))

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Exile

Yahweh explains purpose behind the Jews exile in Babylon, even though it is still in the future. This emphasizes that Yahweh is much more powerful than the false gods.

Isaiah 48:1

Hear this

"Listen to my message." Yahweh is speaking.

house of Jacob

Here "house" refers to the descendants of Jacob. Alternate translation: "descendants of Jacob" (See: [Metonymy](#))

who are called by the name Israel

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "whom everyone calls the people of Israel" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

have come from the sperm of Judah

This phrase emphasizes that they are the direct, physical descendants of Judah. Alternate translation: "are the descendants of Judah" (See: [Metaphor](#))

invoke the God of Israel

Alternate translation: "call on the God of Israel"

ULT

¹ Hear this, house of Jacob, who are called by the name Israel, and have come from the sperm of Judah; you who swear by the name of Yahweh and invoke the God of Israel, {but} not sincerely nor in a righteous manner.

UST

¹ Descendants of Jacob, who are also descendants of Judah and are now called the people of Israel, listen to Yahweh! You make solemn promises using the name of Yahweh, and you request that the God to whom you Israelite people belong will hear you, but you do not do it sincerely.

Isaiah 48:2

they call themselves

This refers to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “you call yourselves” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

the holy city

This refers to Jerusalem.

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

ULT

² For they call themselves people of the holy city and trust in the God of Israel. Yahweh of hosts {is} his name.

UST

² You say that you live in the holy city of Jerusalem and you insincerely say that you are relying on the God to whom you people of Israel belong, the one who is Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

Isaiah 48:3

they came out from my mouth

“Mouth” refers to someone speaking. Alternate translation: “I spoke these things” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

³ “I have declared the things from long ago; they came out from my mouth, and I made them known; then suddenly I did {them}, and they came to pass.

UST

³ “Long ago I predicted what would happen. And then suddenly, I caused those things to happen.

Isaiah 48:4**your neck muscles tight as iron, and your forehead like bronze**

Yahweh compares the tightness of their neck muscles and the hardness of their foreheads to the hardness of iron and bronze. Here, to have a tight neck or a hard forehead is a metaphor that means the people are stubborn. Alternate translation: “it is as if your necks were iron and your heads were bronze” (See: [Simile](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Because I knew that you {were} obstinate, your neck muscles tight as iron, and your forehead like bronze,

UST

⁴ I knew that you people were very stubborn; I knew that your heads were as hard as iron or brass.

Isaiah 48:5

**I declared these things to you beforehand;
before they happened I informed you**

This is saying the same thing twice for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁵ therefore I declared {these things} to you beforehand; before they happened I informed you, so you could not say, 'My idol has done them,' or 'My carved figure and my cast metal figure has ordained these things.'

UST

⁵ That is why I told you those things long ago. Long before they occurred, I announced that they would occur, in order that when they happened you could not say 'Our idols did it; our statue carved out of wood or our idol made of metal caused them to happen.'

Isaiah 48:6

will you not admit what I said is true?

Yahweh uses a question to scold the people of Israel for not admitting what they should know is true. Alternate translation: “you are stubborn and will not admit what I said is true.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁶ You heard about these things; look at all this evidence; and you, will you not admit what I said is true? From now on, I am showing you new things, hidden things that you have not known.

UST

⁶ You have heard those things that I predicted, and now you have seen that they have all occurred, so why do you not admit it? Now I will tell you new things, things that you have not known previously.

Isaiah 48:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ Now, and not from previously, they come into being, and before today you have not heard about them, so you will not be able to say, 'Yes, I knew about them.'

UST

⁷ I am causing them to happen now; they are not things I did long ago. So you cannot say, 'We already knew about those things.'

Isaiah 48:8

these things were not unfolded to your ears beforehand

Yahweh speaks of explaining something as if it were unfolding it. The word “ears” represents the people who are listening. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “I did not explain these things to you beforehand” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Synecdoche](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

from birth

Yahweh speaks of the nation’s beginning as if it were its birth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ You never heard; you did not know; these things were not unfolded to your ears beforehand. For I knew that you have been very deceitful, and that you have been a rebel from birth.

UST

⁸ I will tell you about things that you have never heard about or understood before. Even long ago you did not pay attention to me. I know that you act very deceitfully; you have rebelled against me since you first became a nation.

Isaiah 48:9**For the sake of my name I will defer my anger**

Here the word “name” refers to Yahweh’s reputation. Alternate translation: “For the sake of my reputation I will delay my anger” (See: [Metonymy](#))

for my honor I will hold back from destroying you

This part of the sentence means basically the same thing as the first part. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁹ For the sake of my name I will defer my anger, and {for} my honor I will hold back from destroying you.

UST

⁹ But for my own sake, in order that I will be honored, I will not punish you immediately and I will not completely get rid of you.

Isaiah 48:10

Look, I refined you, but not as silver; I have purified you in the furnace of affliction

Yahweh speaks of using affliction to purify his people as if they were precious metals and affliction were a furnace in which he refines them. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Look, I refined you, but not as silver; I have purified you in the furnace of affliction.

UST

¹⁰ I have purified you, but not the way people refine silver. Instead, I have caused you to suffer very much to get rid of your impure behavior,

Isaiah 48:11

for how can I allow my name to be profaned?

Yahweh uses a question to emphasize that he can never allow his own name to be dishonored. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “for I cannot allow anyone to profane my name.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

11 For my own sake, for my own sake I will act; for how can I allow {my name} to be profaned? I will not give my glory to anyone else.

UST

11 But for my own sake I will delay punishing you more; I will delay for my own sake, in order that my reputation will not be damaged. I will not allow any person or any idol to be honored as I deserve to be honored.”

Isaiah 48:12

Jacob, and Israel

Both of these refer to the people of Israel. (See: [Doublet](#) and [Metonymy](#))

I am the first, I also am the last

This phrase emphasizes Yahweh's eternal nature. This could mean: (1) "I am the one who began all things, and I am the one who ends all things" or (2) "I am the one who has always lived, and I am the one who always will live." See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 44:6](#). (See: [Merism](#))

ULT

12 Listen to me, Jacob, and Israel, whom I called: I {am} he; I {am} the first, I also {am} the last.

UST

12 "You descendants of Jacob, you people of Israel whom I have chosen, listen to me! Only I am God; I am the one who begins everything and who causes everything to end.

Isaiah 48:13

my hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens

Here “hand” refers to Yahweh. Alternate translation: “I laid the foundation of the earth, and I spread out the heavens” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the foundation of the earth

The word “foundation” normally refers to a stone structure that gives support to a building from underneath. Here it describes a similar structure that was thought to support and hold the earth in place. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 24:18](#).

spread out the heavens

Yahweh speaks of creating the heavens as if they were fabric which Yahweh stretched out. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 42:5](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

when I call to them, they stand up together

Standing up when Yahweh calls is a metaphor for being ready to obey him. Yahweh speaks of the earth and the heavens as if they were able to hear him and obey him. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Personification](#))

when I call to them

This could mean: (1) “when I call the earth and the heavens” or (2) “when I call the stars in the heavens.”

ULT

¹³ Yes, my hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; {when} I call to them, they stand up together.

UST

¹³ I am the one who laid the foundation of the earth. I stretched out the sky with my hand. And when I tell the stars to appear, they all do what I tell them.

Isaiah 48:14

Who among you has announced these things?

Yahweh uses a question to emphasize that the idols have not told them these things. Alternate translation: "None of your idols has told this to you." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Yahweh's ally will accomplish his purpose against Babylon. He will carry out Yahweh's will against the Chaldeans

Here "ally" refers to Cyrus. Both of these sentences mean the same thing and are used for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

his purpose

Alternate translation: "Yahweh's purpose"

ULT

14 Assemble yourselves, all of you, and listen! Who among you has announced these {things}? Yahweh's ally {will} accomplish his purpose against Babylon. He will carry out Yahweh's will {against} the Chaldeans.

UST

14 All of you, gather together and listen to me. None of your idols has told this to you: I, Yahweh, have chosen Cyrus to assist me, and he will do to Babylon what I want him to do, and his army will destroy the army of Babylonia.

Isaiah 48:15

I, I

The word “I” is repeated for emphasis. Alternate translation: “I myself” (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

¹⁵ I, I have spoken, yes, I have summoned him, I have brought him, and he will succeed.

UST

¹⁵ I have said it; I have summoned Cyrus. I have appointed him, and he will accomplish everything that he attempts to do.

Isaiah 48:16

I have not spoken in secret

This can be expressed positively. Alternate translation: "I have spoken plainly and clearly" (See: [Double Negatives](#))

sent me

Here "me" refers to an unknown servant of Yahweh, maybe Isaiah or Cyrus or the promised Messiah.

ULT

16 Come near to me, listen to this: From the beginning I have not spoken in secret; when it happens, I {am} there." Now the Lord Yahweh has sent me, and his Spirit.

UST

16 Come close to me and listen to what I say. Long ago I told you plainly what would happen, and when those things occurred, I was causing them to happen." And now Yahweh the Lord and his Spirit have sent me, the prophet Isaiah, to give you a message.

Isaiah 48:17

your Redeemer ... your God

Here "your" refers to the people of Israel. (See: [Forms of You](#))

Redeemer

See how you translated this word in [Isaiah 41:14](#).

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

who leads you by the way that you should go

Yahweh teaching the people how they should live is spoken of as if he were leading them to walk on the correct paths. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁷ This is what Yahweh, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel says, "I {am} Yahweh your God, who teaches you how to succeed, who leads you by the way that you should go.

UST

¹⁷ This is what Yahweh, the one who saves you, the Holy God of us Israelites, says: "I am Yahweh, your God; I teach you what is important for you to prosper; I direct you and lead you to do the things that you should do.

Isaiah 48:18

If only you had obeyed my commandments

Yahweh describes something that could have happened but did not. (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

Then your peace and prosperity would have flowed like a river, and your salvation like the waves of the sea

These two phrases share similar meanings. In both, Yahweh speaks of Israel's experiencing abundant blessings as if those blessings flowed like water. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Parallelism](#))

your salvation like the waves of the sea

The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "your salvation would have flowed like the waves of the sea" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

¹⁸ If only you had obeyed my commandments! Then your peace and prosperity would have flowed like a river, and your salvation like the waves of the sea.

UST

¹⁸ I wish that you had paid attention to my commands! If you had done that, things would have gone well for you like a river that flows gently; you would have been successful again and again, like waves that come without ceasing.

Isaiah 48:19

Your descendants would have been as numerous as the sand, and the children from your womb as numerous as the grains of sand

These both mean that the people would have had more descendants than they could count. (See: [Parallelism](#))

the children from your womb

Yahweh speaks of the descendants of the people of Israel as if they were children to which the nation gives birth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

their name would not have been cut off nor blotted out

The people of Israel being destroyed is spoken of as if their name had been cut off, as one would cut a piece of cloth or cut a branch from a tree, or blotted out. This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "I would not have cut off nor blotted out their name" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

their name

Here the word "name" refers to the descendants who would carry on the name of Israel. Alternate translation: "they" (See: [Metonymy](#))

cut off nor blotted out

These two expressions in this context refer to destroying the people. Alternate translation: "destroyed" (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

¹⁹ Your descendants would have been as numerous as the sand, and the children from your womb as numerous as the grains of sand; their name would not have been cut off nor blotted out from before me.

UST

¹⁹ Your descendants would have been as many as the grains of sand on the seashore which no one can count. I would not have needed to destroy them; the country of Israel would not have been destroyed.

Isaiah 48:20

to the ends of the earth

The places on the earth that are very far away are spoken of as if they were the places where the earth ends. This phrase also forms a merism and refers to everywhere in between the ends. Alternate translation: “to all the farthest places of the earth” or “to the entire earth” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Merism](#))

his servant Jacob

This refers to the descendants of Jacob. Alternate translation: “the people of Israel, his servants” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

20 Come out from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! With the sound of a ringing cry announce it! Make this known, make it go out to the ends of the earth! Say, ‘Yahweh has redeemed his servant Jacob.’

UST

20 However, now I tell you, leave Babylon! Flee from being slaves of the people of Babylonia! Proclaim this message joyfully; send it to the most remote places on the earth: ‘Yahweh freed the people of Israel from being slaves in Egypt.’

Isaiah 48:21

They did not thirst ... the waters gushed out

This refers to an event in the history of the people of Israel when Yahweh took care of them while they lived in the desert after escaping Egypt.

ULT

²¹ They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made the water to flow out of the rock for them; he split open the rock, and the waters gushed out.

UST

²¹ They were not thirsty when he led them through the desert, because he split open the rock and caused water to gush out for them to drink.'

Isaiah 48:22

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²² {There is} no peace for the wicked—
says Yahweh.”

UST

²² But things will not go well like that
for wicked people,” says Yahweh.

Isaiah 49

Isaiah 49 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Many scholars believe that there are four songs or poems which Isaiah records about the Messiah. Isaiah 49:1-6 is the second of these songs. They are often called the “servant songs” because they focus on the Messiah being a servant. (See: [Christ](#), [Messiah](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

A day of salvation

It is unclear if this is a reference to the gospel proclaimed by the Messiah or to the day of restoration of all things. The translator should not try to explain its reference to the reader. (See: [save](#), [saved](#), [safe](#), [salvation](#), [good news](#), [gospel](#) and [restore](#), [restoration](#))

Isaiah 49:1

Listen to me

Here “me” refers to Yahweh’s servant.

you coastlands

This refers to the people who live on the coastlands. Alternate translation: “you who live on the coastlands” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ Listen to me, you coastlands! Now give me your attention, you distant peoples. Yahweh has called me from birth by name, when my mother brought me into the world.

UST

¹ All you people who live on islands in the ocean and in other distant areas, pay attention to what I will say! Yahweh called me before I was born; he chose me when I was still in my mother’s womb.

Isaiah 49:2

He has made my mouth like a sharp sword

Here the word “mouth” represents the words that he speaks. His words are compared to a sharp sword to emphasize that they will be effective. Alternate translation: “He has made my words as effective as a sharp sword” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Simile](#))

he hid me in the shadow of his hand

Yahweh protecting his servant and keeping his purpose secret is spoken of as if Yahweh’s hand cast a shadow over him. (See: [Metaphor](#))

he has made me into a polished arrow; in his quiver he has hidden me

Yahweh’s servant being able to carry out Yahweh’s purposes effectively is spoken of as if the servant were a sharp, new arrow. (See: [Metaphor](#))

in his quiver he has hidden me

Yahweh protecting his servant and keeping his purpose secret is spoken of as if Yahweh kept him hidden in a quiver. (See: [Metaphor](#))

quiver

a case used to carry arrows

ULT

² He has made my mouth like a sharp sword; he hid me in the shadow of his hand; he has made me into a polished arrow; in his quiver he has hidden me.

UST

² When I grew up, he caused my messages to be like a sharp sword. He has protected me by his hand. He protects me like someone protects sharp arrows in a quiver.

Isaiah 49:3

He said

Alternate translation: "Yahweh said"

You are my servant, Israel

Alternate translation: "You are my servant, whom I call Israel"

ULT

³ He said to me, "You {are} my servant, Israel, through whom I show my glory."

UST

³ He said to me, "You will serve my Israelite people, and you will cause people to honor me."

Isaiah 49:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴ But I replied, “Though I thought I have labored in vain, I have spent my energy for nothing, yet my justice {is} with Yahweh, and my reward is with my God.”

UST

⁴ I replied, “My work has been useless; I have used my strength, but I have accomplished nothing worthwhile; everything that I have done has been in vain. However, Yahweh can honor me as he pleases; my God is the one who will reward me as I deserve.”

Isaiah 49:5

that Israel would be gathered to him

This part of the sentence means the same as the part before it. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “to bring the people of Israel back to himself” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Parallelism](#))

I am honored in the eyes of Yahweh

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh has honored me” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ Now Yahweh has spoken—he who formed me from birth {to be} his servant, to restore Jacob again to himself, so that Israel would be gathered to him, for I am honored in the eyes of Yahweh, and my God has become my strength—

UST

⁵ Yahweh formed me when I was in my mother’s womb in order that I would serve him; he appointed me to bring the people of Israel back to himself. Yahweh has honored me, and he is the one who has caused me to be strong.

Isaiah 49:6

I will make you a light to the Gentiles

The servant bringing Yahweh's message to the Gentiles and helping them to understand it is spoken of as if Yahweh made the servant a light that shines among the Gentiles. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 42:6](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

to the ends of the earth

The places on the earth that are very far away are spoken of as if they were the places where the earth ends. This phrase also forms a merism and refers to everywhere in between the ends. AT "to all the farthest places of the earth" or "to the entire earth" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Merism](#))

ULT

⁶ and he says, "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to reestablish the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the survivors of Israel. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth."

UST

⁶ He says to me, "It is not enough for you to serve me by bringing the descendants of Jacob back to worship me again; I also want you to be like a light for the non-Israelites; I want you to take my message about how to be saved to people all over the world."

Isaiah 49:7

Redeemer

See how you translated this word in [Isaiah 41:14](#).

to the one whose life is despised, hated by the nations, and a slave of rulers

Here the word "life" represents the person. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "to the one whom people despised, whom the nations hated and held as slaves" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

ULT

⁷ This is what Yahweh says, the Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, to the one whose life is despised, hated by the nations, and a slave of rulers, "Kings will see you and arise, and princes will see you and bow down, because of Yahweh who is faithful, even the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

UST

⁷ Yahweh, the one who saves us, the Holy God of us Israelite people, says to the one who was despised and rejected by the people of many nations, to the one who is the slave of rulers, "Some day kings will stand up to respect you when they see you, and princes will bow down before you because you serve me, Yahweh, the one who faithfully does what I promise. I am the Holy God to whom you Israelites belong, the one who has chosen you."

Isaiah 49:8

At a time I decide to show my favor I will answer you, and in a day of salvation I will help you

These two clauses mean basically the same thing. (See: [Parallelism](#))

I will answer you

Here “you” refers to Yahweh’s servant.

in a day of salvation

The word “salvation” can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: “when the time comes for me to save you” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

give you as a covenant for the people

Here the word “covenant” is a metonym for the one who establishes or mediates a covenant. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 42:6](#). Alternate translation: “make you be the mediator of a covenant with the people” (See: [Metonymy](#))

to rebuild the land

Here the word “land” represents the cities in the land that had been destroyed. Alternate translation: “to rebuild the ruined places in the land” (See: [Metonymy](#))

to reassign the desolate inheritance

Yahweh speaks of the land as if it were an inheritance that the people of Israel received as a permanent possession. It is implied that the servant is to reassign the land to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “to reassign the desolate land to the people of Israel as their inheritance” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ This is what Yahweh says, “At a time I decide to show my favor I will answer you, and in a day of salvation I will help you; I will protect you, and give you as a covenant for the people, to rebuild the land, to reassign the desolate inheritance.

UST

⁸ This is also what Yahweh says: “At a time when it pleases me, I will answer your prayers. On the day when I rescue you from your oppressors, I will help you. I will protect you and enable you to establish an agreement with other nations. And by what you do, I will re-establish your nation of Israel and allow you to live again in your land that was abandoned.

Isaiah 49:9**They will graze along the roads, and on all the bare slopes will be their pasture**

Yahweh speaks of the people living freely and prosperously as if they were sheep that had plenty of pasture in which to graze. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ You will say to the prisoners, 'Come out;' to those in dark dungeons, 'Show yourselves.' They will graze along the roads, and on all the bare slopes {will be} their pasture.

UST

⁹ You will say to those who were captured and exiled, 'Leave Babylonia and return to your own country!' And you will say to those who are in dark prisons, 'Come out into the light!' When that happens, they will again be like sheep that eat grass in green pastures, on hills where before there was no grass.

Isaiah 49:10

They will not

Here “they” refers to God’s people.

nor will the heat or sun beat on them

Here the word “heat” describes the word “sun.” The people suffering from the sun’s heat is spoken of as if the heat struck them. Alternate translation: “nor will they suffer from the sun’s heat” (See: [Hendiadys](#) and [Metaphor](#))

for he who has mercy on them ... he will guide them

Yahweh speaks of himself in the third person. He speaks of protecting the people and caring for them as if he were their shepherd. Alternate translation: “I, the one who has mercy on them ... I will guide them” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁰ They will not be hungry or thirsty; nor will the heat or sun beat on them, for he who has mercy on them will lead them; he will guide them to springs of water.

UST

¹⁰ They will not be hungry or thirsty anymore; the hot sun will not beat upon them again. I, Yahweh, will act mercifully toward them and lead them; I will lead them to where there are springs of cool water.

Isaiah 49:11

I will make all my mountains into a road, and make my highways level

Yahweh speaks of guiding his people safely and removing obstacles from their path as if he turned mountains into roads and level highways. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 Then I will make all my mountains into a road, and make my highways level."

UST

11 And I will cause the mountains to become as though they were level roads, and I will prepare good highways for my people to travel on, to return to Jerusalem.

Isaiah 49:12

the land of Sinim

The location of this place is uncertain, but it may refer to a region in the southern part of Egypt. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

¹² Look, these will come from far away, some from the north and the west; and others from the land of Sinim.

UST

¹² My people will return from far away; some will come from the north, some from the west, some from southern Egypt."

Isaiah 49:13

Sing, heavens, and be joyful, earth; break into singing, you mountains!

Isaiah turns his attention from the people of Israel and speaks to the heavens, earth, and mountains as if they were people. (See: [Apostrophe](#) and [Personification](#))

ULT

¹³ Sing, heavens, and be joyful, earth; break into singing, you mountains! For Yahweh comforts his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted.

UST

¹³ Because of what Yahweh has promised to do, everything should shout joyfully— the sky and the earth and the mountains should sing, because Yahweh comforts his people, and he will pity those who are suffering.

Isaiah 49:14

But Zion said

The word “Zion” is another name for Jerusalem. Isaiah speaks of the city as if it were a woman who complains that Yahweh has forgotten her. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

14 But Zion said, “Yahweh has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.”

UST

14 The people of Jerusalem say, “Yahweh has abandoned us; he has forgotten about us.”

Isaiah 49:15

Can a woman forget her baby, nursing at her breast, so she does not have compassion on the son she has borne?

Yahweh uses a question to help his people understand that he will never forget about them or stop caring for them. Alternate translation: "A woman would not forget her nursing baby or stop caring for the son she bore." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁵ "Can a woman forget her baby, nursing at her breast, so she does not have compassion on the son she has borne? Yes, they may forget, but I will not forget you.

UST

¹⁵ But Yahweh replies, "That is not true! Can a woman forget the infant that she is nursing? Can she stop acting kindly toward the child to whom she has given birth? But even if a woman would do that, I will not forget you!

Isaiah 49:16

I have inscribed your name on my palms

Yahweh speaks of his unwavering devotion to Zion as if he had written her name on the palms of his hands. (See: [Metaphor](#))

your walls are continually before me

Yahweh speaks of always thinking about Zion as if her walls were always before him. The word “walls” is a metonym for the city. Alternate translation: “I am continually thinking about your walls” or “I am always thinking about you” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

16 Look, I have inscribed your name on my palms; your walls {are} continually before me.

UST

16 Note that I have written your names on the palms of my hands; I am always looking at the walls of your city.

Isaiah 49:17

Your children are hurrying back

Yahweh speaks of the people who are returning to live in Jerusalem as if they were the city's children. Alternate translation: "Your inhabitants are hurrying back" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

17 Your children are hurrying back, while those who destroyed you are going away.

UST

17 Soon your children will be returning there, and all those who destroyed your city will leave.

Isaiah 49:18

**you will surely wear them like jewelry, and
you will put them on like a bride**

Yahweh speaks of the inhabitants of Zion as if they were jewelry that the city wears to show her beauty and joy. (See: [Metaphor](#))

you will put them on like a bride

The last part of the phrase can be clarified from the previous line. Alternate translation: “you will put them on, like a bride wears jewelry” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

18 Look around and see, they are all gathering {and} coming to you. As surely {as} I live—this is Yahweh’s declaration—you will surely wear them like jewelry, and you will put them on like a bride.

UST

18 You will look around and see all of your children coming back to you. As surely as I live, they will be with you for you to show to people like a bride shows her wedding ornaments!

Isaiah 49:19

Though you were a waste and desolate

The words “a waste” and “desolate” mean basically the same thing and emphasize that the enemy has destroyed Zion and left it empty. Alternate translation: “Though you were completely desolate” (See: [Doublet](#))

those who devoured you

The enemy destroying Zion is spoken of as if they had devoured it. Alternate translation: “those who destroyed you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

19 Though you were a waste and desolate, a land that was in ruins, now you will be too small for the inhabitants, and those who devoured you will be far away.

UST

19 Your land has been ruined and caused to become desolate, but some day it will be filled with people, and those who conquered you will be far away.

Isaiah 49:20

The children born during the time of your bereavement

Yahweh speaks of the time when the people of Jerusalem were in exile as if the city was bereaved of her children. Those who were born while the people were in exile are spoken of as the city's children. Alternate translation: "Those who will inhabit you, who were born while the people were in exile" (See: [Metaphor](#))

The place is too cramped for us

This means that there will be so many people that the city will be too small for them all to live in it.

ULT

²⁰ The children born during the time of your bereavement will say in your hearing, 'The place {is} too cramped for us, make room for us, so we may live here.'

UST

²⁰ The children who were born while you were exiled will return to Jerusalem and say, 'This city is too small for us; We need more space to live in!'

Isaiah 49:21

Who has borne these children for me?

Zion speaks of the people who are returning to inhabit the city as if those people were her children. Zion's question expresses her surprise that so many children now belong to her. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

I was bereaved and barren, exiled and divorced

Zion describes herself as a woman incapable of having more children. She indicates the reasons for her great surprise. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I was bereaved and barren

Alternate translation: "I was mourning over my dead children and unable to have more"

exiled and divorced

Alternate translation: "I was sent away, without a husband"

Who has raised these children? Look, I was left all alone; where did these come from?

Again, Zion uses questions to expresses her surprise. Alternate translation: "Look, I was left all alone; now all of these children that I did not raise have come to me." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

21 Then you will ask yourself, 'Who has borne these children for me? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and divorced. Who has raised these children? Look, I was left all alone; where did these come from?'

UST

21 Then you will think to yourselves, 'It is amazing that we have all these children! Most of our children were dead, and the rest were exiled. We were left here alone; so we do not know where all these children have come from! Who raised them?'

Isaiah 49:22

I will raise my hand to the nations; I will raise my signal flag to the peoples

These two clauses mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "I will raise my hand and signal with a flag for the people of the nations to come" (See: [Parallelism](#))

They will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders

Yahweh speaks of the people who will inhabit Jerusalem as if they were the city's children. He also speaks of the people of other nations helping the Israelites to return to Jerusalem as if they were carrying the Israelites. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²² This is what the Lord Yahweh says, "Look, I will raise my hand to the nations; I will raise my signal flag to the peoples. They will bring your sons in {their} arms and carry your daughters on {their} shoulders.

UST

²² This is what Yahweh our God says: "Watch! It is as though I will lift up my hand to signal to those who are not Israelites. And they will carry your little sons and daughters on their shoulders and bring them back to you.

Isaiah 49:23

Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursemaids

Yahweh speaks of the people who will inhabit Zion as if they were the city's children. The terms "foster fathers" and "nursemaids" refer to men and women who become responsible for the care of children. Alternate translation: "The kings and queens of other nations will provide for your inhabitants" (See: [Metaphor](#))

they will bow down to you with their faces to the earth and lick the dust of your feet

These phrases describe gestures that people used to express complete submission to a superior.

lick the dust of your feet

This could mean: (1) that this is a literal expression of submission where the person licks the dust off of a superior's foot or from the ground at the superior's foot or (2) that this is an idiom that describes a person prostrating himself before a superior. (See: [Idiom](#))

will not be put to shame

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "will not be ashamed" or "will not be disappointed" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²³ Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursemaids; they will bow down to you with {their} faces to the earth and lick the dust of your feet; and you will know that I {am} Yahweh; those who wait for me will not be put to shame."

UST

²³ Kings will serve you and will tutor your children, and their queens will take care of your young children. They will prostrate themselves in front of you and lick the dust off your feet. When that happens, you will know that I am Yahweh; and those who trust in me will never be disappointed."

Isaiah 49:24

Can the spoils be taken from the warrior, or captives be rescued from the fierce?

Isaiah uses a question to express the difficulty of taking anything from a mighty soldier or a very strong warrior. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "A person cannot take the spoils from a warrior or rescue captives from fierce soldiers." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

spoils

valuable items taken from the losers in a battle

ULT

²⁴ Can the spoils be taken from the warrior, or captives be rescued from the fierce? ^[1]

UST

²⁴ There is no one who can snatch valuable things from a soldier who has captured those things in a war; there is no one who can force a tyrant to free the people whom he has captured.

Isaiah 49:25

the captives will be taken away from the warrior, and spoils will be rescued

Yahweh says that he will do what is usually impossible for people to do. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will take the captives from the warrior, and I will rescue the spoils" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

I will ... save your children

Yahweh speaks of the people who will inhabit Zion as if they were the city's children. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ But this is what Yahweh says, "Yes, the captives will be taken away from the warrior, and spoils will be rescued; for I will oppose your adversary and save your children.

UST

²⁵ But Yahweh says this: "Some day, those who have been captured will go free, and the valuable things that tyrants have snatched from others will be returned, because I will fight against those who fight against you, and I will rescue your children.

Isaiah 49:26

I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh

This could mean: (1) the oppressors will be so hungry that they will eat the flesh of their friends who have died. Alternate translation: "I will cause your oppressors to eat their own flesh" or (2) Yahweh speaks of the oppressors fighting against and destroying themselves as if they were eating themselves. Alternate translation: "I will cause your oppressors to destroy themselves, as if they were eating their own flesh" (See: [Metaphor](#))

they will get drunk on their own blood, as if it were wine

This could mean: (1) the oppressors will be so thirsty that they drink the blood of their friends who have died. Alternate translation: "they will drink their friends' blood and be like weak people who are drunk on wine" or (2) Yahweh speaks of the oppressors fighting against and destroying themselves as if they were drinking their own blood. Alternate translation: "they will shed so much of their friends' blood that it will be as though they were getting drunk with wine" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁶ I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh; and they will get drunk on their own blood, as if it were wine. Then all mankind will know that I, Yahweh, {am} your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

UST

²⁶ And I will cause your enemies to destroy themselves instead of murdering others. When that happens, everyone in the world will know that I, Yahweh, am the one who saves you, the one who rescues you from your enemies; everyone will know that I am the mighty God to whom you descendants of Jacob belong."

Isaiah 50

Isaiah 50 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Many scholars believe that there are four songs or poems which Isaiah records about the Messiah. Isaiah 50:4-9 is the third of these songs. They are often called the “servant songs” because they focus on the Messiah being a servant. (See: [Christ, Messiah](#))

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

There are many rhetorical questions in this chapter. These questions prove Yahweh’s point and are intended to convince the readers. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Isaiah 50:1

Where is the certificate of divorce with which I divorced your mother?

Yahweh speaks of Zion as if the city were the mother of the people who lived there and of sending the people into exile as if he were divorcing their mother. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Where is the certificate of divorce with which I divorced your mother?

Yahweh asks this rhetorical question so that the people would produce “the certificate of divorce,” which would provide the reason Yahweh sent them into exile. Alternate translation: “Show me the certificate of divorce with which I divorced your mother.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

To which of my creditors did I sell you?

Yahweh speaks of sending the people into exile as if he were selling them. (See: [Metaphor](#))

To which of my creditors did I sell you?

Yahweh asks this question to emphasize that he did not sell them because he owed a debt to a creditor. It is implied that this is what the people had thought. Alternate translation: “I did not sell you because I owed a debt to someone.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

you were sold because of your sins, and because of your rebellion, your mother was sent away

Yahweh gives the reason for sending the people into exile, which he speaks of as if he had sold them and divorced their mother. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “I sold you because of your sins, and I divorced your mother because of your rebellion” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹ This is what Yahweh says, “Where {is} the certificate of divorce with which I divorced your mother? To {which} of my creditors did I sell you? Look, you were sold because of your sins, and because of your rebellion, your mother was sent away.

UST

¹ This is also what Yahweh says: “You Israelite people, do not think that I forced your parents to be exiled to Babylonia like some men send away their wives after giving them a paper on which they state that they were divorcing them! I certainly did not get rid of you like a man who sells his children to get money to pay what he owes. No, the reason that I forced you to be exiled was to punish you because of the sins that you have committed.

Isaiah 50:2

Why did I come but there was no one there? Why did I call but no one answered?

These two sentences mean basically the same thing. Yahweh uses questions to emphasize that the people are in exile because they did not respond to him, not because he was unwilling to save them. Alternate translation: "When I came to you, you should have been there, but you were not. When I called you, you should have answered, but you did not." or "When I came to speak to you, you did not respond to me." (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

Was my hand too short to ransom you? Was there no power in me to rescue you?

Yahweh uses two similar questions to rebuke the people for believing that he was not strong enough to rescue them. Alternate translation: "My hand was certainly not too short for me to ransom you, and I had the power to rescue you!" or "I certainly have the power to rescue you from your enemies." (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

Was my hand too short

Here the word "hand" represents Yahweh's power. Yahweh not being strong enough is spoken of as if his hand were short. Alternate translation: "Was I not strong enough" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Was there no power in me

Alternate translation: "Did I not have the power"

I make the rivers a desert

Yahweh speaks of drying up the rivers as if he were turning them into a desert. Alternate translation: "I make the rivers as dry as a desert" (See: [Metaphor](#))

their fish die for lack of water and rot

"their fish die and rot for lack of water." The word "their" refers to the sea and the rivers.

ULT

² {Why} did I come but {there was} no one there? {Why} did I call but no one answered? Was my hand too short to ransom you? {Was there} no power in me to rescue you? Look, at my rebuke I dry up the sea; I make the rivers a desert; their fish die for lack of water and rot.

UST

² When I came to you to rescue you, why did no one answer when I called out to you? Was there no one there to buy you back and take you home? Did you think that I do not have the power to rescue you? Think about this: I can speak to a sea and cause it to become dry! I can cause rivers to become deserts with the result that the fish in the rivers die from thirst and rot.

Isaiah 50:3**I clothe the sky with darkness; I cover it with sackcloth**

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Yahweh speaks of causing the sky to become dark as if he were clothing it with sackcloth. Alternate translation: "I make the sky dark, as if it were wearing dark sackcloth" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

³ I clothe the sky with darkness; I cover it with sackcloth."

UST

³ I cause the sky to become dark, as though it was wearing black clothes because it was mourning because someone had died."

Isaiah 50:4

General Information:

Yahweh's servant begins to speak.

The Lord Yahweh has given me a tongue as one of those who are taught

The word "tongue" represents what he says. This could mean: (1) Yahweh has enabled him to speak as one who has learned to speak skillfully. Alternate translation: "The Lord Yahweh has enabled me to be a skillful speaker" or (2) Yahweh has taught him what to say. Alternate translation: "The Lord Yahweh has enabled me to speak what he has taught me" (See: [Metonymy](#))

he awakens my ear to hear

Here "my ear" refers to Yahweh's servant. Yahweh enabling him to hear and understand what Yahweh teaches him is spoken of as if Yahweh awakened his ear from sleep. Alternate translation: "he has enabled me to understand what he says" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

like those who are taught

The servant compares himself with a student who learns from his teacher. This could mean: (1) "like one who learns from his teacher" or (2) "like one whom he has taught" (See: [Simile](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁴ The Lord Yahweh has given me a tongue as one of those who are taught, so that I speak a sustaining word to the weary one; he wakes me morning by morning; he awakens my ear to hear like those who are taught.

UST

⁴ Yahweh our God has taught me to speak for him, in order that I may encourage those who are weary. Each morning he awakens me, in order that I may listen to what he teaches me.

Isaiah 50:5

The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear

Yahweh enabling his servant to hear and understand is spoken of as if Yahweh opened his ear. Alternate translation: "The Lord Yahweh has enabled me to hear and understand him" (See: [Metaphor](#))

I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away backward

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Disobeying what Yahweh said is spoken of as if it were turning one's back toward him. This can be stated in positive terms. Alternate translation: "I obeyed what he said" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away backward.

UST

⁵ Yahweh our God has spoken to me, and I have not rejected what he told me; I have accepted it.

Isaiah 50:6

I gave my back to those who beat me, and my cheeks to those who plucked out my beard

Allowing people to beat him and pluck out his beard is spoken of as if it were giving his back and cheeks to them. Alternate translation: "I allowed people to beat me on my back and to pluck out my beard from my cheeks" (See: [Metaphor](#))

I did not hide my face from acts of shame and spitting

Hiding one's face means to protect oneself. Alternate translation: "I did not defend myself when they mocked me and spat on me" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁶ I gave my back to those who beat {me}, and my cheeks to those who plucked out my beard; I did not hide my face from acts of shame and spitting.

UST

⁶ I allowed people to beat me on my back and to pull out the whiskers in my beard because they hated me. I did not turn away from them when they made fun of me and spat on me.

Isaiah 50:7

therefore I am not disgraced

Even though the servant has been mistreated, he will not be ashamed because he has obeyed Yahweh. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “therefore I will not be ashamed” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

so I have made my face like flint

Here “my face” refers to the servant. The servant being steadfastly determined to obey Yahweh is spoken of as if his face were as hard as flint. Alternate translation: “so I am absolutely determined” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

for I know that I will not be put to shame

The servant looks to the future with confidence, secure in Yahweh’s calling. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “for I know that my enemies will not be able to make me feel shame” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁷ For the Lord Yahweh will help me; therefore I am not disgraced; so I have made my face like flint, for I know that I will not be put to shame.

UST

⁷ But because the Lord Yahweh helps me, I will never be humiliated. Therefore I am determined to face difficulties, and I know that nothing will cause me to be ashamed.

Isaiah 50:8

Who will oppose me? Let us stand ... Who is my accuser? Let him come

The servant uses these questions to emphasize that there is no one who can legitimately accuse him of wrong. Alternate translation: "If anyone would oppose me, let us stand ... If anyone would accuse me, let him come" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁸ {He} who will justify me {is} close by. Who will oppose me? Let us stand and confront one another. Who {is} my accuser? Let him come near to me.

UST

⁸ God is near to me; he will show others that I have been right to trust him, so if anyone stands in front of me and accuses me in a court, he will not be able to show that I have done anything that is wrong.

Isaiah 50:9

Who will declare me guilty?

The servant uses this question to assert that no one can declare him guilty. Alternate translation: “There is no one who can declare me guilty.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

they will all wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up

There being no one left to accuse the servant of being guilty is spoken of as if the accusers were garments that wear thin and are eaten by moths. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ See, the Lord Yahweh will help me.
{Who} will declare me guilty? See, they
will all wear out like a garment; the
moth will eat them up.

UST

⁹ The Lord Yahweh defends me in court,
so no one will be able to condemn me.
All those who accuse me will disappear
like old clothes that have been eaten by
moths.

Isaiah 50:10

Who among you fears Yahweh? Who obeys the voice of his servant? Who walks in deep darkness without light? He should ... his God.

The servant uses these questions to identify those to whom he is speaking. Alternate translation: "If someone among you fears Yahweh and obeys the voice of his servant, but he walks in deep darkness without light, then he should ... his God." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

obeys the voice of his servant

Here the word "voice" represents what the servant says. Alternate translation: "obeys his servant" (See: [Metonymy](#))

walks in deep darkness without light

The servant speaks of people who are suffering and feel helpless as if they were walking in a very dark place. Alternate translation: "is suffering and feels helpless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

trust in the name of Yahweh and lean on his God

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Here the word "name" represents Yahweh himself. Trusting in God is spoken of as if it were leaning on him. Alternate translation: "trust in Yahweh, his God" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Who among you fears Yahweh? Who obeys the voice of his servant? Who walks in deep darkness without light? He should trust in the name of Yahweh and lean on his God.

UST

¹⁰ If you honor Yahweh and do what his servant tells you to do, even if you are walking in darkness, and it seems that there is no light, trust in Yahweh your God to help you; depend on him.

Isaiah 50:11

all you who light fires ... flames that you have ignited

This continues the metaphor from the previous verse of people who walk in darkness. Here people who try to live according to their own wisdom instead of trusting in Yahweh are spoken of as if they lit their own fires and carried about torches in order to see in the dark. (See: [Metaphor](#))

You will lie down in a place of pain

Here to “lie down” refers to dying. Dying painfully is spoken of as if it were lying down in a place where they will experience pain. Alternate translation: “You will die with great suffering” (See: [Euphemism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹¹ Look, all you who light fires, who equip {yourselves} with torches: walk in the light of your fire and in the flames that you have ignited. This is what you have received from me: You will lie down in a place of pain.

UST

¹¹ But you people who oppose me by lighting your own fires, and by carrying your own flaming torches: go ahead and live according to your own knowledge, according to what you think is best. Yahweh tells you what will happen to you: he will make you die in great torment!

Isaiah 51

Isaiah 51 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

There are many rhetorical questions in this chapter. These questions prove Yahweh's point and are intended to convince the readers. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Awake

In this chapter the author uses sleeping as a metaphor for sin. The people are told to “awake,” meaning they are to repent and return to Yahweh. (See: [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#) and [repent](#), [repentance](#))

Isaiah 51:1

Listen to me

Here the word “me” refers to Yahweh.

look at the rock ... and to the quarry

Looking at something represents thinking about it. Alternate translation: “think about the rock ... and the quarry” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the rock from which you were chiseled and to the quarry from which you were cut

God speaks of the nation of Israel as if it were a building made of stones and as if their ancestors were a rock or quarry from which God cut them. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “your ancestors, who are like a rock from which you were chiseled and a quarry from which you were cut” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the rock from which you were chiseled

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the rock from which I chiseled you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

chiseled

Alternate translation: “cut with a chisel” or “cut”

the quarry from which you were cut

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the quarry from which I cut you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹ Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek Yahweh: look at the rock {from which} you were chiseled and to the quarry {from which} you were cut.

UST

¹ Yahweh says, “You people who desire to act righteously, who want to do what I want you to do, listen to me! Think about Abraham! It is as though he were a huge rock cliff; and when you people of Israel became a nation, it was as though I had cut you like stones from that rocky cliff.”

Isaiah 51:2

Abraham, your father

God speaks of their ancestor as if he were their father. Alternate translation: "Abraham, your forefather" or "Abraham, your ancestor" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Sarah, who bore you

God speaks of Abraham's wife as if she were their mother and had given birth to them. Alternate translation: "Abraham's wife, Sarah, of whom you are all descendants" (See: [Metonymy](#))

when he was a lone individual

This means when he did not have any children yet. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "when he had no children" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

made him many

God speaks of Abraham's descendants being many as if Abraham were many. Alternate translation: "made his descendants many" or "made him have many descendants" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² Look at Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who bore you; for {when} he was a {lone} individual, I called him. I blessed him and made him many.

UST

² Think about your ancestor Abraham and his wife Sarah, of whom all of you are descendants. When I first spoke to Abraham, he had no children. But after I blessed him, he had a huge number of descendants.

Isaiah 51:3

Yahweh will comfort Zion

The city of Zion, which is also called Jerusalem, here represents the people of Zion. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will comfort the people of Zion” (See: [Metonymy](#))

he will comfort all her waste places

Here “waste places” represents the people who live in those desolate areas. Alternate translation: “he will comfort the people who live in all her waste places” (See: [Metonymy](#))

her waste places ... her wilderness ... her desert plains

The word “her” refers to Zion. Cities are often spoken of as if they were women. (See: [Personification](#))

waste places

places that have been destroyed

her wilderness he made like Eden, and her desert plains ... like the garden of Yahweh

These phrases mean that God will make the empty places in Israel beautiful. In prophecy, events that will happen in the future are often described as being in the past. This emphasizes that they will certainly happen. Alternate translation: “he will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert plains ... like the garden of Yahweh (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Predictive Past](#))

joy and gladness will be found in her

Joy and gladness mean the same thing. Being found there represents being there. Alternate translation: “there will be joy and gladness in Zion again” (See: [Doublet](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ Yes, Yahweh will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; her wilderness he made like Eden, and her desert plains beside the Jordan River valley like the garden of Yahweh; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving, and the sound of singing.

UST

³ Some day I, Yahweh, will encourage Abraham's descendants again, and I will comfort all the people who live in the ruins of Jerusalem. The deserts in that area will become like Eden; it will be like the garden of Yahweh. All the people there will be joyful and happy; they will thank me and sing.

Isaiah 51:4

General Information:

Yahweh speaks to the people of Israel.

Be attentive to me ... listen to me

These two phrases mean the same thing. Together they strengthen the command to listen. (See: [Parallelism](#))

I will make my justice to be a light for the nations

Here God's justice represents his law, and a light represents knowledge of what is right. This means the people of the nations will understand and obey God's law. Alternate translation: "my law will teach the nations what is right" or "the nations will know my law" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ "Be attentive to me, my people; and listen to me, my people! For I will issue a decree, and I will make my justice to be a light for the nations.

UST

⁴ My people of Judah, listen carefully to me, because I command you to proclaim my laws; the right things that I will do will be like a light for the people of all the nations.

Isaiah 51:5

My righteousness is near

The idea of “near” represents “soon.” God’s righteousness being near represents him soon showing his righteousness. He will do this by fulfilling his promises and saving people. Alternate translation: “I will soon show my righteousness” (See: [Metaphor](#))

my salvation will go out

God speaks of saving people as if his salvation were a thing that could go out to them. Alternate translation: “I will save people” (See: [Metaphor](#))

my arm will judge the nations

Here God’s arm represents his power, and judging represents ruling. Alternate translation: “I will rule the nations with my power” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the coastlands

This refers to the people who live on the coasts of distant lands across the sea. Alternate translation: “the people who live on the coastlands” or “the people who live in the lands across the sea” (See: [Metonymy](#))

for my arm they will eagerly wait

Here God’s arm represents what he will do. Here it refers to him saving people. Alternate translation: “they will eagerly wait for me to do something” or “they will eagerly wait for me to save them” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁵ My righteousness is near; my salvation will go out, and my arm will judge the nations; the coastlands will wait for me; for my arm they will eagerly wait.

UST

⁵ I will soon rescue you and them; by my power I will rule over the people of the earth and bless them. The people who live in the most distant lands on earth will wait for me to help them.

Isaiah 51:6

Lift up your eyes to the sky

Lifting the eyes represents looking at something above. Alternate translation: "Look up at the sky" (See: [Metaphor](#))

like smoke ... like a garment ... like flies

All of these refer to things that quickly and easily disappear or become useless. (See: [Simile](#))

my salvation will continue forever

God's "salvation" here represents the result of his salvation, which is freedom. Alternate translation: "I will save you, you will be free forever" (See: [Metonymy](#))

my righteousness will never stop working

God's "righteousness" here represents him ruling righteously. Alternate translation: "my righteous rule will never end" or "I will rule righteously forever" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ Lift up your eyes to the sky, and look at the earth beneath, for the heavens will vanish away like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants will die like flies. But my salvation will continue forever, and my righteousness will never stop working.

UST

⁶ Look up at the sky, and look at the earth; see what they are like now, because some day the sky will disappear like smoke, and the earth will wear out like old clothes wear out, and people on the earth will die like flies. But I will rescue you, and you will remain free forever, and everyone will know what I do and I will always do what is right.

Isaiah 51:7

who have my law in your heart

Having God's law in the heart represents knowing God's law and wanting to obey it. Alternate translation: "who know and honor my law" (See: [Metaphor](#))

nor be disheartened by their abuse

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "and do not lose your courage when they hurt you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁷ Listen to me, you who know what is right, you people who {have} my law in your heart: Do not fear the insults of men, nor be disheartened by their abuse.

UST

⁷ You people who know what things are right to do, and who know in your inner beings what is written in my laws, listen to me! Do not be afraid of people who taunt you; do not be disturbed when people revile you,

Isaiah 51:8

For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool

God speaks of people who abuse those who are righteous as if they were wool garments, and of their being destroyed as if insects ate them. (See: [Metaphor](#))

my righteousness will be forever

God's "righteousness" here represents him ruling righteously. Alternate translation: "my righteous rule will be forever" or "I will rule righteously forever" (See: [Metonymy](#))

and my salvation to all generations

God's "salvation" here represents the result of his salvation, which is freedom. Being "to all generations" represents lasting forever. Alternate translation: "I will save you, and you will be free forever" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁸ For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations."

UST

⁸ because some day they will be destroyed like clothing that moths have eaten, like wool garments that have been eaten by worms. Everyone will know what I do and I will always do what is right; and I will save you, and you will be saved forever."

Isaiah 51:9

Awake, awake, clothe yourself with strength, arm of Yahweh

People urgently ask Yahweh's arm to help them as if his arm were a person. If it would be odd to speak to the arm, this can be addressed directly to Yahweh instead. Alternate translation: "Awake, awake, Yahweh, and clothe your arm with strength" (See: [Personification](#))

Awake, awake ... arm of Yahweh

People speak as if Yahweh's arm were asleep because it has not been helping them. Here the "arm of Yahweh" represents Yahweh, specifically him helping people. The word "Awake" is repeated to show that they need God's help urgently. (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Personification](#))

clothe yourself with strength

Strength is spoken of as if it were some kind of clothing that people would wear to strengthen themselves in battle. Alternate translation: "make yourself strong" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Is it not you who crushed Rahab, you who pierced the monster?

The speaker uses a question to emphasize Yahweh's power to do mighty things. Alternate translation: "It is you who crushed Rahab, you who pierced the monster." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Rahab ... the monster

Rahab was the name of this mythological serpent in the sea. Rahab can symbolize either the nation of Egypt or evil and chaos. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁹ Awake, awake, clothe yourself with strength, arm of Yahweh. Awake as in the days of old, the generations of ancient times. Is it not you who crushed Rahab, you who pierced the monster?

UST

⁹ Yahweh, wake up and do something for us! Show us how strong you are! Do mighty things like you did long ago, when you stabbed Rahab, the sea monster, and cut it into pieces.

Isaiah 51:10

Did you not dry up the sea ... for the redeemed to pass through?

Again, the speaker uses questions to emphasize Yahweh's power to do mighty things. This refers to Yahweh opening the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross and escape the army of Egypt. Alternate translation: "You dried up the sea ... for the redeemed to pass through." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Did you not dry up the sea, the waters of the great deep, and make the depths of the sea into a way for the redeemed to pass through?

UST

¹⁰ Surely you are the one who dried up the sea, and made a path through that deep water in order that your people could cross it!

Isaiah 51:11

General Information:

This is very similar to [Isaiah 35:10](#).

The ransomed of Yahweh

To “ransom” means to “rescue.” This refers to people whom Yahweh has rescued. Alternate translation: “Those whom Yahweh has rescued” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

with gladness forever on their heads

This uses a person’s head to mean the person as a whole. Alternate translation: “they will be glad forever” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

gladness and joy ... sorrow and mourning

The words “gladness” and “joy” mean basically the same thing, as do “sorrow” and “mourning.” Together they emphasize the intensity of these emotions. (See: [Doublet](#))

gladness and joy will overtake them

This speaks of the people being overwhelmed by gladness and joy by giving these emotions the human quality of being able to overtake someone. Alternate translation: “they will be overwhelmed by joy and gladness” or “they will be extremely glad and joyful” (See: [Personification](#))

sorrow and mourning will flee away

This speaks of the people no longer being sorrowful and mourning by speaking of these emotions as if they could run away. Alternate translation: “they will no longer be sorrowful and mourning” (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

11 The ransomed of Yahweh will return and come to Zion with cries of joy and with gladness forever on their heads; and gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and mourning will flee away.

UST

11 And those whom Yahweh will rescue from being exiled in Babylonia will similarly return to Jerusalem singing. Their being joyful forever will be like a crown on their heads. They will not be sad or mourn anymore; they will be completely joyful and happy.

Isaiah 51:12

I, I, am he

The word “I” is repeated for emphasis. If this is unnatural in your language, the repetition does not need to be used. Alternate translation: “I am he”

Why are you afraid of men ... like grass?

This rhetorical question emphasizes that people who have the Lord’s protection should not be afraid of human beings. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “Do not be afraid of men ... like grass.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

who are made like grass

This phrase compares men to grass to emphasize that their lives are short and that they die quickly. Alternate translation: “who live and die quickly like grass” or “who will wither and disappear like grass” (See: [Simile](#))

who are made like

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “who are like” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹² “I, I, {am} he who comforts you. Why {are} you afraid of men, {who} will die, the sons of mankind, {who} are made like grass?”

UST

¹² Yahweh says, “I am the one who encourages you. So why are you afraid of humans who will wither and disappear like grass?”

Isaiah 51:13

Why have you forgotten Yahweh ... earth?

Yahweh uses a question to emphasize that they should not forget Yahweh. Alternate translation: "You should not have forgotten Yahweh ... earth." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Maker

See how you translated this name for Yahweh in [Isaiah 17:7](#).

who stretched out the heavens

"who spread out the sky." This speaks of Yahweh having created the heavens as if he had stretched them out in the same way one would stretch out a large garment. Alternate translation: "who stretched out the heavens like a garment" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the foundations of the earth

The word "foundation" normally refers to a stone structure that gives support to a building from underneath. Here it describes a similar structure that was thought to support and hold the earth in place. See how you translated this phrase in [Isaiah 24:18](#).

the hot fury of the oppressor when he decides to destroy

Alternate translation: "the oppressor's hot fury when he decides to cause destruction"

hot fury

Here the word "hot" means "strong" or "great." Alternate translation: "great fury" (See: [Idiom](#))

Where is the fury of the oppressor?

Yahweh uses a question to emphasize that the people should not fear those who want to oppress them. Their oppressors are no longer a threat to them. Alternate translation: "The fury of the oppressor is not a threat!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

13 Why have you forgotten Yahweh your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth? You are in constant dread every day because of the hot fury of the oppressor when {he} {decides} to destroy. Where {is} the fury of the oppressor?

UST

13 You should not have forgotten me, Yahweh, the one who created your nation, the one who stretched out the sky and laid the foundations of the earth. You should not be afraid of those who are angry with you and want to destroy you. You should not be afraid of them now, because those angry people have now disappeared!

Isaiah 51:14

The one who is bent down

This refers to the people of Israel who are slaves of the Babylonians. This phrase describes how they work. Alternate translation: “The slave” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the pit

This refers to Sheol. Alternate translation: “the pit of Sheol” or “the grave” (See: [Metonymy](#))

nor will he lack bread

Here “bread” represents food in general. This can be written in positive form. Alternate translation: “nor will he be without food” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

14 The one who is bent down, Yahweh will hurry to release; he will not die and go down to the pit, nor will he lack bread.

UST

14 Soon you people, whom your enemies have caused to be slaves in Babylonia, will be freed! You will not remain in prison, and you will not die of hunger,

Isaiah 51:15

who churns up the sea

This speaks of Yahweh causing the sea to move and the waves to rise and fall as if he were stirring the sea as one stirs the contents of a bowl with a large spoon. Alternate translation: “who causes the sea to churn” or “who makes the sea move up and down” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this name for Yahweh in [Isaiah 1:9](#).

ULT

15 For I {am} Yahweh your God, who churns up the sea so that its waves roar —Yahweh of hosts {is} his name.

UST

15 because I am Yahweh, your God, the one who stirs up the sea and causes the waves to roar; I am Yahweh, commander of the angel armies!

Isaiah 51:16

I have placed my words in your mouth

This speaks of Yahweh telling Isaiah what to say as if his words were a physical object Yahweh had placed in Isaiah's mouth. Alternate translation: "I have told you what to say" (See: [Metaphor](#))

I have covered you in the shadow of my hand

Yahweh's "hand" refers to his power. This speaks of Yahweh protecting Isaiah as if his hand were covering him to protect him. Alternate translation: "my power has kept you safe" or "I have protected you and kept you safe" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

that I may plant the heavens

The word "plant" means to establish something in the ground. Here Yahweh firmly establishing the heavens is spoken of as if the heavens were a tent that he would spread out and firmly set it in place with tent pegs. Alternate translation: "that I may establish the heavens" (See: [Metaphor](#))

lay the foundations of the earth

The word "foundation" normally refers to a stone structure that gives support to a building from underneath. Here it describes a similar structure that was thought to support and hold the earth in place. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 24:18](#).

ULT

16 I have placed my words in your mouth, and I have covered you in the shadow of my hand, that I may plant the heavens, lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, 'You {are} my people.'"

UST

16 I have given you my message to proclaim, and I have protected you by my hand. I have done this in order to stretch out the sky and lay the foundation of the earth. And I have done this in order to say to you Israelites, 'You are my people!'"

Isaiah 51:17

Awake, awake, stand up, Jerusalem

Here “Jerusalem” represents the people who live there. Yahweh speaks to the people of Jerusalem as if they were there listening to him. Alternate translation: “Awake, awake, stand up, you people of Jerusalem” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Apostrophe](#))

Awake, awake, stand up

“Be alert and arise.” The repetition of the word “awake” emphasizes the urgency of the call to arouse the people of Israel. It is not used to wake them from literal sleep.

you who have drunk out of the hand of Yahweh ... from the cup of staggering

Yahweh speaks of having punished his people as if he had forced them to drink from a bowl that was filled with his anger. And when they drank from the bowl of his anger, they staggered as if they had drunk a lot of wine. (See: [Metaphor](#))

down to the dregs

The word “dregs” means the solid pieces at the very bottom of a container that has a liquid in it. Alternate translation: “down to the very bottom”

out of the hand of Yahweh

Here Yahweh is referred to by his hand to emphasize that he is the one who gave the bowl to his people. Alternate translation: “that he gave to you” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

from the cup of staggering

Alternate translation: “from the cup that caused you to stagger as if you were drunk on wine”

staggering

not walking straight, or stumbling while walking

ULT

17 Awake, awake, stand up, Jerusalem, you who have drunk out of the hand of Yahweh from the bowl of his anger; you who have drunk out of the bowl, down to the dregs from the cup of staggering.

UST

17 You people of Jerusalem, wake up! You have experienced Yahweh severely punishing you. Yahweh has caused you to suffer much and to experience disaster. Yahweh gave you this cup to drink, but this was Yahweh's cup! He forced you to drink every drop out of that large cup, down to the bottom of the bowl. And that drink made you stagger like you had drunk strong wine. This strong wine represents the anger of God, and you are to drink all of it!

Isaiah 51:18

There is no one ... to guide her; there is no one ... to take her by the hand

These two clauses have the same meaning and can be combined. This speaks of Jerusalem being helpless as if the city were a drunk woman without a son to help her walk safely. Alternate translation: "You have no one to help you! You are like a drunk old woman without a son to take her by the hand and guide her" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁸ {There is} no one among all the sons she has born to guide her; {there is} no one among all the sons that she has raised to take her by the hand.

UST

¹⁸ Now you do not have any children who are able to take your hand and guide you. You cannot help yourself.

Isaiah 51:19

who will grieve with you?...Who will comfort you?

Isaiah uses questions to emphasize that now there is no one to weep with them or comfort them. These questions may be written as statements. Alternate translation: “but there is no one to grieve with you ... There is no one to comfort you.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

These two troubles

The two troubles refer to the following two phrases: “desolation and destruction” and “the famine and the sword.”

desolation and destruction

These words have similar meanings and emphasize the destruction of the land caused by the opposing army. Alternate translation: “your enemies have left your city empty and ruined” (See: [Doublet](#))

the famine and the sword

The words “famine” and “sword” describe the trouble that will come upon the people. The “sword” refers to “war.” Alternate translation: “many of you have died from hunger and war” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁹ These two {troubles} happened to you—who will grieve with you?—desolation and destruction, and the famine and the sword. {Who} will comfort you? ^[1]

UST

¹⁹ You have experienced these disasters: Your country has become desolate; your cities have been destroyed; many people have died from hunger; many people have been killed by your enemies' swords. Now there is no one to weep with you and sympathize with you.

Isaiah 51:20

they lie at every street corner

This is generalization. Many children will lie in the street, but not necessarily on every street corner. Alternate translation: “they lie on the street” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

like an antelope in a net

This speaks of the children being exhausted and helpless as if they were an antelope caught in a trap. Alternate translation: “they are helpless, like an antelope caught in a net” or “as helpless as a trapped antelope” (See: [Simile](#))

antelope

This is an animal, similar to a deer, that has horns and runs very fast. Alternate translation: “deer” (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

they are filled with the anger of Yahweh, the rebuke of your God

The “anger of Yahweh” refers to Yahweh punishing his people because of his anger against them. This speaks of the people having been severely punished as if they had become full of Yahweh’s anger. Also, the word “rebuke” can be written as a verb. Alternate translation: “they have been severely punished by Yahweh because he was angry with them and rebuked them” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

20 Your sons have fainted; they lie at every street corner, like an antelope in a net; they are filled with the anger of Yahweh, the rebuke of your God.

UST

20 Your children have fainted and lie at the corner of every street; they are as helpless as an antelope that has been caught in a net. What has happened to them is because Yahweh has been very angry with them; he has rebuked them severely.

Isaiah 51:21

you oppressed one and drunken one

Yahweh uses the word “one” here to refer to all of the oppressed people. Alternate translation: “you oppressed people and drunken people” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

drunken one, but not drunk with wine

This speaks of the people acting drunk because they are suffering as if they have become drunk from being forced to drink the bowl of Yahweh’s anger. Alternate translation: “you who are drunk from drinking the wine of the bowl of Yahweh’s anger” or “you who act drunk, because you have suffered greatly” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²¹ But now hear this, you oppressed one and drunken one, but not drunk with wine:

UST

²¹ So now, you people who have suffered much, you who were acting as if you were drunk because you were drinking from his cup. But in truth, it is not because you have drunk out of a cup filled with wine, but because of something else that Yahweh will do.

Isaiah 51:22

See, I have taken the cup of staggering from your hand—the bowl, which is the cup of my anger—so that

This speaks of Yahweh no longer being angry with his people as if his anger were the contents of a cup that he was taking away from them. Alternate translation: “I will no longer be angry with you. See, it is like I have taken away from you the cup that made you stagger, that is, the cup that was full of my anger, so that” (See: [Metaphor](#))

See

This is used to draw the listeners’ attention to what is said next. Alternate translation: “Listen”

the cup of staggering

The word “cup” refers to what is in the cup. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 51:17](#). Alternate translation: “the cup of the wine that makes people stagger” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the bowl, which is the cup of my anger

Yahweh speaks of having punished people as if he had forced them to drink from a bowl that was filled with his anger. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 51:17](#). Alternate translation: “the bowl which is filled with my anger” or “the cup which is filled with my anger” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²² Your Lord Yahweh, your God, {who} pleads the cause of his people, says this, “See, I have taken the cup of staggering from your hand— the bowl, which is the cup of my anger—so that you will not drink it again.

UST

²² Yahweh, your Lord and your God, the one who argues your case to defend you, he says this: “I have taken away that cup that holds my anger toward you, and I made you experience my anger when I made you drink from that cup. But now I have taken it from you so that you will never drink of it again.

Isaiah 51:23

I will put it into the hand of your tormentors

This speaks of Yahweh punishing their enemies as if he were going to force them to drink from the cup filled with his anger. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I will put it into the hand of your tormentors

It is implied that by putting the cup of his anger in their hand Yahweh will be forcing them to drink what is in the cup. Alternate translation: "I will force your tormentors to drink from the wine of the bowl of my anger" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

your tormentors

The word "tormentors" may be expressed with a verb. Alternate translation: "those who have tormented you" or "those who have caused you to suffer"

you made your back like the ground and like the street for them to walk on

This compares the way their enemies walked on their back to the way people walk on the street. Alternate translation: "you lay in the streets so your enemies could walk on your backs" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

23 I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, those who have said to you, 'Lie down, that we may walk over you'; you made your back like the ground and like the street for them to walk on."

UST

23 Instead, I will cause those who have tormented you to suffer; I will severely punish those who said to you, 'Lie down in order that we may walk on you; lie down on your stomachs in order that your backs will be like streets that we can walk on.'"

Isaiah 52

Isaiah 52 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

The prophecies of this chapter occur after the exile in Babylon and are not in reference to the people contemporary to Isaiah. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

There is an important teaching or prophecy about the Messiah beginning in this chapter and continues through the next chapter. This prophesy begins in 52:13 and scholars usually note that it portrays the Messiah as a “suffering servant.” (See: [Christ](#), [Messiah](#))

Isaiah 52:1

Awake, awake

This word is repeated for emphasis and shows urgency. Isaiah trying to arouse the people is spoken of as if he were trying to wake them up from sleep. (See: [Metaphor](#))

put on your strength

Being strong again is spoken of as if strength were clothing that a person puts on. Alternate translation: “be strong” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Zion ... Jerusalem

Both of these refer to the people who live in Jerusalem. Isaiah is speaking to the people as if they were there listening to him. Alternate translation: “people of Zion ... people of Jerusalem” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Apostrophe](#))

the uncircumcised or the unclean

These nominal adjectives can be stated as adjectives. Alternate translation: “Those who are uncircumcised or those who are unclean” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

the unclean

This refers to unclean people. A person who God considers spiritually unacceptable or defiled is spoken of as if the person were physically unclean. Alternate translation: “those who are not acceptable to God” (See: [Metaphor](#))

enter you

Here “you” refers to Jerusalem which represents the people who live there. It is understood that the uncircumcised and unclean people would enter the city to attack the people. Alternate translation: “enter your city to attack you” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

¹ Awake, awake, put on your strength, Zion; put on your beautiful garments, Jerusalem, holy city; for never again will the uncircumcised or the unclean enter you.

UST

¹ You people who live in the holy city of Jerusalem, wake up! Be strong again! Show that your city is beautiful and glorious; uncircumcised foreigners, those who do not honor Yahweh, will never again enter your city to attack you.

Isaiah 52:2

Shake yourself off from the dust; arise and sit, Jerusalem

Here "Jerusalem" represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: "People of Jerusalem, sit up and shake the dirt off of yourself" (See: [Metonymy](#))

take off the chain from your neck, captive

It is implied that the people of Jerusalem were wearing chains because they were slaves while exiled in Babylon. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

daughter of Zion

This is an idiom. The "daughter" of a city means the people of the city. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:8](#). Alternate translation: "people of Zion" or "people who live in Zion" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

² Shake yourself off from the dust; arise and sit, Jerusalem; take off the chain from your neck, captive, daughter of Zion.

UST

² People of Jerusalem, get up from where you have been sitting in the dust, and sit down properly! You people who have returned from being exiled, take off from your neck the chains that the Babylonians fastened around your necks,

Isaiah 52:3

You were sold for nothing, and you will be redeemed without money

This speaks about Yahweh as if he were the owner of the people of Israel. Since he is the rightful owner he can give them away or take them back whenever he wants. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I sold you for nothing, and I will redeem you without money" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ For this is what Yahweh says, "You were sold for nothing, and you will be redeemed without money."

UST

³ because this is what Yahweh says: "When you were sent as captives to Babylonia, no one paid to make that happen. So now you will be brought back, and no money will be paid to anyone for your release."

Isaiah 52:4

In the beginning

Here “beginning” refers to the start of Israel’s history as they were first becoming a people.

went down to ... Egypt

“went to ... Egypt.” It was common to use the phrase “went down” when speaking of traveling from Canaan to Egypt.

Assyria has oppressed them

Assyria refers to the people of Assyria. Alternate translation: “the people of Assyria have treated them badly” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ For this is what the Lord Yahweh says, “In the beginning my people went down to live temporarily in Egypt; and Assyria has oppressed them for no good {reason.}”

UST

⁴ Yahweh our Lord also says this: “Long ago, my people went to Egypt to live there. Later the soldiers of Assyria oppressed them.”

Isaiah 52:5

Now what do I have here ... seeing that my people are taken away for nothing?

Yahweh uses a question to make the people pay attention to what he is about to say. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "Now look at what is happening ... my people are again taken away for nothing." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

this is Yahweh's declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Translate as in [Isaiah 30:1](#). Alternate translation: "this is what Yahweh has declared" or "this is what I, Yahweh, have declared" (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

seeing that my people are taken away for nothing

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I see the enemy taking my people away for nothing" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

for nothing

This could mean: (1) "for nothing" means the Babylonians took the people unjustly and without cause or (2) this continues the metaphor from [Isaiah 52:3](#) where Yahweh is spoken of as if he owned the people of Israel and could give them away for nothing. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Those who rule over them mock

This refers to the Babylonians who have conquered the people. However, some versions have, "Those who rule over them wail." For these versions, this passage refers to the leaders of the Israelites in captivity.

my name is blasphemed continually all day long

Here "name" represents Yahweh's reputation. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "those who watch the enemy take away my people are continually saying evil things about me" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ Now what do I have here—this is Yahweh's declaration—seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Those who rule over them mock—this is Yahweh's declaration—and my name {is} blasphemed continually all day long. ^[1]

UST

⁵ But now think about what is happening: My people are being forced to be slaves again, this time by the people of Babylonia. They have taken my people away, but they never declared any just reason for taking them captive. And the rulers of Babylon boast and make fun of them (as I, Yahweh, have said they would do), and the other people groups in the world despise the mention of my name.

Isaiah 52:6

Therefore my people will know my name

Here “name” represents Yahweh’s reputation. Alternate translation: “Therefore my people will truly know who I am” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ Therefore my people will know my name; {they will know} in that day that I {am} the one who says, “Yes, {it is} I!”

UST

⁶ But after that, my people will love me and honor me; when that happens, they will know that I am the one who said that this would happen. I am the one who speaks, and I say, ‘Yes, this is Yahweh who is speaking to you.’

Isaiah 52:7

General Information:

Isaiah is speaking to the people of Israel.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news

Here “feet” represents a messenger who is walking. Alternate translation: “It is beautiful to see a messenger coming over the mountains to announce good news” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

to Zion

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

ULT

⁷ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, who announces peace, who bears good tidings, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

UST

⁷ It is a wonderful thing when messengers come from across the mountains and bring good news, the news about God giving us peace and saving us, the news that the God to whom we Israelite people belong is now showing everyone his power as king!

Isaiah 52:8

raise their voices

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

every eye of theirs

Here “eye” represents the whole person. Alternate translation: “every one of them” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁸ Listen, your watchmen raise {their} voices, together they shout for joy, for they will see, every eye of theirs, Yahweh’s return to Zion.

UST

⁸ The watchmen who are guarding the city will shout and sing joyfully, because while they are watching, they will all see Yahweh returning to Jerusalem.

Isaiah 52:9

you ruins of Jerusalem

Isaiah speaks of the ruins of Jerusalem as if they were a person that could rejoice. This represents the people of Jerusalem who were defeated. Alternate translation: “you people who live among the ruins of Jerusalem” (See: [Personification](#))

he has redeemed Jerusalem

Here “Jerusalem” represents the people. Alternate translation: “he has redeemed the people of Jerusalem” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ Break out into joyful singing together, you ruins of Jerusalem; for Yahweh has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.

UST

⁹ Jerusalem was ruined, but the people who are there now should start to sing joyfully, because Yahweh will encourage his people; he will set his people free and bring them back to Jerusalem.

Isaiah 52:10

bared his holy arm

Here “arm” represents Yahweh’s power. Yahweh showing all the people of the nations that he is holy and powerful is spoken of as if Yahweh were a warrior who removed his cloak, baring his arms for battle. Alternate translation: “showed his holiness and mighty power” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

all the nations; all the earth

Here “nations” and “earth” represent the people of all the nations all over the earth. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

10 Yahweh has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the earth will see the salvation of our God.

UST

10 Yahweh will show all the nations that he is holy and powerful. People in the most remote places on earth will know that he has rescued his people.

Isaiah 52:11

Leave, leave

This word is repeated to emphasize that the people must indeed leave, although not necessarily right away.

go out from there

It is assumed knowledge that the people of Israel were slaves in Babylon. This can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: “go out from the land where you are slaves” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

touch nothing unclean

Something that Yahweh has stated is unfit to touch or eat is spoken of as if it were physically unclean. Alternate translation: “touch nothing that is unacceptable to Yahweh” (See: [Metaphor](#))

leave from her midst

Here “her” represents Babylon.

ULT

11 Leave, leave, go out from there; touch nothing unclean; leave from her midst; purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of Yahweh.

UST

11 So leave the places where you were taken to when you were captured, where everything is unacceptable to God. You men who are carrying the items used in the temple of Yahweh, leave there and return to Jerusalem, and purify yourselves in order to be acceptable to worship God.

Isaiah 52:12

Yahweh will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearguard

Yahweh protecting his people from their enemies is spoken of as if he were the warriors who go ahead of the people and the warriors who stay behind the people to protect them. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² For you will not go out in a rush, nor will you leave in a panic; for Yahweh will go before you; and the God of Israel {will be} your rearguard.

UST

¹² But it will not be necessary for you to leave suddenly, to flee in panic, because Yahweh will go in front of you; and he will also protect you from being attacked at the rear while you travel.

Isaiah 52:13

he will be high and lifted up, and he will be exalted

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. These two phrases “high and lifted up” and “will be exalted” have basically the same meaning and emphasize that Yahweh will honor his servant. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 33:10](#). Alternate translation: “I will give my servant the greatest honor” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹³ Look, my servant will act wisely; he will be high and lifted up, and he will be exalted.

UST

¹³ Listen carefully! My servant will act wisely and do all that Yahweh wants him to do, and he will be honored more than anyone else.

Isaiah 52:14

his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man

It is implied that the servant is disfigured because enemies beat him very badly. The full meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: “his enemies beat his body so badly that he did not even look like a human anymore” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹⁴ As many were horrified at you— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man, and his form no longer looked like anything human.

UST

¹⁴ But many people will be appalled when they see what has happened to him. Because he was beaten very badly, his appearance will be changed; people will hardly recognize that he is a human.

Isaiah 52:15

my servant will sprinkle many nations

The servant causing the people of the nations to be acceptable to Yahweh is spoken of as if the servant were a priest who sprinkles the blood of a sacrifice to make someone or something acceptable to Yahweh. (See: [Metaphor](#))

will sprinkle

The Hebrew word translated “sprinkle” here can also be translated as “surprise” or “startle,” which some versions of the Bible do.

many nations

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

kings will shut their mouths

The phrase “shut their mouths” is an idiom. Alternate translation: “kings will stop talking” or “kings will be silent” (See: [Idiom](#))

that which they had not been told

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “that which no one had told them” or “something no one had told them” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

15 Even so, my servant will sprinkle many nations and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For that which they had not been told, they will see, and that which they had not heard, they will understand.

UST

15 But he will purify the people of many nations by sprinkling them clean; even kings will be silent when they stand in front of him, because they will see someone that no one had told them about before, and they will understand things that they had not heard about before.

Isaiah 53

Isaiah 53 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

In this chapter there is an important teaching or prophecy about the Messiah and his life and ministry. It begins in 52:13 and scholars usually note that it portrays the Messiah as a “suffering servant.” (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophecy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [Christ](#), [Messiah](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Atonement

This chapter prophesies about the death of Christ for sin. Most scholars believe it teaches that Christ was a righteous man who died for the sins of mankind. This is usually referred to as the atonement. (See: [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#) and [atonement](#), [atone](#), [atoned](#))

Isaiah 53:1

Who has believed what they heard from us

What Isaiah just found out is so amazing that he wonders if the exiles will believe it. The “we” includes him and those in exile. Alternate translation: “It is hard for anyone to believe what we have heard” (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?

Arm refers to God’s power. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh has revealed his power to people.” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹ Who has believed what they heard from us, and to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?

UST

¹ Who will believe what we have heard about God’s servant? Who will see what Yahweh does by his great power?

Isaiah 53:2

For he grew up before Yahweh like a sapling

Here “he” refers to God’s servant whom Isaiah compares to a very young tree. This emphasizes that he will appear weak. (See: [Simile](#))

out of parched earth

“parched earth” is hard and dry ground that will not allow plants to grow and represents where the servant of Yahweh will come.

Alternate translation: “out of an impossible situation” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² For he grew up before Yahweh like a sapling, and like a sprout out of parched earth; he had no remarkable appearance or splendor; when we saw him, {there was} no beauty to attract us.

UST

² While God watches, his servant will grow up fragile like a very young tree, like a weak young plant that shoots up, a stem that is growing in dry ground. There will be nothing beautiful or majestic about him, nothing that would cause us to want to look at him.

Isaiah 53:3

He was despised and rejected by people

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People considered him as nothing and rejected him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

a man of sorrows

Alternate translation: "a man knowing all kinds of sadness"

from whom men hide their faces

"Face" represents a person's attention or fellowship. Hiding one's face means to turn away from someone. Alternate translation: "from whom people turn away" (See: [Metonymy](#))

he was despised

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "they considered him to be worthless" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ He was despised and rejected by people; a man of sorrows, and one familiar with pain. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised; and we considered him insignificant.

UST

³ People will despise and reject him. He will endure much pain, and he will suffer much. Because his face will be very disfigured, people will not want to look at him; he will not even look human any more; people will despise him and think that he is not worth paying any attention to.

Isaiah 53:4

he has borne our sicknesses and carried our sorrows

To “bear” or carry an abstraction like sickness and sorrow represents taking it up. Alternate translation: “he has taken our sicknesses and sorrows upon himself” (See: [Metaphor](#))

yet we thought he was being punished by God, struck by God, and afflicted

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “yet we thought God was punishing and afflicting him” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴ But surely he has borne our sicknesses and carried our sorrows; yet we thought he was being punished by God, struck by God, and afflicted.

UST

⁴ But he will be punished for the sicknesses within our lives; he will endure great pain for us. But we will think that he is being punished by God, afflicted for his own sins.

Isaiah 53:5

But he was pierced because of our rebellious deeds; he was crushed because of our sins

These two phrases share similar meanings and emphasize that the servant suffered because of the people's sins. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "God allowed the enemy to stab him and kill him because of our sins" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

The punishment for our peace was on him

This refers to peace with God. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "He accepted this punishment so we could live in harmony" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

with his wounds we are healed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "he healed us by his suffering of the wounds" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ But he was pierced because of our rebellious deeds; he was crushed because of our sins. The punishment for our peace was on him, and with his wounds we are healed.

UST

⁵ But people will pierce him through and kill him because of the evil things that we did; they will wound him because of our sins. They will beat him in order that things may go well with us; because they will whip him, we will be healed.

Isaiah 53:6

We all like sheep have gone astray

Sheep often leave the path on which the shepherd leads them. Isaiah means that we do what we want instead of what God commands. (See: [Simile](#))

the iniquity of us all

Our “iniquity” here represents the guilt for our sin. Alternate translation: “the guilt for the sin of every one of us” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

6 We all like sheep have gone astray; we have each turned to his own way, and Yahweh has placed on him the iniquity of us all.

UST

6 All of us have gone away from God like sheep who have strayed away from their shepherd. We have turned away from doing the things that God wants in order to do the things that we want. We deserve to be punished, but Yahweh will punish him instead for all of our sins.

Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “They treated him harshly” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

he did not open his mouth

“Mouth” represents what a person says. Opening one’s mouth means to speak. Alternate translation: “he did not protest” (See: [Metonymy](#))

as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is silent

Isaiah compares the servant to a lamb and a sheep to emphasize that he will remain silent as people harm and humiliate him. (See: [Simile](#))

as a lamb that is led to the slaughter

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “just as a lamb is silent as a person slaughters it” (See: [Simile](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁷ He was oppressed; yet when he humbled himself, he did not open his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

UST

⁷ He will be abused and caused to suffer, but he will not say anything to complain. They will lead him to where they will execute him, like they lead a lamb to where it will be slaughtered. And like a sheep does not bleat when the shearer cuts off its wool, he will not say anything to defend himself when he is killed.

Isaiah 53:8

By coercion and judgment he was condemned

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "They treated him harshly, judged him, and condemned him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

coercion

The Hebrew word translated here as "coercion" is interpreted by some versions as "arrest." For these versions, the thought is that the Servant will be arrested and then judged and condemned.

who from that generation thought anymore about him?

This question emphasizes that no one thinks about him. Alternate translation: "no one from his generation cared what happened to him." or "no one among his contemporaries cared what happened to him." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

who from that generation thought anymore about him?

Many versions interpret this passage in Hebrew differently: "Who can say anything about his descendants?" or "Who can say anything about his fate?"

But he was cut off from the land of the living

"Cut off" here refers to death. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "But he died" or "But death took him away" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Idiom](#))

of my people

Alternate translation: "of the people of Israel"

ULT

⁸ By coercion and judgment he was condemned; who from that generation thought anymore about him? But he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the offenses of my people the penalty was put on him.

UST

⁸ After he is arrested and put on trial, he will be taken away and executed. And no one at that time will think anything more about him. For he will die; he will receive all the penalties brought on by the curses against us for the wrong things we have done.

Isaiah 53:9**nor had there been any deceit in his mouth**

“Mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “nor did he deceive anyone when he spoke” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ They placed his grave with the criminals, with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, nor {had there been any} deceit in his mouth.

UST

⁹ Although he will never have done any wrong or deceived anyone, people will place his corpse where wicked people are buried, and in a rich man's grave.

Isaiah 53:10

he will see his offspring

Here, “offspring” means those people that Yahweh has forgiven because of the servant’s sacrifice. (See: [Metaphor](#))

he will prolong his days

This speaks of making him live for more time. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will make his servant live again” (See: [Idiom](#))

Yahweh’s purpose will be accomplished through him

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will accomplish his purpose through his servant” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

10 Yet it was Yahweh’s will to crush him and make {him} ill. When he makes his life an offering for sin, he will see {his} offspring, he will prolong {his} days, and Yahweh’s purpose will be accomplished through him.

UST

10 But it will be Yahweh’s will that he be afflicted and caused to suffer. When he dies as an offering for your own sin, he will benefit many, many people, as if they were his children; he will live a long time after he dies and becomes alive again, and he will accomplish everything that Yahweh has planned.

Isaiah 53:11

After the suffering of his life

Here “his life” refers to the servant. Alternate translation: “After the servant has suffered” (See: [Metonymy](#))

he will see light

Many versions understand “light” here to stand for life. That is, the servant will become alive again. (See: [Metaphor](#))

My righteous servant

Here “my” refers to Yahweh.

he will bear their iniquities

The word “bear” means carry. This could mean: (1) “their iniquities” is a metonym representing the punishment for their sins. Alternate translation: “he will take their punishment” or “he will be punished for their sins” (See: [Metaphor](#)) * or (2) “their iniquities” is a metonym representing their guilt. Alternate translation: “he will take their guilt upon himself” or “he will be guilty for their sins”

ULT

11 After the suffering of his life, he will see light {and} be satisfied by his knowledge. ^[1] My righteous servant will justify many; he will bear their iniquities. ^[2]

UST

11 When he sees all that he will accomplish because of his suffering, he will be satisfied. And because of what will have happened to him, Yahweh's righteous servant, he will cause the guilt of many people to be ended, because he will bear the guilt for their sins.

Isaiah 53:12

Therefore will I give him his portion among the multitudes, and he will divide the spoils with the many

These two clauses mean basically the same thing. "Portion" and "spoils" refer to a king after a victorious battle sharing the plunder or rewards with his army. This means God will greatly honor his servant because of his sacrifice. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

the multitudes

Many versions interpret this expression as "the many" or "the strong."

because he exposed himself to death

"Exposed" means to be vulnerable or unprotected. The servant of Yahweh put himself in a situation where he would die. Alternate translation: "he willingly accepted the possibility of death" (See: [Metonymy](#))

was numbered with the transgressors

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "allowed people to treat him as a criminal" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹² Therefore will I give him his portion among the multitudes, and he will divide the spoils with the many, because he exposed himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors. He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

UST

¹² So Yahweh will share with many people the spoils he has won from his enemies. His servant will be like a king who divides the spoils among his soldiers, because he put himself in danger of dying and did in fact die. Even though people had considered him to be a sinner, he removed the guilt of many people, and he interceded for those who have done things that are wrong.

Isaiah 54

Isaiah 54 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Yahweh's covenant faithfulness

This chapter focuses on Yahweh's faithfulness to fulfill his covenants. It references several different covenant promises in this chapter. (See: [covenant faithfulness](#), [covenant loyalty](#), [covenant love](#), [faithful](#), [faithfulness](#), [trustworthy](#), [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#) and [covenant and promise](#), [promised](#))

Isaiah 54:1

you barren woman ... children of the married woman

Yahweh telling the people of Jerusalem to rejoice because there will be many people living in Jerusalem again is spoken of as if Yahweh were telling a barren woman she is going to have many children. (See: [Metaphor](#))

break into joyful singing and cry aloud, you who have never been in birth labor

This statement means the same thing as the first part of the sentence. (See: [Parallelism](#))

For the children of the desolate one are more

An event that will happen in the future is spoken of as if it happened in the past. This emphasizes that the event will certainly happen. Alternate translation: "For the children of the desolate woman will be more" (See: [Predictive Past](#))

the desolate one

Here "desolate" means that the woman's husband had rejected and abandoned her

ULT

¹ "Sing, you barren woman, you {who} have not given birth; break into joyful singing and cry aloud, you {who} have never been in birth labor. For the children of the desolate one {are} more than the children of the married woman," says Yahweh.

UST

¹ Yahweh says, "You people of Jerusalem, start to sing! You who are like women who have never given birth to children, sing loudly and shout joyfully, because you, who are like childless women who have been abandoned by their husbands, will soon have more children than women who have never had any children.

Isaiah 54:2

Make your tent larger ... strengthen your stakes

This continues the metaphor that began in [Isaiah 54:1](#). Yahweh telling the people of Jerusalem to prepare because Yahweh will greatly increase their people is spoken of as if he is telling a woman to make her tent bigger to make room for many children. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² "Make your tent larger and spread your tent curtains farther out, unsparingly; lengthen your ropes and strengthen your stakes.

UST

² Make your tents larger; make them wider, and fasten them firmly with tent pegs.

Isaiah 54:3

For you will spread out

Here “you” is singular and refers to the barren woman. She represents herself and all of her descendants. Alternate translation: “For you and your descendants will spread out” (See: [Forms of You](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

will conquer nations

Here “nations” represents the people. Alternate translation: “will conquer the people of other nations” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³ For you will spread out to the right hand and to the left, and your descendants will conquer nations and resettle desolate cities.

UST

³ You will need to make your city much larger because soon you and your descendants will spread all over the land. They will force the people of other nations to leave where they are, and you will live again in the cities that people had previously abandoned.

Isaiah 54:4

you will forget the shame of your youth and the disgrace of your abandonment

Yahweh telling the people that in the future they will not even think about the shame they experienced when their enemies defeated them is spoken of as if Yahweh were telling a woman that she will no longer think about the shame she experienced from being unable to have children and having her husband abandon her. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Do not fear for you will not be ashamed, nor be discouraged for you will not be disgraced; you will forget the shame of your youth and the disgrace of your abandonment.

UST

⁴ Do not be afraid; you will no longer be ashamed. Previously you were ashamed because your enemies conquered you and caused your nation to be like a widow, but soon you will not even remember that.

Isaiah 54:5

For your Maker is your husband

Yahweh loving and taking care of his people is spoken of as if he were their husband. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Maker

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 17:7](#).

Yahweh of hosts

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:24](#).

The Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 5:16](#).

Redeemer

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 41:14](#).

he is called the God of the whole earth

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “he is the God of the whole earth” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ For your Maker {is} your husband; Yahweh of hosts is his name. The Holy One of Israel {is} your Redeemer; he is called the God of the whole earth.

UST

⁵ I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the Holy One of Israel, who rules over the whole earth, the one who created you, will be like a husband to you.

Isaiah 54:6

Yahweh has called you back as a wife ... like a woman married young and rejected

Yahweh sending his people away into exile then bringing them back is spoken of as if Yahweh were a husband who had rejected his wife but now accepts her. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#))

grieved in spirit

Here "spirit" represents a person's inner being. Alternate translation: "grieved" or "made sad" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ For Yahweh has called you back as a wife abandoned and grieved in spirit, like a woman married young and rejected," says your God.

UST

⁶ Your nation was like a woman whose husband left her, and caused you to be very sad; you were like a young woman who got married when she was very young, and then her husband abandoned her.

Isaiah 54:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ "For a short time I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you.

UST

⁷ I abandoned you people of Jerusalem for a while, but now I am saying, 'I will take you back.'

Isaiah 54:8

In a flood of anger

Yahweh being very angry is spoken of as if his anger were a flood that overwhelms people. Alternate translation: “When I was very angry” (See: [Metaphor](#))

I hid my face from you

Here “hid my face” is an idiom that means God abandoned his people and let them suffer. Alternate translation: “I abandoned you” (See: [Idiom](#))

but with everlasting covenant faithfulness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **faithfulness**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “faithful.” See how you translated “covenant faithfulness” in [Isaiah 16:5](#). Alternate translation: “but because I always am faithful to my covenant with you” or “but because I am always faithful to do what I promise to do” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

says Yahweh, the one who rescues you

Here Yahweh speaks about himself in the third person. It can be stated in first person. Alternate translation: “that is what I, Yahweh, your rescuer, say to you” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

⁸ In a flood of anger I hid my face from you momentarily; but with everlasting covenant faithfulness I will have mercy on you— says Yahweh, the one who rescues you.

UST

⁸ I was very angry with you for a while, and I turned away from you. But I will act mercifully toward you and I will faithfully love you forever. That is what I, Yahweh, your rescuer, say to you.

Isaiah 54:9

the waters of Noah

This refers to the flood that Yahweh caused during the time of Noah.
(See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁹ For this is like the waters of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again pass over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you.

UST

⁹ During the time that Noah lived, I solemnly promised that I would never again allow a flood to cover the earth. So now I solemnly promise that I will not be angry with you again and rebuke you.

Isaiah 54:10

Though the mountains may fall and the hills be shaken, yet my steadfast love

Yahweh describes a hypothetical condition to explain what would happen even if those conditions were met. Alternate translation: “Even if the mountains fell and the hills shook, my steadfast love” (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

the hills be shaken

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the hills may shake” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

my steadfast love will not turn away from you

Yahweh continuing to love his people is spoken of as if his love would not turn away from the people. Alternate translation: “I will not stop loving you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

nor will my covenant of peace be shaken

Yahweh not canceling his covenant with the people is spoken of as if his covenant were an object that would not be shaken. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “and I will not cancel my covenant of peace” or “and I will surely give you peace as I promised in my covenant” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

says Yahweh, who has mercy on you

Here Yahweh speaks about himself in the third person. It can be stated in first person. Alternate translation: “that is what I, Yahweh, who acts mercifully, say” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Though the mountains may fall and the hills be shaken, yet my steadfast love will not turn away from you, nor will my covenant of peace be shaken—says Yahweh, who has mercy on you.

UST

¹⁰ Even if the mountains and hills shake and collapse, I will not stop faithfully loving you, and I will not cancel my covenant to cause things to go well for you. That is what I, Yahweh, who acts mercifully, say.

Isaiah 54:11

Afflicted one

Here Yahweh speaks to the city of Jerusalem as if it were listening to him. Here Jerusalem represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: "You afflicted people of Jerusalem" (See: [Apostrophe](#) and [Metonymy](#))

storm-driven

Yahweh speaks of the people as if they were blown around and damaged by the winds and storms. This means the people were hurt and without stability. (See: [Metaphor](#))

uncomforted one

Alternate translation: "without comfort"

I will set your pavement in turquoise ... lay your foundations with sapphires

Yahweh describes in ideal terms how he will restore Jerusalem and cause it to be beautiful again. Although the language may be exaggerated, you should translate this just as Yahweh described it.

turquoise ... sapphires

These are precious gemstones. Turquoise is light blue-to-green, sapphires are typically dark blue. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

11 Afflicted one, storm-driven {and} uncomfortable one, look, I will set your pavement in turquoise, and lay your foundations with sapphires.

UST

11 You people of Jerusalem, your enemies acted very violently toward you; it was as though your city had been battered by a severe storm, and no one helped you. But now I will cause your city to be rebuilt with stones made of turquoise, and will cause the foundations of the city to be made of sapphires.

Isaiah 54:12

I will make ... beautiful stones

Yahweh describes in ideal terms how he will restore Jerusalem and cause it to be beautiful again. Although the language may be exaggerated, you should translate this just as Yahweh described it.

rubies

These precious gemstones are red to pink. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

¹² I will make your pinnacles of rubies and your gates of sparkling stones, and your outer wall of beautiful stones.

UST

¹² I will cause the towers on the city wall to be made of rubies, and all the gates and outer walls of the city will be made of other very valuable stones.

Isaiah 54:13

Then all your children will be taught by Yahweh

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "And Yahweh will teach all your children" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

by Yahweh

Yahweh speaks of himself in the third person. It can be stated in first person. Alternate translation: "by me, Yahweh" (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

¹³ Then all your children {will be} taught by Yahweh; and the peace of your children {will be} great.

UST

¹³ I will be the one who will teach your children and cause things to go well with you.

Isaiah 54:14

In righteousness you will be established

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **righteousness**, you could express the same idea with an adjective such as “right.” If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “I will cause you to be strong again because you will do what is right” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

it will not come near to you

No one in the city or outsiders will ever terrify the inhabitants of Jerusalem again.

ULT

14 In righteousness you will be established, and you will be far from oppression, for you will not fear; and from terror, for it will not come near to you.

UST

14 Your government will be strong because it will act justly; no one will oppress you; you will not be afraid, because nothing will come near you that will make you fear.

Isaiah 54:15

General Information:

Yahweh continue speaking to the people of Jerusalem.

stirs up trouble

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “causes trouble” or “troubles you” (See: [Idiom](#))

will fall in defeat

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “you will defeat them in battle” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Look, if anyone stirs up trouble, it will not be from me; anyone who stirs up trouble with you will fall in defeat.

UST

¹⁵ If any army attacks you, it will not be because I have incited them to do that, and you will defeat anyone who attacks you.

Isaiah 54:16

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁶ See, I have created the craftsman, who blows the burning coals and forges weapons as his work, and I have created the destroyer to destroy.

UST

¹⁶ Think about this: Blacksmiths fan the coals to make a very hot flame in order to produce weapons that can be used in battles, but I am the one who has produced blacksmiths! And I am also the one who created people who destroy other people and cities.

Isaiah 54:17

No weapon that is formed against you will succeed

Enemies not succeeding against Yahweh's people is spoken of as if their weapons would not succeed against Yahweh's people. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Enemies may form weapons to attack you but they will not defeat you" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

This is the heritage of the servants of Yahweh

The reward that Yahweh will give to those who serve him is spoken of as if the reward were something they would inherit. (See: [Metaphor](#))

this is Yahweh's declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Translate as in [Isaiah 30:1](#). Alternate translation: "this is what Yahweh has declared" or "this is what I, Yahweh, have declared" (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

¹⁷ No weapon that is formed against you will succeed; and you will condemn everyone who accuses you. This {is} the heritage of the servants of Yahweh, and their vindication from me—this is Yahweh's declaration."

UST

¹⁷ You will not be defeated by soldiers using weapons that they have made to attack you, and when others try to accuse you, you will prove that they are wrong, and you will condemn them to punishment. That is the reward for the people who serve Yahweh. I will defend them and show everyone else that they are right to trust me; that is what I, Yahweh, promise."

Isaiah 55

Isaiah 55 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Gentiles

Many scholars believe this chapter prophesies that Gentiles will be able to come to a saving faith in Yahweh. At this time, the Israelites believed that only an Israelite could be saved. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [save](#), [saved](#), [safe](#), [salvation](#) and [faith](#))

Isaiah 55:1

General Information:

Yahweh speaks of blessing the people freely as if he were selling food and drink to needy people for free. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Connecting Statement:

Yahweh continues speaking to the people of Jerusalem in exile through Isaiah.

Come ... Come

The repetition of this word four times adds a sense of urgency to the invitation.

buy wine and milk without money and without cost

There is a sense of irony in this statement since a person usually has to use money to buy something. This emphasizes Yahweh's amazing grace in giving these things freely. (See: [Irony](#))

ULT

¹ "Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the water, and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

UST

¹ "Come here! All you people who are in exile, and listen to me! If you are thirsty, now is the time for you to come to me and get your water! Now those who had no money, you can come and buy wine and milk from me, the finest wine and the best milk! You can get what you need from me, and you can buy it now! You can buy it even though you do not have any money, and even though you could never afford it!

Isaiah 55:2

Why do you weigh out ... bread, and why do you labor ... satisfy?

Yahweh asks these questions to rebuke the people. He speaks of the people seeking happiness apart from Yahweh as if they were purchasing things to eat that were not food and working for things that could not satisfy them. Alternate translation: "You should not weigh out silver ... bread, and you should not labor ... satisfy" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Metaphor](#))

weigh out silver

This refers to counting silver coins in order to pay someone for something. Alternate translation: "pay money" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

for what is not bread

Here the word "bread" represents food in general. It is implied that the people were buying things to eat that were not really food. Alternate translation: "for things to eat that are not really food" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness

The people trusting Yahweh for blessing and happiness is spoken of as if they are eating good food that is making them happy. (See: [Metaphor](#))

in fatness

The word "fatness" refers to meat that has plenty of fat on it and is an idiom for fine food. Alternate translation: "with the best foods" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

² Why do you weigh out silver for {what is} not bread, and why do you labor for {what} does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness.

UST

² Why do you spend money to buy things that do not supply what you really need? Why do you work hard to get money to buy things that do not truly satisfy you? Pay attention to what I say and acquire what is really good! If you come to me, then in your heart you will truly be happy.

Isaiah 55:3

Turn your ears

Listening to or paying attention to someone is spoken of as if it were turning one's ears to someone. Alternate translation: "Pay attention" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ Turn your ears and come to me! Listen, that you may live! I will make an everlasting covenant with you—my reliable, faithful love that I promised to David.

UST

³ Listen to me and come to me; pay attention to me, and if you do that, you will have new life within you. I will make a covenant with you that will last forever to faithfully love you like my love for King David.

Isaiah 55:4

I have placed him

This could mean: (1) this refers to what Yahweh did for King David in the past or (2) it refers to what God will do through one of David's descendants.

ULT

⁴ Look, I have placed him {as} a witness to the nations, as a leader and commander to the peoples.

UST

⁴ By what he did, I showed my power to many people groups; I caused him to be a leader and commander over the people of many nations.

Isaiah 55:5

the Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

ULT

⁵ Look, you will call to a nation that you did not know; and a nation that did not know you will run to you because of Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you.”

UST

⁵ And similarly, you will summon people of other nations to come to you, nations that previously you have not heard about, and they had not heard about you; and they will come to you quickly because they will have heard that I, Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, have honored you.

Isaiah 55:6

Seek Yahweh while he may be found

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Seek Yahweh while you can still find him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁶ Seek Yahweh while he may be found; call on him while he is nearby.

UST

⁶ Seek to know Yahweh while it is still possible for you to do that; call to Yahweh while he is near!

Isaiah 55:7

Let the wicked leave his path

The word “wicked” refers to wicked people. Yahweh speaks of wicked people no longer sinning as if they were to stop walking along a path that they had been traveling. Alternate translation: “Let wicked people change the way they live” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#) and [Metaphor](#))

the man of sin his thoughts

The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: “let the sinful man leave his thoughts” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

his thoughts

This could mean: (1) “the way he thinks” or (2) “his plans”

he will pity him

Alternate translation: “Yahweh will pity him”

to our God

The verb may be supplied from the first phrase in this sentence. Alternate translation: “let him return to our God” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

⁷ Let the wicked leave his path, and the man of sin his thoughts. Let him return to Yahweh, and he will pity him, and to our God, who will abundantly forgive him.

UST

⁷ Wicked people should abandon their wicked behavior, and evil people should stop thinking what is evil. They should turn to Yahweh, and if they do that, he will act mercifully toward them; they should turn to Yahweh, their God, because he will fully pardon them for all the wicked things that they have done.

Isaiah 55:8

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁸ “For my thoughts {are} not your thoughts, nor {are} your ways my ways —this is Yahweh’s declaration—

UST

⁸ Yahweh declares that what he thinks is not the same as what you think, and what he does is very different from what you do.

Isaiah 55:9

**for as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways, and
my thoughts than your thoughts**

Yahweh speaks of the things that he does and how he thinks as being far superior to or higher than what people do and think, just like the sky is much higher than the earth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ for {as} the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

UST

⁹ Just as you people on the earth can never reach the sky, the thoughts of Yahweh are that much higher than the way you think. His ways are always different from what you do. And so, you can be sure that you can never fully understand the way Yahweh thinks or know the reasons for what Yahweh does.

Isaiah 55:10

For as the rain and snow ... do not return there

This is likely a description of the rain and snow evaporating.

ULT

¹⁰ For as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return there unless they saturate the earth and make it produce and sprout and give seed to the farmer who sows and bread to the eater,

UST

¹⁰ Yahweh sends the rain and snow down from the sky, and they water the ground. When the ground becomes moist, it causes plants to sprout and grow, with the result that the soil produces seed for the farmer to plant and grain to produce flour to make bread for people to eat.

Isaiah 55:11

so also my word ... it will achieve the purpose for which I sent it

Yahweh speaks of his word as if it were a person whom he sends out as his messenger to accomplish a task. (See: [Personification](#) and [Metaphor](#))

my word will be that goes from my mouth

Here the word “mouth” represents Yahweh himself. Alternate translation: “the word that I speak” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

it will not return to me empty

Here the description of the word returning to Yahweh means that it has completed the task that Yahweh had sent it to complete. That it will not return “empty” means that it will not fail to accomplish its task. Alternate translation: “it will not fail to complete its task” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹¹ so also my word will be that goes from my mouth—it will not return to me empty, but it will achieve {the purpose} for which I sent it.

UST

¹¹ And similarly, the things that I promise to do, I will always cause to happen; my promises will always come true. They will accomplish the things for which I spoke them.

Isaiah 55:12

be led along peacefully

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will lead you along peacefully" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the mountains and the hills will break out in joyful shouts before you, and all the trees of the fields will clap their hands

Yahweh speaks of the mountains, hills, and trees as if they were people with voices and hands, celebrating as Yahweh rescues his people. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

¹² For you will go out in joy and be led along peacefully; the mountains and the hills will break out in joyful shouts before you, and all the trees of the fields will clap {their} hands.

UST

¹² This is why you will leave Babylon joyfully; you will have peace as Yahweh leads you out. It will be as though the hills and mountains sang joyfully, and the trees in the fields clapped their hands.

Isaiah 55:13

Instead of the thornbushes, the cypress will grow; and instead of the brier, the myrtle tree will grow

The words “thornbushes” and “brier” refer to species of plants that have sharp thorns growing on them. The words “cypress” and “myrtle” refer to species of evergreen trees. The thorny plants symbolize desolation, while the evergreens symbolize life and prosperity. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

for his name

Here the word “name” represents Yahweh’s fame. Alternate translation: “for his fame” or “for his honor” (See: [Metonymy](#))

that will not be cut off

Something ceasing to exist is spoken of as if it were cut off, as a branch is cut off of a tree or a piece of fabric is cut off of clothing. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “that will never end” or “that will last forever” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹³ Instead of the thornbushes, the cypress will grow; and instead of the brier, the myrtle tree will grow, and it will be for Yahweh, for his name, as an everlasting sign that will not be cut off.”

UST

¹³ Instead of thornbushes and briers, pine trees and myrtle trees will grow in your land. As a result of that, people will honor Yahweh much more; and what Yahweh does will cause everyone to remember what he has promised, and they will honor him.”

Isaiah 56

Isaiah 56 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Gentiles

Many scholars believe this chapter prophesies that Gentiles will be able to come to a saving faith in Yahweh. At this time, the Israelites believed that only an Israelite could be saved. (See: [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [save](#), [saved](#), [safe](#), [salvation](#) and [faith](#))

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Beasts

The Israelites are compared to beasts and dogs in this chapter. This would have been very offensive to them. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Isaiah 56:1

for my salvation is near, and my righteousness is about to be revealed.

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will soon save you and show you that I am righteous" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹ This is what Yahweh says, "Observe what is right, do what is just; for my salvation {is} near, and my righteousness is about to be revealed."

UST

¹ Yahweh says to all the people of Judah, "Do the things that are fair and right, because I will soon come to rescue you; I will soon show everyone that you have been right to trust me."

Isaiah 56:2

who holds it tightly

Here “holds it tightly” is an idiom that means to continue to observe something. Alternate translation: “who is careful to always do this” (See: [Idiom](#))

keeps his hand from doing any evil

Here the “hand” represents the whole person and emphasizes the person’s actions or behaviors. Alternate translation: “does not do evil things” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

² Blessed {is} the man {that} does this, and {who} holds it tightly. He observes the Sabbath, not defiling it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”

UST

² I will bless those who faithfully obey my laws about the Sabbath days. I will bless those who keep sacred my Sabbath days, and who do not do any work on those days, and who refrain from doing anything that is evil.

Isaiah 56:3

See, I am a dry tree

This means eunuchs may have thought they could not be a part of God's people because they were deformed by castration (and for this reason could not have children). Israelites did not practice castration; foreigners did, sometimes for punishment. Eunuchs who had accepted the Hebrew faith knew that normally they were not allowed to worship in the temple (Deut. 23:1). The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³ Let no foreigner who has become a follower of Yahweh say, "Yahweh will certainly exclude me from his people." The eunuch should not say, "See, I {am} a dry tree."

UST

³ Foreigners who have believed in me should not say, 'Yahweh will surely not allow me to belong to his people.' And eunuchs should not say, 'Because I am deformed and unable to have children, I cannot belong to Yahweh; I am like a tree that has completely withered.'

Isaiah 56:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴ For this is what Yahweh says, “To the eunuchs who observe my Sabbaths and choose what pleases me, and hold fast my covenant,

UST

⁴ They should not say that, because I, Yahweh, say this to the eunuchs who obey my laws about the Sabbath, and who choose to do the things that please me, and who obey all the other laws of the covenant that I made with the Israelite people:

Isaiah 56:5

in my house and within my walls

These two phrases mean the same thing. Alternate translation: “inside the walls of my temple” (See: [Doublet](#))

that will never be cut off

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “that will never end” or “that will never be forgotten” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ to them I will set up in my house and within my walls a monument that is better than having sons and of daughters. I will give them an everlasting monument that will never be cut off.

UST

⁵ I will cause people to put inside the walls of my temple a monument to them; because of that monument, they will be honored more than they would have if they had children; they will be honored forever.

Isaiah 56:6

who love the name of Yahweh

Yahweh's "name" represents himself. Alternate translation: "who love Yahweh" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ Also foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh— to serve him, and who love the name of Yahweh, to worship him, every one who observes the Sabbath and who keeps from defiling it, and who holds fast my covenant—

UST

⁶ I will also bless those who are not Israelites who join themselves to me, who serve me and worship and love me, who obey my laws about the Sabbath, and who faithfully obey all the other laws of the covenant that I made with the Israelite people.

Isaiah 56:7

holy mountain

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 11:9](#).

will be accepted on my altar

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will accept on my altar" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

my house will be called a house of prayer

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "my house will be a house of prayer" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁷ I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices {will be} accepted on my altar. For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations,

UST

⁷ I will bring them to my sacred hill in Jerusalem, and cause them to be very joyful in my temple where people pray to me, and I will accept the sacrifices that they burn on my altar and other sacrifices that they offer, because my temple will be a building where people of all nations pray to me.

Isaiah 56:8

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁸ this is the declaration of the Lord Yahweh, who gathers the outcasts of Israel— I will still gather {others} in addition to them.”

UST

⁸ I, Yahweh, the Lord, the one who will bring back the people of Israel who have been forced to go to other countries, say this: I will bring from other countries many more people to join those Israelites whom I have brought back.”

Isaiah 56:9

All you wild beasts of the field, come and devour, all you beasts in the forest

God is calling armies of other nations by comparing them to animals to come and attack the people of Israel. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ All you wild beasts of the field, come and devour, all you beasts in the forest!

UST

⁹ "You surrounding nations have armies that are like animals in the forest; come and attack Israel!

Isaiah 56:10

All their watchmen are blind

This means Israel's leaders cannot or perhaps do not want to see what is going on in society.

They are all silent dogs

The leaders are supposed to open their mouths and warn the people, but they do not. Comparing someone to a dog in this society is a great insult. (See: [Metaphor](#))

They dream, and lying down they love to sleep

This means the leaders are not bringing God's word of warning to Israel but prefer their own comfort.

ULT

¹⁰ All their watchmen {are} blind, they do not understand. They {are} all silent dogs who cannot bark. They dream, and lying down they love to sleep.

UST

¹⁰ The Israelite leaders should be like watchdogs to protect the people, but it is as though they were blind. They understand nothing. They are all like dogs that cannot bark. Good watchdogs bark when strangers approach, but the Israelite leaders do not warn the people that their enemies are coming. Instead, they just want to lie down and sleep and dream.

Isaiah 56:11

The dogs have big appetites

Yahweh continues comparing Israel's bad leaders to dogs. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 The dogs have big appetites; they can never get enough; {they are} shepherds without discernment; they have all turned to their own way, each one covetous for unjust gain.

UST

11 And they are like greedy dogs; they never get all that they want. They are supposed to lead the people, like good shepherds lead their flocks, but they are ignorant, and they each do whatever they want to do.

Isaiah 56:12

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹² "Come," {they say}, "let us drink wine and liquor. Tomorrow will be like today, a day great beyond measure."

UST

¹² They say to each other, 'Come, let us go and get some wine and other alcoholic drinks, and let us become drunk! And tomorrow we will enjoy drinking even more!'"

Isaiah 57

Isaiah 57 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Child sacrifice

This chapter references the killing of children. Some religions in the ancient Near East practiced the sacrificing of their children. This was considered evil by Yahweh. (See: [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Mocking

The people abandoned the worship of Yahweh in favor of other gods. When they needed help, he tells them to ask these false gods. This is mocking the power of the false gods and shows the people the uselessness of their worship of these gods. (See: [god](#), [false god](#), [goddess](#), [idol](#), [idolater](#), [idolatrous](#), [idolatry](#))

Isaiah 57:1

the people of covenant faithfulness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **faithfulness**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “faithful.” See how you translated “covenant faithfulness” in [Isaiah 16:5](#). Alternate translation: “the people who are faithful to the covenant” or “the people who are faithful” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

are gathered away ... is gathered away

“die and go away ... dies and goes away” (See: [Euphemism](#))

that the righteous is gathered away from the evil

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “that the righteous people die, and Yahweh takes them away from all that is evil” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹ The righteous perish, but no one considers it, and the people of covenant faithfulness are gathered away, but no one understands that the righteous is gathered away from the evil.

UST

¹ Righteous people die, and no one is concerned about it. Godly people die, and no one understands why. God takes them away in order that they will not endure more calamities,

Isaiah 57:2

He enters into peace

Alternate translation: "The righteous enter into peace"

they rest

they die (See: [Euphemism](#))

those who walk in their uprightness

Alternate translation: "those who have done what is right"

ULT

² He enters into peace; they rest in their beds, those who walk {in} their uprightness.

UST

² and now they have peace. They lived righteously, and now they rest peacefully in their graves.

Isaiah 57:3

But come here

God is calling all of the unfaithful people to come before him so he can judge them in a strong contrast to the promises for the righteous that came before.

sons of the sorceress

This is a strong insult against the people who practice sorcery because sorcery and magic includes idolatry. (See: [Metaphor](#))

children of the adulterer and the woman who has prostituted herself

This refers to actual and spiritual adultery. They have abandoned the worship of God and now worship other gods and idols along with actual prostitution in pagan Canaanite ceremonies.

ULT

³ But come here, you sons of the sorceress, children of the adulterer and the woman who has prostituted herself.

UST

³ Yahweh says, "But you who practice sorcery, come here! You who worship idols, listen to me!

Isaiah 57:4

Whom are you merrily mocking? Against whom are you opening the mouth and sticking out the tongue?

Yahweh uses questions to scold the people who are mocking him through false worship. Alternate translation: "You are mocking me and making fun of me by opening your mouth wide and sticking out the tongue!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Are you not children of rebellion, children of deceit?

Yahweh uses another question to scold the people. This does not refer to their birth but to their spiritual state. Alternate translation: "You are children of rebellion, children of deceit!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁴ Whom are you merrily mocking?
Against whom are you opening the
mouth {and} sticking out the tongue?
{Are} you not children of rebellion,
children of deceit?

UST

⁴ Do you realize whom you are
ridiculing, and whom you are insulting?
Do you realize to whom you are sticking
out your tongues? You are insulting me,
Yahweh! You are always rebelling
against me and always lying, just like
your ancestors.

Isaiah 57:5

You heat yourselves ... under the rocky overhangs

All of these actions are associated with worshiping idols. The oaks were sacred trees to the Canaanites. People thought such activity would increase fertility for people and the land. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁵ You heat yourselves up sleeping together under the oaks, under every green tree, you who kill your children in the dry riverbeds, under the rocky overhangs.

UST

⁵ You are eager to sleep together under every tall green tree where you worship your gods. You kill your children as sacrifices to your idols in the dry riverbeds, and offer them as sacrifices to your idols in the rocky caves.

Isaiah 57:6

that have been assigned to you

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. The exact meaning in Hebrew is unclear. Alternate translation: “that is your lot” or “that is your inheritance” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

In these things should I take pleasure?

Yahweh uses a question to scold the people. Alternate translation: “Certainly, these things do not please me.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁶ Among the smooth {things} of the river valley {are} the things that have been assigned to you. They {are} the object of your devotion. You pour out your drink offering to them and raise up a grain offering. In these things should I take pleasure?

UST

⁶ You take big smooth stones from the riverbeds and worship them as your gods. You pour out wine to be an offering to them, and you bring grain to burn for an offering to them. Do you think that I enjoy all those things?

Isaiah 57:7

You prepared your bed

This refers to sleeping with prostitutes as a part of worshiping false gods. (See: [Euphemism](#))

on a high mountain

People often went on top of hills and mountains to worship false gods. They thought those were the best places for worship. This might even refer to Jerusalem, too. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁷ You prepared your bed on a high mountain; you also went up there to offer sacrifices.

UST

⁷ You sleep with idols' prostitutes on every hill and mountain, and you go there to offer sacrifices to your gods.

Isaiah 57:8

You made a covenant with them

Alternate translation: "You made a contract with them"

ULT

⁸ Behind the door and the doorposts you set up your symbols; you deserted me, made yourselves naked, and went up; you made your bed wide. You made {a covenant} with them; you loved their beds; you saw {their} private parts.

UST

⁸ You have put charms behind your doors and doorposts, and you have deserted me. You have taken off your clothes and climbed into your bed, and invited more of your lovers to come to bed with you. You have paid them to sleep with you, and you have looked at their private parts.

Isaiah 57:9

you went down to Sheol

The people did not literally go to Sheol, the world of the dead. Instead, Yahweh is indicating by exaggeration that the people were willing to go anywhere to find new gods to worship. (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

⁹ You went to Molech with oil; you multiplied perfumes. ^[1] You send your ambassadors far away; you went down to Sheol.

UST

⁹ You have given fragrant oil and lots of perfume to kings, and you sent representatives to distant countries to look for other gods to worship; you even tried to send messengers to the place of the dead to search for new gods.

Isaiah 57:10

You found life in your hand

After trying so hard, the idolators found they still had strength to keep going. Here "hand" equals "strength" or "capacity." (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

10 You were tired from your long journey, {but} you never said, "It is hopeless." You found life in your hand; therefore you did not weaken.

UST

10 You became weary because of doing all those things, but you never said, 'It is useless for us to do that.' You found new strength for worshiping idols, so you continued to do so.

Isaiah 57:11

Whom are you worried about? Whom do you fear so much that has caused you to act so deceitfully ... about me?

Yahweh uses these questions to scold the people. Alternate translation: "You must really fear these idols for you to act so deceitfully ... about me!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

so much that you would not remember me or think about me

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize that, although the people should have remembered Yahweh, they did not. (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

¹¹ "Whom are you worried about? Whom do you fear so much that has caused you to act so deceitfully, so much that you would not remember me or think about me? {Because} I was silent for so long, you are no longer afraid of me.

UST

¹¹ Was it because you were afraid of those idols more than you were afraid of me that you lied about what you were doing, and you do not even think about me? Was it because I did not punish you for a long time that you are not afraid of me?

Isaiah 57:12

I will proclaim all your righteous acts and tell all that you have done

Yahweh is being sarcastic, calling their evil deeds so-called righteousness. (See: [Irony](#))

ULT

¹² I will proclaim all your righteous acts and tell all that you have done, but they will not help you.

UST

¹² You think that the things that you have done are right, but I will tell you the truth: It will not help you to do any of those things.

Isaiah 57:13

let your collection of idols rescue you

Yahweh is mocking the people and their idols. He tells the idols to save the people though he knows they cannot. (See: [Irony](#))

the wind will carry them all away, a breath will carry them all away

This is saying the same thing in two ways to emphasize that idols are helpless and worthless. Alternate translation: “the wind, or even a breath, will blow them away” (See: [Parallelism](#))

holy mountain

The “holy mountain” is Mount Zion, in Jerusalem. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 11:9](#).

ULT

13 When you cry out, let your collection {of idols} rescue you. Instead the wind will carry {them} all away, a breath will carry them all away. Yet he who takes refuge in me will inherit the land and will take possession of my holy mountain.

UST

13 When you cry out for help to your collection of idols, they will not rescue you. The wind will blow them away; a single breath will carry them all away. But those who trust in me will live in the land of Israel, and they will worship me on Zion, my sacred hill.”

Isaiah 57:14

Build, build! Clear a way! Remove all the stumbling blocks from the path of my people

Yahweh is emphatic and urgent that a clear and level road be available for the people to return to him and free of obstacles to worshiping Yahweh. This echoes [Isaiah 40:3](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁴ He will say, 'Build, build! Clear a way! Remove all the stumbling blocks from the path of my people!'"

UST

¹⁴ Yahweh will say, "Prepare yourselves to receive me, like people build and prepare a road for a king to come on. Get rid of the things that are causing you to sin.

Isaiah 57:15

For this is what the high and elevated One says

The words “high” and “elevated” have basically the same meaning here and emphasize Yahweh being exalted. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 6:1](#) and [Isaiah 33:10](#). See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 52:13](#).

to revive the spirit of the humble ones, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize that Yahweh will strengthen and encourage those who humble themselves before him. (See: [Parallelism](#))

spirit ... heart

Here these refer to a person’s thoughts and emotions, not the spirit and heart literally. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁵ For this is what the high and elevated One says, who lives eternally, whose name {is} holy, “I live in the exalted and holy {place}, with him also {that} is of a crushed and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble ones, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

UST

¹⁵ Because this is what I say—I, Yahweh, who am holy and honored more than anyone else, and who live forever: I live in the highest heaven, where everything is holy, but I also am with those who are humble and who are sorry for the sinful things that they have done. I will greatly encourage those who have repented.

Isaiah 57:16

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁶ For I will not accuse forever, nor will I be angry forever, for then man's spirit would faint before me, the lives {that} I have made.

UST

¹⁶ I will not accuse people forever; I will not always be angry with them, because if I did that, people would become weak; all the people whom I created and caused to live would die.

Isaiah 57:17

I hid my face

This means God gave up on his people and no longer helped or blessed them. (See: [Idiom](#))

he went backward in the way of his heart

This means the Israelites kept rejecting the true God for false ones. Here “backward” and “way” are location words representing motivations and feelings. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

17 Because of the sin of his violent gain, I was angry, and I punished him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went backward in the way of his heart.

UST

17 I was angry with my people because they sinned by taking with force what belonged to others. Because I was angry, I punished them and turned away from them, but they continued sinning.

Isaiah 57:18

his ways

“their ways.” Here “his” refers to the people of Israel.

comfort and console those who mourn for him

Alternate translation: “I will soothe and calm those who feel sad for the people’s suffering because of their sinful behavior”

ULT

18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him. I will lead him and comfort and console those who mourn for him,

UST

18 I have seen the evil things that they continually do, but I will restore them and lead them. I will encourage them. As for those who are mourning,

Isaiah 57:19

I create the fruit of the lips

Here “fruit of the lips” refers to what a person says. Alternate translation: “I cause them to praise and thank me” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Peace, peace, to those who are far off

“I have made peace with them who are far off.” The word “Peace” is repeated for emphasis.

ULT

19 and I create the fruit of the lips.
Peace, peace, to {those who are} far off
and to {those who are near}—says
Yahweh—I will heal them.

UST

19 I will enable them to sing songs to
praise me. I will restore all my people,
those who live near Jerusalem and
those who live far away, and I will cause
things to go well for them.

Isaiah 57:20

But the wicked are like the tossing sea ... mire and mud

This compares the wicked to rough water on the shore that makes the water dirty. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

²⁰ But the wicked {are} like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, and its waters churn up mire and mud.

UST

²⁰ Wicked people do not have peace in their inner beings; they are like a sea whose waves are always churning up mud,

Isaiah 57:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ {There is} no peace for the wicked one—says God.”

UST

²¹ and I, Yahweh, say that things will never go well for those who are evil.”

Isaiah 58

Isaiah 58 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Fasting

The practice of fasting became more common after the exile. This was intended to bring people into a right relationship with God by creating a designated time to concentrate on him. It may have been believed that Yahweh heard people better when they fasted. The significance of fasting is derived from the faster's attitude of repentance and faith in Yahweh and not the practice itself. (See: [repent](#), [repentance](#) and [faith](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

“Yet they seek me daily”

The people did not truly seek Yahweh every day. They practiced the outward aspects of the Jewish religion, but their hearts were far from Yahweh. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Isaiah 58:1

Lift up your voice like a trumpet

This means shout loudly. Here “your” refers to Isaiah. (See: [Simile](#) and [Forms of You](#))

Confront my people with their rebellion, and the house of Jacob with their sins

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Together they strengthen the urgency to confront Yahweh’s people. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹ “Cry loudly; do not hold back. Lift up your voice like a trumpet. Confront my people with their rebellion, and the house of Jacob with their sins.

UST

¹ Yahweh said to me, “Shout loudly! Shout like a loud trumpet! Shout to warn my Israelite people about their sins!

Isaiah 58:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² Yet they seek me daily and delight in the knowledge of my ways, like a nation that practiced righteousness and did not abandon the law of their God. They ask me for righteous judgments; they take pleasure in the thought of God coming near.

UST

² They worship me every day; they come to my temple because they say that they are eager to know what I want them to do. They act as though they were a nation that does things that are righteous, that would never abandon the commands of me, their God. They request me to decide matters justly, and they are eager that I should come to them.

Isaiah 58:3

‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘but you do not see it? Why have we humbled ourselves, but you do not notice?’

The people of Israel use questions to complain to God because they feel he is ignoring them. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

³ ‘Why have we fasted,’ {they say,} ‘but you do not see it? {Why} have we humbled ourselves, but you do not notice?’ Look, on the day of your fast you find your own pleasure and oppress all your laborers.

UST

³ They say, ‘We have fasted to please you, but you did not notice our doing that. We humbled ourselves, but you did not pay any attention!’ I will tell you why I did not pay attention. It is because when you fast, you do it only to please yourselves, and you act cruelly toward all your workers.

Isaiah 58:4

Look

“Behold!” or “Pay attention.” Yahweh confronts their questioning by telling them to pay attention.

fist of wickedness

“wicked fist.” This shows that they fight viciously. “Fist” represents anger that is physically violent. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ Look, you fast to quarrel and fight, and to hit with your fist of wickedness; {you do} not fast today to make your voice heard above.

UST

⁴ You fast, but you also quarrel and fight with each other with your fists. Doing things like that while you fast will certainly not cause me to hear your prayers where I am, high in heaven.

Isaiah 58:5

Is this really the kind of fast that I would want ... under himself?

Yahweh uses a question to scold the people. They act like they are humble before God, but they are hurting other people. Alternate translation: "This is not the kind of fast I want ... under himself." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

A day for anybody to humble himself, for him to bow down his head like a reed

This means the person is bowing down, but he is not truly humble. "A reed" represents a weak plant that bends easily. (See: [Simile](#))

Do you really call this a fast, a day that pleases Yahweh?

Yahweh uses a question to scold the people. Alternate translation: "Surely you do not think this kind of fast pleases me!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁵ {Is this} really the kind of fast that I would want: A day for anybody to humble himself, for him to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under himself? Do you really call this a fast, a day that pleases Yahweh?

UST

⁵ You bow your heads like the tops of reeds bend when the wind blows, and you wear rough clothes and cover your heads with ashes like people do when they are grieving. That is what you do when you are fasting, but do you really think that will please me?

Isaiah 58:6

Is not this the fast that I choose ... break every yoke?

Yahweh uses a question to teach the people about the kind of fast that pleases him. Alternate translation: "This is the fast that I choose ... break every yoke." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

To release wicked bonds, to undo the ropes of the yoke, to set the crushed ones free, and to break every yoke

All of these phrases mean they should help those people whom the wicked are hurting and oppressing. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁶ {Is} not this the fast that I choose: To release wicked bonds, to undo the ropes of the yoke, to set the crushed ones free, and to break every yoke?

UST

⁶ No, that is not the kind of fasting that I desire. Instead you should seek to free those who have been unjustly put in prison, and encourage those who are treated cruelly; and free those who have been oppressed in any way.

Isaiah 58:7

Is it not to ... your house?

Yahweh uses another question to teach the people. Alternate translation: "It is to ... your house." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

break your bread

This phrase represents starting the meal by the host tearing the loaf of bread apart. (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁷ {Is it} not to break your bread with the hungry and to bring the poor and homeless into your house?" When you see someone naked, you should clothe him; and you should not hide yourself from your own relatives.

UST

⁷ Share your food with those who are hungry and to allow those who have no houses to stay in your houses. Give clothes to those who do not have clothes, and do not hide yourself from your relatives who need help from you.

Isaiah 58:8

Then your light would be broken open like the sunrise

“Break open” here is an idiom that means when a light begins to shine brightly. This means that if they help people in need, their deeds will be like lights others will see, as when the sun comes up after a dark night. Or the light may refer to the light of the Lord, shining on them and blessing them. (See: [Idiom](#) and [Metaphor](#))

your healing would quickly sprout up

This means God will bless and restore them quickly, as a wound heals quickly. (See: [Metaphor](#))

your righteousness would go before you, and the glory of Yahweh would be your rearguard

This refers to the time when God protected the people of Israel as they escaped from Egypt. This means God will again protect them from their enemies if they will do what is right.

your righteousness

This expression in Hebrew can also be interpreted as the one who gives righteousness or even victory. In this context, this expression would refer to God. A few modern versions have this interpretation.

ULT

⁸ Then your light would be broken open like the sunrise, and your healing would quickly sprout up; your righteousness would go before you, and the glory of Yahweh would be your rearguard.

UST

⁸ If you do those things, what you do for others will be like a light that shines when it dawns. The troubles that have been caused by your sins will end quickly. Others will know about your righteous behavior, and the glorious presence of Yahweh will protect you from behind like I protected the Israelite people when they left Egypt.

Isaiah 58:9

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁹ Then you would call, and Yahweh would answer; you would cry out for help, and he would say, "Here I {am.}" If you take away from among yourselves the yoke, the accusing finger, and the speech of wickedness,

UST

⁹ Then you will call out to me, and I will quickly answer and say, 'I am here to help you.' Stop oppressing people; stop falsely accusing people; and stop saying evil things about people.

Isaiah 58:10

**then your light will rise in the darkness, and
your darkness will be like the noonday**

“Your light” represents the acts of kindness that will be examples to everyone, and the “darkness,” the bad deeds, will be overcome by their good deeds. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁰ {if} you yourselves provide for the hungry and satisfy the need of the distressed; then your light will rise in the darkness, and your darkness will {be} like the noonday.

UST

¹⁰ Give food to those who are hungry, and give to people who are afflicted the things that they need. Your doing that will be like a light that shines in the darkness; instead of doing evil to people, the good things you do for people will be like the sunshine at noontime.

Isaiah 58:11

satisfy you in regions where there is no water

“Water” represents all they need for an abundant life even when their surroundings do not have enough. (See: [Metaphor](#))

You will be like a watered garden

“A watered garden” represents abundance and plenty so they will have all they need. (See: [Simile](#))

like a spring of water, whose waters never fail

“A spring of water” represents a source of abundance in a land where water is precious. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

11 Then Yahweh will lead you continually and satisfy you in regions where there is no water, and he will strengthen your bones. You will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

UST

11 Yahweh will guide you continually, and he will give you good things to satisfy you. He will enable you to remain strong and healthy. You will be like a garden that is well watered, like a spring that never dries up.

Isaiah 58:12

you will be called

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “people will call you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

12 Some of you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the ruins of many generations; you will be called “The repairer of the wall,” “The restorer of streets to live on.”

UST

12 Your people will rebuild the cities that were destroyed long ago; they will build houses on top of the old foundations. People will say that you are the ones who are repairing the holes in the city walls, and who are repairing the streets where people live.

Isaiah 58:13

you turn back your feet from traveling on the Sabbath day, and from doing your own pleasure on my holy day

Here the people are represented by their “feet.” God did not allow long travels or work on the day of rest. Alternate translation: “you stop traveling and doing what you want to do on the Sabbath, my holy day” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹³ Suppose that you turn back your feet from traveling on the Sabbath day, and {from} doing your own pleasure on my holy {day}. Suppose that you call the Sabbath a delight, and that you call the matters of Yahweh holy and honored. Suppose that you honor the Sabbath by leaving your own business, and by not finding your own pleasure and by not speaking {your own} words.

UST

¹³ Do not travel on the Sabbath days, and on Sabbath days do not do only the things that you delight to do. Enjoy the Sabbath days, and consider them to be delightful. The Sabbath days are my holy days. Honor me, Yahweh, in everything that you do on the Sabbath days. Do not talk about and do things to please yourselves. If you do all the things that I have just now told you to do; listen, and I will tell you what I will do for you.

Isaiah 58:14

I will make you ride on the heights of the earth

This refers to God exalting the nation in reputation and power in response to living righteously. (See: [Metaphor](#))

for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken

The word “mouth” symbolizes what Yahweh says. Alternate translation: “for Yahweh has spoken it” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹⁴ “Then you will find delight in Yahweh; and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you from the inheritance of Jacob your father—for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.”

UST

¹⁴ I will enable you to be joyful. I will greatly honor you; it will be as though you were riding with me above the highest mountains! I will give to you the blessings that I gave to your ancestor Jacob. Those things will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

Isaiah 59

Isaiah 59 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Yahweh's deliverance

When Israel was conquered, they were being punished for their sin. Yahweh is strong enough to deliver them, but he did not because he desired to refine them through the experience of the exile. (See: [deliver](#), [hand over](#), [turn over](#), [release](#), [rescue](#) and [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#))

Isaiah 59:1

Look

“Behold!” or “You should know!” Yahweh tells the people to pay attention.

Yahweh’s hand is not so short

“Hand” represents power and ability. A “short” hand does not have power and ability. Alternate translation: “Yahweh is fully able” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ Look, Yahweh’s hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor his ear so dull, that it cannot hear.

UST

¹ Listen to this! Yahweh’s power is not too little to rescue you. He has not become deaf; he can still hear you when you call to him for help.

Isaiah 59:2**your ... you**

These plural pronouns refer to the people of Israel as a single group. (See: [Forms of You](#))

your sins have made him hide his face from you

“Face” represents being present and looking upon. Alternate translation: “your sins have made him turn away from you” (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

² Your sinful acts, however, have separated you from your God, and your sins have made him hide {his} face from you and from hearing you.

UST

² But you have separated yourselves from your God by the sins that you have committed. Because of your sins, he has turned away from you, with the result that he does not pay attention to what you request him to do.

Isaiah 59:3

For your hands are stained with blood and your fingers with sin

Here “hands” and “fingers” refers to their actions. This means they are guilty of doing violent and sinful things. “Your” is plural. Alternate translation: “For you have committed violent sins” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Forms of You](#))

Your lips speak lies and your tongue speaks maliciously

The parts of the body that make speech represent what people say. Alternate translation: “You speak lies and malicious things” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³ For your hands are stained with blood and your fingers with sin. Your lips speak lies and your tongue speaks maliciously.

UST

³ You do violent things to others, with the result that your hands are stained with their blood. You constantly tell lies, and you say evil things about others.

Isaiah 59:4

they conceive trouble and give birth to sin

“Conceiving” and “giving birth” emphasize how carefully they plan to do sinful things. Here “they” still refers to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: “they work hard to do sinful things” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ No one calls in righteousness, and none pleads his case in truth. They trust in empty {words}, and tell lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to sin.

UST

⁴ When you accuse someone in court, what you say is not fair and it is not true. You accuse people falsely; you depend on the lies you tell. You are constantly planning to cause trouble for others, and then you do those evil things that you planned.

Isaiah 59:5

They hatch eggs of a poisonous snake

Eggs of a poisonous snake hatch into more dangerous snakes. "Poisonous snakes" represents evil the people do that harms more and more. Alternate translation: "They make evil that spreads out to make more evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

weave a spider's web

This represents the deeds of the people that are useless. Alternate translation: "produce things and activities that are useless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Whoever eats of their eggs dies, and if an egg is crushed, it hatches into a poisonous snake

Eating a poisonous egg will kill the one that eats it and represents self-destruction. Breaking the egg allows the young poisonous snake to hatch and represents spreading destruction. Alternate translation: "The activities they do will destroy them and will spread destruction to others" (See: [Metaphor](#))

if an egg is crushed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "if someone crushes an egg" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ They hatch eggs of a poisonous snake and weave a spider's web. Whoever eats of their eggs dies, and if an egg is crushed, it hatches into a poisonous snake.

UST

⁵ What you plan to do to harm people is like the eggs a poisonous snake lays, like a web that a spider catches its victims in. Cobras will hatch from those eggs, and insects will fall into the spider's web.

Isaiah 59:6

Their webs cannot be used for garments, nor can they cover themselves with their works

This means their sinful deeds cannot be covered and hidden, just as a web cannot serve as clothing and cover someone. Alternate translation: "Their evil deeds will be exposed as useless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Their webs cannot be used for garments

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "They cannot clothe themselves with their webs" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

deeds of violence are in their hands

"Hands" represents the ability and power to do these things and therefore their responsibility. Alternate translation: "they are fully responsible for the violence they do" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ Their webs cannot be used for garments, nor can they cover themselves with their works. Their works {are} works of sin, and deeds of violence are in their hands.

UST

⁶ You cannot hide the evil deeds that you have done. You are constantly acting violently.

Isaiah 59:7

Their feet run to evil

Here people are represented by their “feet.” This speaks of them doing something quickly as their feet running to it. Alternate translation: “They are quick to do evil things” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

are their roads

“roads” represents their way of life. Alternate translation: “are all they do” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ Their feet run to evil, and they run to pour out innocent blood. Their thoughts {are} thoughts of sin; violence destruction {are} their roads.

UST

⁷ You are very quick to go and do evil deeds, and you hurry to murder people who are innocent. You are continually thinking about sinning. Wherever you go, you destroy things and cause people to suffer.

Isaiah 59:8

there is no justice in their paths

“paths” represents their way of life. Alternate translation: “they never do what is just” or “everything they do is unjust” (See: [Metaphor](#))

They have made crooked paths

“Crooked paths” represents the way of life that is corrupt. Alternate translation: “They say and do dishonest things. They are devious” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ The way of peace they do not know, and {there is} no justice in their paths. They have made crooked paths; whoever travels these paths does not know peace.

UST

⁸ You do not know how to act peacefully or to treat others fairly. You always are dishonest, and those who imitate your behavior never have any peace within themselves.

Isaiah 59:9

justice is far from us

Here “us” refers to Isaiah and the people of Israel. “Far” represents that justice is gone and difficult to get. Alternate translation: “justice is gone and very difficult to get” (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#) and [Metaphor](#))

We wait for light, but see darkness; we look for brightness, but we walk in darkness

Each of these phrases means that the people are waiting for God’s goodness, but it seems like he has abandoned them. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ Therefore justice is far from us, nor does righteousness reach us. We wait for light, but see darkness; we look for brightness, but we walk in darkness.

UST

⁹ Because of that, God does not rescue us from our enemies, it seems that he is not acting fairly toward us. We expect God to give us light, but all he gives us is darkness.

Isaiah 59:10

We grope for the wall like the blind ... like dead men

This means that because God is not coming to them, they feel helpless, not finding the right path and despairing of the future, with no hope for a vibrant life. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁰ We grope for the wall like the blind, like those who cannot see. We stumble at noonday as in the twilight; among the strong we are like dead men.

UST

¹⁰ We are like blind people who have to feel along the wall to be able to walk anywhere. We stumble and trip at noontime like we would when it is dark. We are like dead people who are among healthy people.

Isaiah 59:11

We growl like bears and moan like doves

These refer to the sounds the people made because they were distressed and mourning. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

11 We growl like bears and moan like doves; we wait for justice, but {there is} none; for rescue, but it is far from us.

UST

11 We growl like hungry bears; we continually moan like doves. We ask God to do what is just, but nothing happens. We want God to rescue us, but it seems that he is far away.

Isaiah 59:12

our many transgressions

Here “our” refers to Isaiah and the people of Israel. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

before you

Here “you” refers to Yahweh. (See: [Forms of You](#))

our sins testify against us

Isaiah describes the sins as a person who goes before God to declare that the people are guilty. (See: [Personification](#))

for our transgressions are with us

“With us” represents being aware of them. Alternate translation: “for we are aware of our transgressions” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² For our many transgressions are before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions {are} with us, and we know our sins.

UST

¹² But these things are happening because it is as though our sins are piled high in the presence of God, and it is they that testify against us. We cannot deny it; we know that we have done many wrong things.

Isaiah 59:13

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

13 We have rebelled, denying Yahweh and turning away from following our God. We have spoken extortion and turning aside, conceived complaining from the heart and words of lying.

UST

13 We know that we have rebelled against Yahweh; we have turned away from him. We oppress people by what we testify against them; we do not allow them to get what they have a right to get. We think about the lies that we can tell, and then we tell them.

Isaiah 59:14

Justice is driven back

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The people drive justice back" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Justice ... righteousness ... truth ... right

These are ideas that Isaiah describes as acting like persons. (See: [Personification](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

14 Justice is driven back, and righteousness stands far off; for truth stumbles in the public square, and right cannot come.

UST

14 In our courts, the judges do not decide cases fairly; no one is acting righteously. In plazas where people gather together, no one tells the truth; it seems that people are not allowed to say what is true.

Isaiah 59:15

Trustworthiness

Isaiah describes this idea as acting like a person. (See: [Personification](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Trustworthiness has gone away, and he {who} turns away from evil makes himself a victim. Yahweh saw {it} and was displeased that {there was} no justice.

UST

¹⁵ No one tells the truth, and people try to ruin the reputations of those who quit doing evil. Yahweh looked around, and he saw that no one was doing what is just; he was very displeased.

Isaiah 59:16

He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intervene.

Alternate translation: "Yahweh was appalled that no one came to help those who were suffering." or "Yahweh was astonished that no one came to help those who were suffering."

Therefore his own arm brought salvation for him

Yahweh's "arm" represents his ability and power. Alternate translation: "Yahweh used his own power to save the people" (See: [Metonymy](#))

his righteousness sustained him

"Righteousness" here is a quality that acts like a person. The word can be translated as an adjective. Alternate translation: "he did right as he always would do" (See: [Personification](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹⁶ He saw that {there was} no man, and wondered that {there was} no one to intervene. Therefore his own arm brought salvation for him, and his righteousness sustained him.

UST

¹⁶ He was disgusted when he saw that no one tried to help those who were being treated cruelly. So he used his own power to rescue them; it is because he is always righteous that he did that.

Isaiah 59:17

He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation upon his head. He clothed himself with garments of vengeance and wore zeal as a mantle

“breastplate,” “helmet,” “garments,” and “mantle” are clothing for war and fighting. Isaiah describes Yahweh as putting these on to punish his people. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#))

mantle

a loose, flowing robe

ULT

¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation upon his head. He clothed himself with garments of vengeance and wore zeal as a mantle.

UST

¹⁷ It is as though he were a soldier who put on his armor and a helmet; his continually doing what is right is like his armor, and his ability to rescue people is like his helmet. His being extremely angry and his being ready to get revenge on those who do evil are like his robes.

Isaiah 59:18

He repaid them

Isaiah is describing a future event as if it happened in the past. This means that it will certainly happen.

ULT

18 He repaid them for what {they} had done, angry judgment to his adversaries, vengeance to his enemies, to the islands punishment as their reward.

UST

18 He will repay his enemies for the evil things that they have done. He will severely punish even those who live far from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 59:19

fear the name of Yahweh

Here “name” refers to Yahweh’s reputation and character. Alternate translation: “fear Yahweh” (See: [Metonymy](#))

from the west ... from the sun’s rising

Isaiah combines these words to mean people in all places of the world. (See: [Merism](#))

for he will come as a rushing stream

Narrow valleys in Judah were dry most of the year until a sudden, heavy rain turned them into fast-moving water. When that happened there was a lot of noise and wind. (See: [Simile](#))

driven by the breath of Yahweh

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “which the breath of Yahweh drives” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

19 So they will fear the name of Yahweh from the west, and his glory from the sun’s rising; for he will come as a rushing stream, driven by the breath of Yahweh.

UST

19 When that happens, people everywhere, from the east to the west, will respect and honor Yahweh, because he will come like a rushing river that is pushed along by the strong wind that Yahweh sent.

Isaiah 59:20

this is Yahweh's declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Translate as in [Isaiah 30:1](#). Alternate translation: “this is what Yahweh has declared” or “this is what I, Yahweh, have declared” (See: [First](#), [Second](#) or [Third Person](#))

ULT

²⁰ “A redeemer will come to Zion and to those who turn from their rebellious deeds in Jacob—this is Yahweh’s declaration.

UST

²⁰ And Yahweh says that he will come to Jerusalem to free his people; he will come to rescue those in Judah who have stopped doing sinful things.

Isaiah 59:21

my words which I have put in your mouth

Alternate translation: “the message I have given you to speak”

ULT

²¹ As for me, this is my covenant with them—says Yahweh—my spirit who is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, will not leave your mouth, or go out of the mouth of your children, or go out of the mouth of your children’s children—says Yahweh—from this time and forever.”

UST

²¹ This is what Yahweh says to his people: “This is the covenant that I will make with you: My Spirit will not leave you, and you will always have my message. You will be able to declare it, and your children and grandchildren will be able to declare it forever.”

Isaiah 60

Isaiah 60 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Israel's restoration

This chapter pictures a time when Israel will be fully restored to Yahweh. They will be everything Yahweh intended them to be. All the nations will look to Israel and acknowledge her special relationship to Yahweh. (See: [restore](#), [restoration](#))

Isaiah 60:1

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of Yahweh has risen on you

This refers to the glorious things Yahweh has done for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They are now to show that glory through what they do and say and have hope in the future. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of Yahweh has risen on you.

UST

¹ You people of Jerusalem, stand up! Yahweh has done glorious things for you, and he has acted powerfully for you; so show others that he is very great!

Isaiah 60:2

Though darkness will cover the earth, and thick darkness the nations

Both of these phrases mean the same thing and are combined for emphasis. They refer to “spiritual darkness.” This means all the other people of the world will not know Yahweh or how to please him. This is a metaphor for divine judgment. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

yet Yahweh will arise upon you

This means the light of God’s presence will appear for the people of Israel, and it will show the way they should go. (See: [Metaphor](#))

his glory will be seen on you

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the people of the nations will see his glory on you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

² Though darkness will cover the earth, and thick darkness the nations; yet Yahweh will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen on you.

UST

² But spiritual darkness has covered all the other people groups on the earth, complete darkness, but Yahweh will show you how great he is, and other people will also see it.

Isaiah 60:3

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³ Nations will come to your light, and kings to your bright light that is rising.

UST

³ People of all people groups will see that he is very great by seeing what he has done for you, and kings will come to see the wonderful things that have happened to you.

Isaiah 60:4

General Information:

Here Yahweh begins speaking.

They all gather themselves

"They" refers to the rest of the people of Israel who will come together to return to Jerusalem.

your daughters will be carried in their arms

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "they will carry your daughters in their arms" or "they will carry your daughters on their hips" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁴ Look all around and see. They all gather themselves together and come to you. Your sons will come from far, and your daughters will be carried in their arms.

UST

⁴ Yahweh says, "Look around, and you will see the people who will be returning from exile! Your sons will come from distant countries; others will carry your little daughters home."

Isaiah 60:5

Then you will look and be radiant, and your heart shall rejoice and overflow

These phrases share similar meanings and emphasize that they will be very happy because of what will happen in Jerusalem. (See: [Parallelism](#))

the abundance of the sea

This refers to the riches and goods that will come to Jerusalem by way of shipping, perhaps from along the Mediterranean Sea.

be poured out to you

This describes that the abundance will be like water that gushes out. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Then you will look and be radiant, and your heart shall rejoice and overflow, because the abundance of the sea will be poured out to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you.

UST

⁵ When you look at this happening, you will be very joyful in your inner beings, because people will bring valuable goods to you from all around the world. They will bring valuable things from many nations in ships.

Isaiah 60:6

the dromedaries

Alternate translation: "the young camels"

Ephah

an area in Arabia (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

⁶ Camel caravans will cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all of them will come from Sheba; they will bring gold and frankincense, and will sing the praises of Yahweh.

UST

⁶ People will also bring valuable goods to you on herds of camels: camels from the Midian and Ephah areas of northern Arabia. And from Sheba in southern Arabia they will come, bringing gold and frankincense; they will all come to praise me, Yahweh.

Isaiah 60:7

Kedar ... Nebaioth

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

All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The people of Kedar will gather their flocks for you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the rams of Nebaioth will serve your needs

This refers to their need for sacrifices.

they will be acceptable offerings on my altar

Alternate translation: "I, Yahweh, will accept them on my altar"

ULT

⁷ All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve your needs; they will be acceptable offerings on my altar; and I will glorify my glorious house.

UST

⁷ They will bring flocks of sheep and goats from Kedar in northern Arabia and give them to you. They will bring rams from Nebaioth for you to sacrifice on my altars, and I will accept them happily. At that time I will cause my temple to be very beautifully decorated.

Isaiah 60:8

Who are these who fly along like a cloud, and like the doves to their shelters?

Yahweh uses questions and poetic images to draw attention here. He compares the sails of the ships to clouds and doves. This is also a picture of the Israelites returning to the country where they belong. Alternate translation: "Look, I see something like clouds moving quickly and like doves returning to their shelters." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

⁸ Who {are} these {who} fly along like a cloud, and like the doves to their shelters?

UST

⁸ And what are those things that are moving swiftly like clouds? They resemble pigeons returning to their nests.

Isaiah 60:9

The coastlands

This refers to the people who live on the coastlands and describes the area of coastlands as if it was people looking out. Alternate translation: “The people from the coastlands” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Personification](#))

the ships of Tarshish

This expression usually means large merchant ships suitable for long voyages.

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

he has honored you

Alternate translation: “Yahweh has honored you, the people of Israel”

ULT

⁹ The coastlands look for me, and the ships of Tarshish {lead}, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of Yahweh your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has honored you.

UST

⁹ But they are really ships from Tarshish that are bringing your people back here. When your people come, they will bring with them all the valuable possessions that they have acquired, and they will do that to honor me, Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, because I will have greatly honored you.

Isaiah 60:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁰ Sons of foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you; though in my wrath I punished you, yet in my favor I will have compassion on you.

UST

¹⁰ Foreigners will come and rebuild the walls of your cities, and their kings will serve you. Although I punished you because I was angry with you, these things will happen now because I will act mercifully toward you because I am kind.

Isaiah 60:11

they will not be shut day or night

Here “day” and “night” together mean “all the time.” If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “no one will ever shut them” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Merism](#))

so that the wealth of the nations may be brought, with their kings being led

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “so that the people of the nations may bring their wealth, along with their kings” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

11 Your gates also will remain open continually; they will not be shut day or night, so that the wealth of the nations may be brought, with their kings being led.

UST

11 The gates of your cities will be open during the day and also during the night, in order that people will be able to bring into your cities valuable things from many countries, with their kings being led to you in the processions.

Isaiah 60:12

those nations will be completely destroyed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I will completely destroy the people of those nations" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹² Indeed, nations and kingdoms that will not serve you will perish; {those} nations will be completely destroyed.

UST

¹² And the kingdoms and nations whose people refuse to allow you to rule them will be completely destroyed.

Isaiah 60:13

The glory of Lebanon

This refers to Lebanon being famous for its beautiful trees, especially cypress and cedar. The exact identification of all the trees is not known.

the place of my feet

This refers to Yahweh's temple. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

13 The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the cypress tree, the fir, and the cypress box tree together, to beautify my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of my feet.

UST

13 The glorious things in Lebanon will be brought to you— lumber from cypress trees and fir trees and pine trees— to be used to make my temple beautiful. When that is done, my temple will truly be glorious!

Isaiah 60:14

Holy One of Israel

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:4](#).

ULT

¹⁴ They will come to you to bow down, the sons of those who humbled you; they will bow at your feet; they will call you The City of Yahweh, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

UST

¹⁴ The descendants of those who oppressed you will come and bow down to you; those who despised you will prostrate themselves in front of your feet. They will say that your city on Mount Zion is the City of Yahweh, where the Holy One of Israel lives.

Isaiah 60:15

with no one passing through you

Alternate translation: “with everyone avoiding your land” or “with all the foreigners avoiding your land”

ULT

15 Instead of you remaining abandoned and hated, with no one passing through {you}, I will make you a thing of pride forever, a joy from generation to generation.

UST

15 Previously everyone hated you and ignored you, but now your city will be majestic forever; and I will cause you to be joyful forever.

Isaiah 60:16

You will also drink the milk of the nations, and will nurse at the breast of kings

This refers to the wealth and plenty that will be drained from foreign nations. Both clauses repeat the same idea for emphasis. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Parallelism](#))

Redeemer

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 41:14](#).

the Mighty One of Jacob

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 49:26](#).

ULT

¹⁶ You will also drink the milk of the nations, and will nurse at the breast of kings; you will know that I, Yahweh, {am} your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

UST

¹⁶ People of all nations and their kings will gladly bring their wealth to you. When that happens, you will realize that I truly am Yahweh, the one who saves you and rescues you from your enemies, and that I am the mighty one to whom you Israelite people belong.

Isaiah 60:17

instead of wood, bronze, and instead of stones, iron

Yahweh will give more valuable building materials to them now.
Alternate translation: “instead of wood, I will bring bronze, and instead of stones, I will bring iron” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

I will appoint peace as your governors, and justice your rulers

Yahweh describes “peace” and “justice” as human rulers. This means there will be complete peace and justice in the land of Israel. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

¹⁷ Instead of bronze I will bring gold, instead of iron I will bring silver; instead of wood, bronze, and instead of stones, iron. I will appoint peace as your governors, and justice your rulers.

UST

¹⁷ Instead of metals that are not valuable, like bronze and iron, I will bring to you silver and gold. Instead of wood and stones, I will bring you bronze and iron for your buildings. There will be peace in your country, and your rulers will do what is fair.

Isaiah 60:18

Violence will no longer be heard in your land

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "There will no longer be reports of violence in your land" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

but you will call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise

The physical objects have the names of spiritual qualities. The city of Jerusalem will be a safe place, and the people there will praise Yahweh. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

18 Violence will no longer be heard in your land, or devastation nor shattering within your borders; but you will call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise.

UST

18 People in your country will no longer act violently, and people will no longer destroy your land and drive you out of it. The people in the city will be safe, and everyone there will praise me.

Isaiah 60:19

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁹ The sun will no longer be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you; but Yahweh will be your everlasting light, and your God your glory.

UST

¹⁹ And you will no longer need the sun and moon to give you light, because I, Yahweh, will give you more light than the sun and moon; I will be a glorious light for you forever.

Isaiah 60:20

for Yahweh will be your everlasting light

Both verses repeat this same idea for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Your sun will no longer set, nor will your moon withdraw and disappear

The moon will not literally disappear. This exaggeration is saying that the light of the sun and the moon will be much less bright than the light of Yahweh. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

²⁰ Your sun will no longer set, nor will your moon withdraw and disappear; for Yahweh will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning will be ended.

UST

²⁰ It will seem as though the sun and moon will always be shining, because I, Yahweh, will be an everlasting light for you. You will never again be sad because of things that happen to you.

Isaiah 60:21

the branch of my planting, the work of my hands

These phrases mean approximately the same and are repeated for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

the branch of my planting

Yahweh is comparing the people to young shoots coming up that he planted as if he was a gardener. Yahweh has placed his people in the land of Israel. This gives hope to the people. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the work of my hands

Yahweh compares the people of Israel to something made by the skill of his handicraft. (See: [Metaphor](#))

that I may be glorified

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “so that all people may glorify me” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²¹ All your people {will be} righteous; they will take possession of the land for all time, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

UST

²¹ Your people will all be righteous, and they will occupy the land forever, because I myself have put you there like people plant trees in order that you will show others that I am very great.

Isaiah 60:22

a thousand

"1,000" (See: [Numbers](#))

ULT

²² The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation; I, Yahweh, will swiftly accomplish these things when the time comes.

UST

²² At that time, the groups that are very small now will become very large clans, and small clans will become great nations. All those things will happen because, I, Yahweh, will cause them to happen at the right time."

Isaiah 61

Isaiah 61 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

The first part of this chapter is probably a prophecy about the coming Messiah and not Isaiah because this was different than the message Isaiah delivered. (See: [Christ, Messiah](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Restoration

This chapter prophesies concerning a future time of peace and restoration. It is unlikely to have been fulfilled in Isaiah's day. (See: [restore, restoration](#) and [prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess](#) and [fulfill, fulfilled, carried out](#))

Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is on me

“Spirit” here is the Holy Spirit of Yahweh who compels or motivates the person. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 11:2](#) or in [Isaiah 42:1](#).

the afflicted

This refers to poor people, those in great sorrow, or oppressed people who have problems they cannot overcome by themselves.

liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison for those who are bound

These two phrases mean the same thing. They state that God will certainly give freedom to captives. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹ The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh {is} on me, because Yahweh has anointed me to proclaim good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison for {those who are} bound.

UST

¹ The Spirit of Yahweh our Lord is on me; he has appointed me to bring good news to those who are oppressed, to comfort those who are discouraged, and to free all those who are as though they are chained by the wrong things that they continually do.

Isaiah 61:2

the year of Yahweh's favor, the day of vengeance

Both of these phrases refer to the same span of time. "Year" and "day" are both specific examples that represent the greater whole. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Parallelism](#))

year of Yahweh's favor

Alternate translation: "time when Yahweh will act kindly toward his people"

ULT

² He has sent me to proclaim the year of Yahweh's favor, the day of vengeance of our God, and to comfort all who mourn.

UST

² He has sent me to tell those who mourn that now is the time when Yahweh will act kindly toward his people; now is the time when our God will get revenge on their enemies.

Isaiah 61:3

to give ... to give

Isaiah repeats this for emphasis.

a turban

“a headdress” or “a beautiful head covering.” This is a long piece of cloth that is wrapped around the head.

oil of joy ... a mantle of praise

People put oil on themselves and dressed in beautiful, long robes during times of celebration and joy. (See: [Metonymy](#))

in place of a spirit of dullness

Alternate translation: “in place of sadness” or “in place of mourning”

oaks of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh

This means Yahweh has caused the people to be strong and sturdy. (See: [Metaphor](#))

that he may be glorified

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “so that the people’s lives may glorify him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ He has sent me—to give to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a turban instead of ashes, oil of joy instead of mourning, a mantle of praise in place of a spirit of dullness, to call them oaks of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, that he may be glorified.

UST

³ To all those in Jerusalem who mourn, he will give beautiful things to wear on their heads instead of ashes that they put on their heads to show that they were sad; he will cause them to rejoice instead of being sad; he will enable them to be happy instead of being discouraged. They will be called ‘people who continually do what is right, people who are like tall oak trees that Yahweh has planted’ to show others that he is very great.

Isaiah 61:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins; they will restore the former desolations. They will restore the ruined cities, the desolations from many former generations.

UST

⁴ Those who return from Babylon will rebuild the cities that the soldiers from Babylon tore down. Even though those cities have been destroyed and abandoned for many years, they will be restored.

Isaiah 61:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ Foreigners will stand and feed your flocks, and sons of foreigners {will work} your fields and vineyards.

UST

⁵ Foreigners will be the ones who will take care of your flocks of sheep and goats, and plow your fields and take care of your grapevines.

Isaiah 61:6

You will be called

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People will call you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁶ You will be called the priests of Yahweh; they will call you servants of our God. You will eat the wealth of the nations, and you will boast in their riches.

UST

⁶ But you are the ones who will be like the priests to serve Yahweh, to work for God. You will enjoy valuable goods that are brought from other nations, and you will be happy that those things have become yours.

Isaiah 61:7

you will have double

This probably refers to a double portion of land.

they will rejoice over their share ... they will ... their land ... will be theirs

This still refers to the people of Israel. This can be stated in second person. Alternate translation: “you will rejoice over your share ... you will ... your land ... will be yours” (See: [First](#), [Second](#) or [Third Person](#))

ULT

⁷ {Instead of} your shame {you will have} double; and instead of dishonor they will rejoice over their share. So they will have a double share of their land; everlasting joy will be theirs.

UST

⁷ Previously you were shamed and disgraced, but now you will have great blessings; previously your enemies humbled you, but now you will have many good things; you will be happy because you will be in your land again, and you will rejoice forever.

Isaiah 61:8

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁸ For I, Yahweh, love justice, and I hate robbery and violent injustice. I will faithfully repay them, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

UST

⁸ "I, Yahweh, am very pleased with those who decide matters fairly; I hate those who illegally take things from other people. I will surely repay my people for all that they have suffered in the past. And I will make an everlasting agreement with them.

Isaiah 61:9

Their descendants will be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples

These two clauses mean the same thing. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People from other nations will know their descendants" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

their offspring among the peoples

This clause assumes the same verb as the previous one. Alternate translation: "their offspring will be known among the peoples" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

⁹ Their descendants will be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge them, that they {are} the people {whom} Yahweh has blessed.

UST

⁹ Their descendants will be honored by people of other nations; their children will be honored by all the other nations. Everyone who sees them will know that they are a nation that I, Yahweh, have blessed."

Isaiah 61:10

I will greatly rejoice in Yahweh

"I" refers to the people of God speaking as one person whom Yahweh has restored.

clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has clothed me with the robe of righteousness

The people of God speaking as one person now have salvation and righteousness as their distinct appearance visible to all. "Garments" and "robe" are clothing that everyone can see. (See: [Metaphor](#))

as a bridegroom adorns himself with a turban, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels

This comparison emphasizes that the speaker is extremely happy, joyful, celebrating. (See: [Simile](#))

turban

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 61:3](#).

ULT

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in Yahweh; in my God I will be very glad. For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has clothed me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns {himself} with a turban, and as a bride adorns {herself} with her jewels.

UST

¹⁰ I greatly rejoice because of what Yahweh has done! I am happy in all my inner being, because he has saved me and declared that I am righteous; those blessings are like a robe that he has put on me. I am as happy as a bridegroom in his wedding clothes, or a bride wearing jewels.

Isaiah 61:11

For as the earth produces its sprouting plants, and as the garden makes its planting grow

This is saying the same thing in two ways. The fact that whatever God says he will do is certainly going to happen is compared to the fact that seeds sprout after planting. Alternate translation: "Just as seeds sown in a garden sprout from the soil and grow" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Simile](#))

righteousness and praise to sprout up

This expression describes these virtues as growing from seed like plants do. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹¹ For as the earth produces its sprouting plants, and as the garden makes its planting grow, so the Lord Yahweh will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up in front of all the nations.

UST

¹¹ Just as seeds sown in a garden sprout from the soil and grow, Yahweh our God will cause people of all nations to act righteously, with the result that they will praise him for doing that.

Isaiah 62

Isaiah 62 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Restoration

This chapter prophesies concerning a future time of peace and restoration. It is unlikely to have been fulfilled in Isaiah's day. (See: [restore](#), [restoration](#) and [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [fulfill](#), [fulfilled](#), [carried out](#))

Isaiah 62:1

For Zion's sake I will not be silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet

Both of these statements mean the same thing. Here "Zion" and "Jerusalem" both represent the people who live in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "For the sake of the people of Jerusalem I will not be silent" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metonymy](#))

I will not be silent

It is most likely that "I" refers to Isaiah.

until her righteousness proceeds brightly, and her salvation as a burning torch

Both clauses reassure the people that God will eventually come and save the people of Israel and that it will be as apparent as light is. (See: [Simile](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹ For Zion's sake I will not be silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness proceeds brightly, and her salvation as a burning torch.

UST

¹ Because I am very concerned about the people of Jerusalem, I will do something to help them. I will not stop praying for them until they are rescued from their oppressors, until that becomes as apparent to everyone as the dawn every morning, until people can see it as clearly as they see a torch shining brightly at night.

Isaiah 62:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You will be called by a new name that Yahweh will choose.

UST

² Some day the people of many nations will know that Yahweh has rescued you, his people. Their kings will see that your city is very great. And Yahweh will give your city a new name.

Isaiah 62:3

You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Yahweh, and a turban of kingship in the hand of your God

These mean the same thing and are combined for emphasis. They say that Jerusalem will become a royal city under the power and authority of God. Yahweh's hand is a metonym for his power and authority. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³ You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Yahweh, and a turban of kingship in the hand of your God.

UST

³ It will be as though Yahweh had held you up in his hands in order that everyone can see you. Under his authority you will be like a crown worn by a king.

Isaiah 62:4

It will no more ... will it be said, "Desolate."

These mean the same thing are combined for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

It will no more be said of you

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People will no longer say about you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

nor of your land any longer will it be said

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "nor will people any longer say about your land" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

your land will be married

This means Yahweh will love the people of Israel and will always be with them as is a husband. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ It will no more be said of you, "Abandoned"; nor of your land any longer will it be said, "Desolate." Indeed, you will be called "My delight is in her," and your land "Married," for Yahweh delights in you, and your land will be married.

UST

⁴ Your city will never again be called 'the deserted city,' and your country will never again be called 'the desolate land'; it will be called 'the land that Yahweh delights in,' and it will also be called 'married to Yahweh.' It will be called that because Yahweh will be delighted with you, and it will be as though you were his bride.

Isaiah 62:5**as a young man marries a young woman, so
your sons will marry you**

Here “sons” refers to the people of Israel and “you” refers to Judah, the land of Israel. This means the people will take possession of the land as a man takes possession of his young wife. (See: [Simile](#))

**as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, your
God will rejoice over you**

This emphasizes God’s happiness about his relationship with his people. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

⁵ Truly, {as} a young man marries a young woman, {so} your sons will marry you, and {as} a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, your God will rejoice over you.

UST

⁵ You people will live in all the country of Judah like a young man lives with his bride. And our God will be happy that you belong to him, like a bridegroom is happy that his bride belongs to him.

Isaiah 62:6

I have put

Here "I" may refer to Isaiah or to Yahweh.

watchmen on your walls

This refers to prophets, officials, or possibly angels, who are constantly praying for the people of Jerusalem like watchmen who constantly guard the city. See how you translated "watchmen" in [Isaiah 52:8](#) and [Isaiah 56:10](#). (See: [Metaphor](#))

they are not silent day or night

This means they are continually pleading to Yahweh or calling to each other. Alternate translation: "they are earnestly praying to Yahweh throughout the entire day" (See: [Litotes](#) and [Merism](#))

ULT

⁶ I have put watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they are not silent day or night. You who keep reminding Yahweh, do not pause.

UST

⁶ You people of Jerusalem, I have placed watchmen on your walls; they will earnestly pray to Yahweh day and night. You watchmen, you must not stop praying and reminding Yahweh about what he has promised to do.

Isaiah 62:7

Do not allow him to rest

Here “him” refers to Yahweh.

ULT

⁷ Do not allow him to rest until he reestablishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise on earth.

UST

⁷ And tell Yahweh that he should not rest until he causes Jerusalem to be a city that is famous and admired throughout the world.

Isaiah 62:8

by his right hand and by the arm of his strength

The right hand and arm represent power and authority. Alternate translation: "by his power and authority" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Surely I will no longer give your grain as food for your enemies

This means Yahweh will not let enemies conquer the people of Israel and take their grain anymore. Perhaps enemies took the grain in the past as a tax or to feed their own armies.

I will no longer give your grain as food for your enemies ... Foreigners will not drink your new wine

These statements are set together for emphasis and completion. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁸ Yahweh has sworn by his right hand and by the arm of his strength, "Surely I will no longer give your grain {as} food for your enemies. Foreigners will not drink your new wine, for which you have worked.

UST

⁸ Yahweh has raised his right hand to solemnly promise to the people of Jerusalem: "I will use my power and will never again allow your enemies to defeat you; soldiers from other nations will never come again to take away your grain and the wine that you worked hard to produce.

Isaiah 62:9

those who harvest the grain ... those who pick the grapes

These statements are set together for emphasis and completion.
(See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁹ For those who harvest the grain will eat it and praise Yahweh, and those who pick the grapes will drink the wine in the courts of my holy sanctuary."

UST

⁹ You yourselves will grow the grain, and you will be the ones who will praise me, Yahweh, while you eat the bread made from the grain. Inside the courtyards of my temple, you yourselves will drink the wine made from the grapes that you harvested."

Isaiah 62:10

Come through, come through the gates

The phrase “come through” is repeated to show urgency.

Build it, build the highway

The word “build” is repeated to emphasize that Yahweh urgently wants the road prepared. The “highway” represents the way the people can return. This is similar to [Isaiah 40:3](#) and [Isaiah 57:14](#). (See: [Metonymy](#))

Gather out the stones

“Take the stones out of the road to make it smooth.” Stones represent all the obstacles to quick travel. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Raise up a signal flag for the nations

A signal flag represents something to draw the attention of others. This means Yahweh is calling the people of the other nations to take notice of the land of Israel and to see what Yahweh has accomplished as he said he would. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

10 Come through, come through the gates! Prepare the way for the people! Build it, build the highway! Gather out the stones! Raise up a signal flag for the nations!

UST

10 Go out through the city gates! Prepare the highway on which people will return from other countries! Cause the road to become smooth; clear off all the stones; set up signal flags to help the people groups to see the road to Jerusalem.

Isaiah 62:11

Look

Alternate translation: "Take notice!"

the ends of the earth

The places on the earth that are very far away are spoken of as if they were the places where the earth ends. This phrase also forms a merism and refers to everywhere in between the ends. See how you translated this in [Isaiah 40:28](#). AT "the farthest places of the earth" or "the entire earth" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Merism](#))

the daughter of Zion

"Daughter" represents the people of Jerusalem (Zion). See how you translated this in [Isaiah 1:8](#). (See: [Idiom](#))

See, his reward is with him, and his recompense is going before him

These clauses represent the same idea for emphasis. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Isaiah 40:10](#). (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

11 Look, Yahweh announces to the ends of the earth, "Say to the daughter of Zion: Look, your Savior is coming! See, his reward {is} with him, and his recompense is going before him."

UST

11 This is the message that Yahweh has sent to the people of every nation. Tell the people of Israel, "The one who will rescue you is coming! Look! He will be bringing to you your reward; those whom he has rescued will be going ahead of him."

Isaiah 62:12

you will be called

This can be stated actively, "they will call you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹² They will call you, "The holy people; the redeemed of Yahweh," and you will be called "Sought after; a city not abandoned."

UST

¹² They will be called: "Yahweh's own people, and ones whom he rescued." And Jerusalem will be known as: "The city that Yahweh loves," and "The city that is no longer abandoned."

Isaiah 63

Isaiah 63 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Imagery

The imagery of judgment in this chapter is intended to be rather vivid. The translator should avoid euphemisms, if possible. Overall, this chapter prophesies a day of great judgment and God's wrath. (See: [judge](#), [judgment](#) and [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#) and [wrath](#), [fury](#))

Isaiah 63:1

Who is this who comes from Edom ... Bozrah

Isaiah speaks as a watchman using the question and answer format to present this information about Yahweh's judgment on Edom, an enemy of Israel. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "I, Yahweh, am coming from Edom, clothed in red from Bozrah" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Bozrah

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

It is I

Here "I" refers to Yahweh.

ULT

¹ Who {is} this {who comes} from Edom, clothed in red from Bozrah? {Who is} he in royal clothing, marching confidently because of his great strength? It is I, speaking righteousness and powerfully able to save.

UST

¹ I ask, "Who is this who is coming from the city of Bozrah in Edom, whose clothes are stained red from blood? Who is this who is wearing beautiful robes?" He replies, "It is I, Yahweh, declaring that I have defeated your enemies, and I am able to rescue you!"

Isaiah 63:2

Why are your clothes red, and why ... winepress?

If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "The red on your clothing looks makes you look like you have been treading on grapes in a winepress." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

winepress

A winepress is a low place carved out of rock in the ground where workers step on the grapes to crush them with their feet, in order to remove the grape juice.

ULT

² Why {are} your clothes red, and why do they look like you have been treading grapes in a winepress?

UST

² I ask him, "What are those red spots on your clothes? It appears that you have been treading on grapes to make wine."

Isaiah 63:3

I have trodden grapes

Here "I" refers to Yahweh. This imagery refers to Yahweh destroying his enemies. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ I have trodden grapes in the winepress alone, and no one from the nations joined me. I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my fury. Their blood is spattered on my clothes and stained all my clothes.

UST

³ He replies, "I have been treading on my enemies, not on grapes. I did it myself; no one helped me. I punished them because I was very angry with them, and my clothes became stained with their blood."

Isaiah 63:4

the day of vengeance

Alternate translation: “the time of vengeance” or “the time for vengeance”

vengeance

Yahweh will punish in an appropriate way to bring about justice. His kind of vengeance differs from man’s vengeance.

the year for my redemption

Here “year” refers to a specific time appointed by Yahweh for restoring Israel. Alternate translation: “the time for my redemption” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ For I looked forward to the day of vengeance, and the year for my redemption had arrived.

UST

⁴ I did that because it was time for me to get revenge; it was time to rescue my people from those who had oppressed them.

Isaiah 63:5

but my own arm

Here “arm” represents power. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁵ I looked, and {there was} no one to help. I wondered that {there was} none to help, but my own arm brought victory for me, and my strong anger drove me on.

UST

⁵ I searched for someone who would enable me to help my people, but I was amazed that there was no one to help me. So I defeated their enemies with my own power; I was able to do that because I was very angry.

Isaiah 63:6

made them drunk in my wrath

This means Yahweh made them stunned and senseless by his full wrath and punishment. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I poured out their blood

Here “blood” represents the life of Yahweh’s enemies that was gushing out so they would die. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ I trampled down the peoples in my anger and made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their blood on the earth.

UST

⁶ Because I was extremely angry, I punished the nations; I caused them to stagger like drunk men, and I caused their blood to pour out on the ground.”

Isaiah 63:7

I will tell of the acts of Yahweh's covenant faithfulness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **faithfulness**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as "faithfully" or "faithful." See how you translated "covenant faithfulness" in [Isaiah 16:5](#). Alternate translation: "I will tell about how God has acted faithfully to his covenant" or "I will tell about all the faithful things God has done for his people" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

I will tell

Here "I" refers to Isaiah.

done for us

Here "us" refers to Isaiah and the people of Israel. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

ULT

⁷ I will tell of the acts of Yahweh's covenant faithfulness, the praiseworthy deeds of Yahweh. I will tell of all that Yahweh has done for us, {and} of his great goodness to the house of Israel. This compassion he has shown us because of his mercy, and with many deeds of covenant faithfulness.

UST

⁷ I will tell about all the things that Yahweh has done for his people because of his faithful love for them, and I will praise him for all that he has done. Yahweh has done good things for us people of Israel; he has acted mercifully toward us and he has steadfastly and faithfully loved us.

Isaiah 63:8

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁸ For he said, "For certain they {are} my people, children {who} are not disloyal."
He became their Savior.

UST

⁸ Yahweh said, "These are my people; they will not deceive me"; so he rescued us.

Isaiah 63:9

Through all their suffering

“Through all our suffering.” Here “their” refers to the people of Israel. Isaiah included himself as a member of the people.

he suffered too

Here “he” refers to Yahweh.

the angel from his presence

This is a representative who is sent from God's presence.

he lifted them up and carried them

This refers to when God protected and saved the people of Israel from the Egyptians many years earlier. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁹ Through all their suffering, he suffered too, and the angel from his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he saved them, and he lifted them up and carried them through all the ancient times.

UST

⁹ When we had many troubles, he was sad also. He sent his angel from before his presence to rescue us. Because he loved us and was merciful to us, he saved us; it was as though he had picked our ancestors up and carried them all those years during which they were oppressed in Egypt.

Isaiah 63:10

But they rebelled

“but we rebelled.” Here “they” refers to the people of Israel. Isaiah included himself as a member of the people.

his Holy Spirit

Alternate translation: “Yahweh’s Holy Spirit”

ULT

10 But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he became their enemy {and} fought against them.

UST

10 But we rebelled against him, and we caused his Holy Spirit to be sad. So he became like an enemy who fought against us.

Isaiah 63:11

They said

“we said.” Here “they” refers to the people of Israel. Isaiah included himself as a member of the people.

who brought them up out of the sea

The story of Yahweh miraculously splitting the waters of the Sea of Reeds so that the Israelites could cross and escape the Egyptians is assumed knowledge. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the shepherds of his flock

Leaders are sometimes referred to as “shepherds.” Alternate translation: “the leaders of his people” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 His people thought about the ancient times of Moses. {They said}, “Where {is} God, who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where {is} God, who put his Holy Spirit among them?”

UST

11 Then we thought about what happened long ago, during the time when Moses led our ancestors out of Egypt. We cried out, “Where is the one who brought our ancestors through the Sea of Reeds while Moses led them? Where is the one who sent his Holy Spirit to be among our ancestors?”

Isaiah 63:12

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking.

who made his glorious power go with the right hand of Moses

Here "right hand" represents the power of Yahweh through Moses. This means it was God's power that enabled Moses to divide the water of the Reed Sea. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹² Where is God, who made his glorious power go with the right hand of Moses, and divided the water before them, to make an everlasting name for himself?

UST

¹² Where is the one who showed his glorious power and caused the water to separate when Moses lifted his arm above it, with the result that he will be honored forever?

Isaiah 63:13

Like a horse running on flat land, they did not stumble

This means that the people of Israel were sure-footed as horses in open country on their travels toward Israel from Egypt. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹³ Where is God, who led them through the deep water? Like a horse running on flat land, they did not stumble.

UST

¹³ Where is the one who led our ancestors while they walked through the seabed? They were like horses that were racing along and never stumbled.

Isaiah 63:14

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking.

As the cattle that go down into the valley ... rest

This image pictures cattle going into a valley where there is green grass and water and emphasizes that God led the people of Israel and took care of them. (See: [Simile](#))

to make yourself a name of praise

Here “name of praise” refers to honor and one’s reputation. Alternate translation: “to make sure you have an honored reputation for yourself” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁴ As the cattle that go down into the valley, the Spirit of Yahweh gave them rest. So you led your people, to make yourself a name of praise.

UST

¹⁴ They were like cattle that walk down into a valley to rest, and the Spirit of Yahweh enabled them to go to a place where they could rest. Yahweh, you led your people, and you caused yourself to be praised.”

Isaiah 63:15

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking.

Where are your zeal and your mighty acts?

The writer uses a question to express deep emotion and concern because it seems God is not helping them. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "We do not see your zeal and your mighty acts!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Your pity and your compassionate actions are kept from us

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "You keep your pity and compassion from us" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

15 Look down from heaven and take notice from your holy and glorious habitation. Where {are} your zeal and your mighty acts? Your pity and your compassionate actions are kept from us.

UST

15 "Yahweh, look down from heaven; look down on us from your holy and glorious home. You were previously very concerned about us, and you acted powerfully to help us. But it seems that you do not act mercifully and zealously for us anymore.

Isaiah 63:16

though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not recognize us

These ancestors of the nation of Israel would not be able to identify their descendants because they changed so much. "Abraham" and "Israel" represent the people from the distant past. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Israel

This refers to the name also called "Jacob."

ULT

¹⁶ For you {are} our father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not recognize us, you, Yahweh, {are} our father. 'Our Redeemer' {has been} your name from ancient times.

UST

¹⁶ You are our father, even if Abraham does not know what is happening to us, and Jacob is not concerned about us, either, but Yahweh, you are our father; you rescued us long ago.

Isaiah 63:17

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking.

Yahweh, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts, so we do not obey you?

Here the writer uses a question to express a complaint of the people to God. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "Yahweh, you have made us wander from your ways and become stubborn so that we do not obey you." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

why do you make us wander from your ways

To not do what Yahweh commands is spoken of as if a person wanders off of the correct path. Alternate translation: "why do you make do what is wrong" (See: [Metaphor](#))

harden our hearts

This means to become resistant to Yahweh's teaching by refusing to listen and obey. Here "heart" represents their motives, feelings and desires. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

17 Yahweh, why do you make us wander from your ways {and} harden our hearts, so we do not obey you? Return for your servants' sake, the tribes of your inheritance.

UST

17 Yahweh, why did you cause us to wander away from your road? Why did you cause us to be stubborn in our inner beings, with the result that we no longer honor you? Help us like you did previously, because we are the people who serve you and belong to you.

Isaiah 63:18

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking.

ULT

¹⁸ Your people possessed your holy place for a short time, but then our enemies trampled it.

UST

¹⁸ We, your holy people, possessed your sacred temple for only a short time, and now our enemies have destroyed it.

Isaiah 63:19

who were never called by your name

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. The word “name” refers to a family relationship. Alternate translation: “who never belonged to your family” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Metonymy](#))

We have become ... called by your name

Some modern versions interpret this passage differently: “We are like the people over whom you have not ruled, like those who have not been called by your name.”

ULT

19 We have become {like} those over whom you never ruled, like those who were never called by your name.”

UST

19 Now it seems as though we never were ruled by you, as though we never belonged to you.”

Isaiah 64

Isaiah 64 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Repentance

This chapter records the repentance of the righteous remnant of Judah. (See: [repent](#), [repentance](#), [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#) and [remnant](#) and [prophet](#), [prophecy](#), [prophesy](#), [seer](#), [prophetess](#))

Isaiah 64:1

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking to Yahweh ([Isaiah 63:11](#)).

Oh, if you had

Isaiah introduces this desire for Yahweh's presence in their past history with a strong exclamation. (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

if you had split open the heavens

If Yahweh had shown himself very dramatically by tearing open the sky. The words "split open" refer to ripping a piece of cloth apart. (See: [Metaphor](#))

mountains would have shaken

The mountains would have trembled as in an earthquake. (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

ULT

¹ "Oh, if you had split open the heavens and come down! The mountains would have shaken at your presence,

UST

¹ "Yahweh, I wish that you had come down from the sky; you would have caused the mountains to shake with fear.

Isaiah 64:2

as when fire kindles the brushwood, or the fire makes water boil

This possibly emphasizes how easily God's presence would have caused the mountains and the people to tremble. (See: [Simile](#) and [Hypothetical Situations](#))

ULT

² as when fire kindles the brushwood, or the fire makes water boil. Oh, that your name would be known by your adversaries, that the nations would tremble at your presence!

UST

² It would have been like fire burning up dead wood, or like fire making water to boil. Come down in order that your enemies will know who you are, and so that the people of other nations will tremble in your presence.

Isaiah 64:3

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³ Previously, when you did marvelous things that we had not expected, you came down, and the mountains trembled at your presence.

UST

³ You did awesome things that we were not expecting you to do; the mountains shook when you came down onto Mount Sinai.

Isaiah 64:4

nor eye seen

Here the “eye” refers to the whole person. Alternate translation: “nor has anyone seen” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁴ Since ancient times no one has heard or perceived, nor eye seen any God besides you, who does things for him who waits for him.

UST

⁴ Since long ago no one has ever seen or heard about a God like you; you help those who depend on you.

Isaiah 64:5

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking to Yahweh.

call to mind

This is an idiom that means “remember.” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁵ You come to help those who rejoice in doing what is right, those {who} call to mind your ways and obey them. You were angry when we sinned. In your ways we will always be rescued.

UST

⁵ You help those who joyfully do what is right, those who conduct their lives as you want them to. But we did not do that; we continued to sin, and so you became angry with us. We have been sinning for a long time. It is only if we continually do what you want us to do that you will save us.

Isaiah 64:6

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking to Yahweh.

all our righteous deeds are like a menstrual rag

A “menstrual rag” is a cloth that a woman uses during the time of month when she bleeds from her womb. This means all their attempts to please God fail. This sentence was meant to be shocking. (See: [Simile](#))

We have all withered like leaves

Isaiah compares the people of Israel to leaves that dry up when dead. (See: [Simile](#))

our iniquities, like the wind, carry us away

This means their sins, as a community, are the reason for their failure. Isaiah compares the iniquities to the wind as the force for their suffering Yahweh’s punishment. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

⁶ For we have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds {are} like a menstrual rag. We have all withered like leaves; our iniquities, like the wind, carry us away.

UST

⁶ We have all become people who are not fit to worship you; all of the good things that we have done are only like bloodstained rags. Because of our sins, we are all like leaves that dry up and are blown away by the wind.

Isaiah 64:7**you have hidden your face from us**

This means God gave up on his people and let them suffer. (See: [Idiom](#))

in the hand of our iniquities

Here the word “hand” is a metonym for the power of those who are punishing the people for their iniquities. Alternate translation: “as you punish us for our iniquities” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ {There are} none who calls on your name, who makes an effort to take hold of you. For you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away in the hand of our iniquities.

UST

⁷ None of our people worships you, and no one really tries to persuade you to help him. You have turned away from us. It is as though you have abandoned us, so that we keep sinning and become more and more guilty.

Isaiah 64:8

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking to Yahweh.

we are the clay. You are our potter; and we all are the work of your hand

This means God created the people of Israel. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ Yet, Yahweh, you {are} our father; we {are} the clay. You {are} our potter; and we all {are} the work of your hand.

UST

⁸ But even so, Yahweh, you are our father. We are like clay that a potter uses, and you created us, like a potter creates pottery.

Isaiah 64:9

call to mind

This refers to remembering the past. (See: [Idiom](#))

look at us all

Isaiah asks Yahweh to pay attention to their situation. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

⁹ Be not too angry, Yahweh, nor always call to mind against us our sins. Please look at us all, your people.

UST

⁹ Yahweh, do not continue to be angry with us; do not keep thinking about our sins forever. Do not forget that we are all your people.

Isaiah 64:10

General Information:

The people of Israel continue speaking to Yahweh.

Your holy cities have become a wilderness

This emphasizes that the cities have been destroyed and no one lives there.

ULT

10 Your holy cities have become a wilderness; Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

UST

10 All of your towns in Judah have become like the wilderness; even Jerusalem has been destroyed.

Isaiah 64:11

Our holy and beautiful temple, where our fathers praised you, has been destroyed by fire

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “The enemy has destroyed our holy and beautiful temple, where our fathers praised you, by fire” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹¹ Our holy and beautiful temple, where our fathers praised you, has been destroyed by fire, and all that was so dear is in ruins.

UST

¹¹ Your glorious temple on Mountain Zion, where our ancestors worshiped you, has been completely burned up. And all our other beautiful things have been ruined.

Isaiah 64:12

How can you still hold back, Yahweh? How can you remain silent and continue to humiliate us?

They use questions to express their frustration because God has not yet come to help them. Alternate translation: “Please do not hold back, Yahweh! Please do not remain silent and continue to humiliate us!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹² How can you still hold back, Yahweh? How can you remain silent and continue to humiliate us?”

UST

¹² Yahweh, you see all those things, but it seems that you refuse to do anything to help us. It seems that you will cause us to suffer much more.”

Isaiah 65

Isaiah 65 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 this chapter.

This chapter is Yahweh's response to the repentance of the people. (See: [repent](#), [repentance](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Judgment and hope

This chapter records that Yahweh's judgment on the people must come. Despite this, there is hope that in the end, Yahweh will make all things new and restore them to himself. (See: [judge](#), [judgment](#) and [hope](#), [hoped](#) and [restore](#), [restoration](#))

Isaiah 65:1

I was ready

Here "I" refers to Yahweh.

ULT

¹ "I was ready to be sought out by {those who} did not ask; I was ready to be found by {those who} did not seek. I said, 'Here I am! Here I am!' to a nation that did not call on my name.

UST

¹ This is what Yahweh said: "I was ready to reply to my people, but no one requested me to help them. I was ready to help even those who did not call out to me. I continued to say, 'I am here to help you!'

Isaiah 65:2

I have spread out my hands all day to a stubborn people

“Spreading out my hands” here is a person’s gesture to show imploring or a strong request. Alternate translation: “I have continually begged a stubborn people to receive my help” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

² I have spread out my hands all day to a stubborn people, who walk in a way {that is} not good, who have walked after their own thoughts and plans!

UST

² It is as though I had continually held out my arms to show that I was ready to help my people who rebelled against me, and who continually did the evil things that they wanted to do.

Isaiah 65:3

in gardens ... on brick tiles

These refer to Canaanite places for worshiping idols. Their sacred altars were made of bricks, which Yahweh forbid for his altars. Yahweh's altars were made of stone. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³ They are a people who continually offend me, offering sacrifices in gardens, and burning incense on brick tiles.

UST

³ They boldly continue to do things that cause me to be angry: they offer sacrifices to their idols in their gardens, and they burn incense to them on altars made of bricks and tiles.

Isaiah 65:4

sit among the graves and keep watch all night

This is a reference to consulting the dead, a practice that Yahweh prohibited. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

eat pork

Yahweh did not allow the people of Israel to eat meat from pigs. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴ They sit among the graves and keep watch all night, and eat pork with the broth of fowl meat in their dishes.

UST

⁴ They remain awake at night in cemeteries, talking with the spirits of dead people. They eat the meat of pigs, and their pots are full of the broth of meat that is unacceptable to me.

Isaiah 65:5

These things are smoke in my nose

Yahweh compares these people who are continually annoying him to smoke that irritates a person's breathing. (See: [Metaphor](#))

a fire that burns all day long

Yahweh compares the people of Israel to a slow-burning fire that sends out smoke without stopping as it irritates. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ They say, 'Stand away, do not come near to me, for I am holier than you.' These things {are} smoke in my nose, a fire that burns all day long.

UST

⁵ Then they say to others, 'Stay away from me; do not come near me, because I am very holy, with the result that you should not touch me.' People like that are like smoke in my nose from a fire that burns continually.

Isaiah 65:6

Look, it is written

Alternate translation: "Take notice and pay attention"

into their laps

This means God will punish them to the fullest extent. This expression compares Yahweh punishing the people to dumping on their legs as they are sitting. (See: [Idiom](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ Look, {it is} written before me: I will not keep quiet, for I will pay them back; I will repay them into their laps,

UST

⁶ I have written a record of all the evil things that they have done. And I will not remain silent about all those things; I will certainly punish these people

Isaiah 65:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ for their sins and the sins of their fathers together," says Yahweh. "I will repay them for burning incense on the mountains and for mocking me on the hills. I will therefore measure out their past deeds into their laps."

UST

⁷ for the sins that they and their ancestors have committed. They have mocked me by burning incense to their idols on the hilltops. So I will punish them like they deserve for doing those things."

Isaiah 65:8

As when juice is found in a cluster of grapes

Yahweh compares the people of Israel to a cluster of grapes that still has some good juice in it. (See: [Metaphor](#))

when juice is found in a cluster

This can be stated in an active way. Alternate translation: “when you find juice in a cluster” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

I will not ruin them all

This can be expressed positively. Alternate translation: “I will spare some of them who are righteous” (See: [Litotes](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ This is what Yahweh says, “As when juice is found in a cluster of grapes, when {one} says, ‘Do not ruin it, for there is good in it,’ this is what I will do for my servants’ sake: I will not ruin them all.

UST

⁸ This is also what Yahweh said: “When there is a cluster of nice grapes on a vine, people do not throw them away, because they know that there is good juice in those grapes. Similarly, because there are some people in Judah who faithfully serve me, I will not get rid of all of them.

Isaiah 65:9

my mountains

This refers to the highest locations of Jerusalem and all of Judea.

ULT

⁹ I will bring descendants from Jacob, and from Judah ones who will possess my mountains. My chosen ones will possess the land, and my servants will live there.

UST

⁹ I will spare some of the descendants of Jacob who are living on the hills of Judah. I have chosen them, and they will possess that land; they will worship me, and they will live there.

Isaiah 65:10

Sharon

This was a fertile grazing area. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Valley of Achor

This is the name of a valley that possibly ran from Jerusalem to south of Jericho. This was also a fertile grazing area. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

10 Sharon will become a pasture for the flocks, and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds, for my people who seek me.

UST

10 Then all the land from the Plain of Sharon near the Mediterranean Sea and as far east as the Valley of Achor near Jericho will become pastureland, where their cattle and sheep will rest.

Isaiah 65:11

holy mountain

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 11:9](#).

who prepare a table ... and fill wine glasses of mixed wine

People would bring food and drink and place it in front of the idol as part of their worship.

mixed wine

wine mixed with spices

Fortune ... Destiny

These are names of false gods. They are also called “Gad” and “Meni.”

ULT

11 But you who abandon Yahweh, who forget my holy mountain, who prepare a table for Fortune, and fill wine glasses of mixed wine for Destiny.

UST

11 But it will be different for you who have abandoned me, you who do not worship me on Zion, my sacred hill, you who worship Gad and Meni, the gods who you say will bring you good luck and good fortune.

Isaiah 65:12

appoint you for the sword

“The sword” represents various weapons of war that Yahweh will use to punish those who do not respond to Yahweh’s call. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not listen

Both clauses mean the same and are repeated for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹² I will appoint you for the sword, and you will all bow down to the slaughter, because when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not listen. But you did what was evil in my sight and chose to do what displeases me.”

UST

¹² It is I, not Meni, who will decide what will happen to you; you will all be slaughtered by swords. That will happen because you did not answer when I called out to you. I spoke to you, but you did not pay attention. Instead, you did things that I said are evil; you chose to do things that do not please me.

Isaiah 65:13

Look, my servants

"Take notice and pay attention" Yahweh repeats this for emphasis.
(See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

13 This is what the Lord Yahweh says,
"Look, my servants will eat, but you will
be hungry; look, my servants will drink,
but you will be thirsty; look, my servants
will rejoice, but you will be put to
shame.

UST

13 I, Yahweh the Lord, will give to those
who worship and obey me things to eat
and drink, and they will be happy; but
all you evil people will be hungry and
thirsty, and you will be sad and
disgraced.

Isaiah 65:14

but you will cry because of the pain of the heart, and will wail because of the crushing of the spirit

These clauses mean the same and the repetition is for emphasis.
(See: [Parallelism](#))

crushing of the spirit

This expression compares the feeling of terrible disappointment and sorrow to something becoming deformed due to high pressure. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁴ Look, my servants will shout with joy because of gladness of heart, but you will cry because of the pain of the heart, and will wail because of the crushing of the spirit.

UST

¹⁴ Those who worship and obey me will sing joyfully, but you evil people will wail loudly because you will be suffering in your inner beings.

Isaiah 65:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

15 You will leave behind your name as a curse for my chosen ones to speak; I, the Lord Yahweh, will kill you; I will call my servants by another name.

UST

15 Those whom I have chosen will use your names when they curse people; I, Yahweh the Lord, will get rid of you. But I will give to those who worship and obey me a new name.

Isaiah 65:16

will be blessed by me, the God of truth

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I, the God who always speaks the truth, will bless him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the former troubles will be forgotten ... will be hidden

These clauses can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "they will forget the former troubles, for these troubles will be out of my memory" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

they will be hidden from my eyes

"hidden from my eyes" represents the attention and memory of Yahweh. Alternate translation: "I will not even think about them again" (See: [Idiom](#) and [Personification](#))

ULT

16 Whoever pronounces a blessing on the earth will be blessed by me, the God of truth. Whoever takes an oath on the earth will swear by me, the God of truth, because the former troubles will be forgotten, for they will be hidden from my eyes.

UST

16 The people in this land have had many troubles, but I will cause those troubles to occur no more. Therefore those who request me to bless them and those who solemnly promise to do something should never forget that I am God, who faithfully do what I promise to do.

Isaiah 65:17

For see

Alternate translation: "Notice! Pay attention!"

new heavens and a new earth

Both are extremes that also represent everything between. (See: [Merism](#))

the former things will not be remembered or be brought to mind

Both of these clauses mean the same thing and are combined for emphasis. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "you will not even think about what happened in the past" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁷ For see, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or be brought to mind.

UST

¹⁷ Note this: Some day I will create a new heaven and a new earth. They will be very wonderful, with the result that you will no longer think about all the troubles you had previously.

Isaiah 65:18

But you will be glad

Here “you” refers to all of God’s servants. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

18 But you will be glad and rejoice forever in what I am about to create. See, I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and her people {as} a delight.

UST

18 Be glad and always rejoice because of what I will do: Jerusalem will be a place where people rejoice; the people who live there will always be happy.

Isaiah 65:19

weeping and cries of distress will no longer be heard in her

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “no one will hear weeping and cries of distress any longer in her” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and be glad over my people; weeping and cries of distress will no longer be heard in her.

UST

¹⁹ I will rejoice about Jerusalem, and I will be delighted with my people. People will no longer weep or cry because of being distressed.

Isaiah 65:20

one hundred years

“100 years” (See: [Numbers](#))

will be considered a young person

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “people will consider him a young person” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

will be considered cursed

This can be stated this in active form. Alternate translation: “people will consider this person as cursed” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁰ Never again will an infant {live} there {only a few} days; nor will an old man die before his time. One who dies at one hundred years old will be considered a young person. Anyone who fails to reach the age of one hundred years old will {be} considered cursed.

UST

²⁰ No child will die when it is still an infant; all people will live until they are very old. People will consider that anyone who is a hundred years old is still young; they will consider that anyone who dies who is younger than that has been cursed.

Isaiah 65:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ They will build houses and inhabit {them}, and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

UST

²¹ My people will build houses and then live in them. They will plant vineyards and then eat grapes from those vineyards.

Isaiah 65:22

for as the days of trees will be the days of my people

Alternate translation: "for my people will live as long as trees live"

ULT

²² No longer will they build a house and another live in it; they will not plant, and another eat; for as the days of trees {will be} the days of my people. My chosen will fully outlive the work of their hands.

UST

²² The houses that they build, no one will take those houses away from them and live in them. No one will take a vineyard away from its owner. My chosen people will live a long time, like trees do, and they will enjoy the things that they have done— the houses that they have built and the crops that they have planted.

Isaiah 65:23

they are the children of those blessed by Yahweh

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “they are the children of those whom Yahweh blessed” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²³ They will not labor in vain, nor give birth to dismay. For they are the children of those blessed by Yahweh, and their descendants with them.

UST

²³ They will not work hard in vain, and their children will not die from some calamity. I will certainly bless their children and their grandchildren.

Isaiah 65:24

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁴ Before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.

UST

²⁴ Before they call to me to help them, I will answer; I will answer their prayers while they are still praying for me to do something for them.

Isaiah 65:25

holy mountain

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 11:9](#).

ULT

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; but dust {will be} the serpent's food. They will no longer hurt nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says Yahweh.

UST

²⁵ No one will be harmed or injured anywhere on Zion, my sacred hill: wolves and lambs will eat grass together peacefully; lions will eat hay like oxen do, and they will not attack people. Snakes will not hurt anyone; they will lie on the ground and eat only dirt. That is surely what it will be like because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Isaiah 66

Isaiah 66 General Notes

Structure and formatting

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 66:1-17, 21-24.

Special concepts in this chapter

In the end

In the end, Yahweh will enact his perfect justice. This is the true hope of this world. The new heaven and the new earth are an important part of this. In the end, this will be the perfect creation of Yahweh and will last forever. (See: [just, justice, unjust, injustice, justify, justification](#) and [hope, hoped](#) and [eternity, everlasting, eternal, forever](#))

Isaiah 66:1

Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool

Yahweh compares heaven to a throne and the earth to a footstool to emphasize how great he is. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Where then is the house you will build for me? Where is the place where I may rest?

Yahweh uses questions to emphasize that humans cannot build a place for him to dwell. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹ This is what Yahweh says, "Heaven {is} my throne, and the earth {is} my footstool. Where then {is} the house you will build for me? Where {is} the place where I may rest?"

UST

¹ Yahweh also said this: "All of heaven is like my throne, and the whole earth is like my footstool. So you could certainly not build a house that would be adequate for me to live in and rest!"

Isaiah 66:2

My hand has made all these things

Yahweh is represented by his hand which emphasizes his power and authority. Alternate translation: “I have made all these things” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

this is Yahweh’s declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Translate as in [Isaiah 30:1](#). Alternate translation: “this is what Yahweh has declared” or “this is what I, Yahweh, have declared” (See: [First](#), [Second](#) or [Third Person](#))

the broken and contrite in spirit

Here “broken” and “contrite” refers to a person who is truly humble and who suffers for his faith.

ULT

² My hand has made all these things; that is how these things came to be—this is Yahweh’s declaration. This is the man of whom I approve, the broken and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at my word.

UST

² I have created everything; all things exist because I made them. That is true because I, Yahweh, have said it. The people I am most pleased with are those who are humble, who patiently endure it when they suffer, and who tremble when they hear me rebuking them.

Isaiah 66:3

He who slaughters ... also blesses wickedness

These four clauses all describe different ways evil people act and come to the same meaning for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

They have chosen their own ways

Alternate translation: "They have chosen to do evil things that violate the ways of Yahweh"

ULT

³ He who slaughters an ox {also} murders a man; he who sacrifices a lamb {also} breaks a dog's neck; he who offers a grain offering offers swine's blood; he who offers a memorial of incense {also} blesses wickedness. They have chosen their own ways, and they take pleasure in their abominations.

UST

³ You have chosen to continually do the things that you want to do: some of you slaughter oxen to sacrifice them to me, but you also bring human sacrifices to your idols! You sacrifice lambs to me, but you kill dogs to offer them to your gods. You offer grain to me, but you also bring pigs' blood to your idols. You burn incense to me, but you also praise your idols. You delight to do those disgusting things.

Isaiah 66:4

what was evil in my sight

Here sight represents judgment or evaluation. Alternate translation: “what I consider to be evil” or “what is evil in my judgement” (See:

[Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ In the same way I will choose their own punishment; I will bring on them what they fear, because when I called, no one answered; when I spoke, no one listened. They did what was evil in my sight, and chose to do {what} displeases me.”

UST

⁴ When I called out to you, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not pay attention. You did many things that I say are evil, and you chose to do things that I did not like. So now I will punish you by causing you to experience the things that you yourselves have done, that you yourselves are afraid of.”

Isaiah 66:5

May Yahweh be glorified

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Glorify Yahweh" or "May Yahweh glorify himself" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

but they will be put to shame

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "but I will put them to shame" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ Hear the word of Yahweh, you who tremble at his word, "Your brothers who hate and exclude you for my name's sake have said, 'May Yahweh be glorified, then we will see your joy,' but they will be put to shame."

UST

⁵ But you people who tremble when you hear what Yahweh says, listen to what he says now: "Some of your people hate you and drive you away because you belong to me. They make fun of you, and they say, 'Yahweh should show his glorious power! We want to see him do something to cause you to be truly happy.' But some day those people will be very disgraced."

Isaiah 66:6

General Information:

Yahweh describes the punishment for the hypocrisy of the worshipers.

A sound of battle tumult

The sound represents the real fighting that is going on in the temple as Yahweh is carrying out the punishment. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ A sound of battle tumult comes from the city, a sound from the temple, the sound of Yahweh paying back his enemies.

UST

⁶ At that time, you will listen to the noise in the city. You will hear the shouting in the temple. It will be the sound of Yahweh paying back his enemies.

Isaiah 66:7

**Before she goes into labor, she gives birth;
before pain is upon her, she gave birth to a
son**

Yahweh speaks about Zion as if it were a woman who is about to give birth. Although Zion was destroyed and the people no longer lived there, Yahweh promises that without delay and with little effort an entire nation will come from her. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before pain is upon her, she gave birth to a {son.}

UST

⁷ No one ever heard that a woman gave birth to a baby when she was just starting to have birth pains.

Isaiah 66:8

Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? Will a land be born in one day? Can a nation be established in one moment?

Yahweh uses questions to emphasize how unique this event will be. The series of questions builds tension until Zion is finally mentioned. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁸ Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? Will a land be born in one day? Can a nation be established in one moment? Yet as soon as Zion goes into labor, she gives birth to her children.

UST

⁸ Certainly no one ever heard about such a thing happening, and no one has ever seen it happen. Similarly, no one ever heard that a nation was created in one instant, not in one day. But Jerusalem is like a woman who gives birth to children as soon as she starts to have birth pains.

Isaiah 66:9

Do I bring a baby to the birth opening ... born?

Yahweh uses questions to emphasize that he will not fail to fulfill his promises to the people of Jerusalem. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ Do I bring a baby to the birth opening and not permit the child to be born?—asks Yahweh. Or do I bring a child to the moment of delivery and then hold it back?—asks your God.”

UST

⁹ Women certainly do not bring infants to the time when they are ready to be born and then do not allow them to be born. Similarly, Yahweh will do for Jerusalem what he has promised to do: he will cause Jerusalem to be full of people again. That will happen because Yahweh has said it.

Isaiah 66:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

10 Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her, all you who mourned over her!

UST

10 You people in Jerusalem, rejoice! And all you people who love Jerusalem should also be happy. You people who were sad because of what happened to Jerusalem, you should now be glad.

Isaiah 66:11

For you will nurse and be satisfied; with her breasts you will be comforted

This means Jerusalem will be a place of safety and comfort for God's people. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "For she will satisfy you with her milk; she will comfort you with her breasts" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

11 For you will nurse and be satisfied; with her breasts you will be comforted; for you will drink them to the full and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

UST

11 You people in Jerusalem will have everything that you need, like a baby that gets all it needs from its mother's breasts. You will enjoy all the abundant and glorious things in the city.

Isaiah 66:12

like a river ... like an overflowing stream

This means God will cause the people of the nations to bring a very large amount of riches, which will be permanent like a river and abundant. (See: [Simile](#))

You will nurse at her side, be carried in her arms, and be dandled on her knees

This means Jerusalem will be a place of safety and comfort for God's people. (See: [Metaphor](#))

be carried in her arms, and be dandled on her knees

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "she will carry you in her arms and bounce you on her knees with delight" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹² This is what Yahweh says, "I am about to spread prosperity over her like a river, and the riches of the nations like an overflowing stream. You will nurse at {her} side, be carried in {her} arms, and be dandled on {her} knees.

UST

¹² Yahweh has promised, "I will cause Jerusalem to be full of valuable things that come from other nations; those things will pour into Jerusalem; it will be like a big flood. I will take care of the people of Jerusalem like women care for the babies that they nurse.

Isaiah 66:13

so I will comfort you, and you will be comforted in Jerusalem

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "so I will comfort you in Jerusalem" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹³ As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you, and you will be comforted in Jerusalem."

UST

¹³ I will comfort you people in Jerusalem like mothers comfort their children."

Isaiah 66:14

General Information:

Isaiah is speaking to God's faithful people.

your bones will sprout

"Bones" refers to the whole body. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

will sprout like the tender grass

"Tender grass" grows fast and strong and compares to the health and vigor of God's faithful people. (See: [Simile](#))

The hand of Yahweh will be made known to his servants

Here "hand" refers to his power. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation:

"Yahweh will reveal his power to his servants" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

14 You will see {this}, and your heart will rejoice, and your bones will sprout like the tender grass. The hand of Yahweh will be made known to his servants, but he will show {his} anger against his enemies.

UST

14 When you see those things happen, you will rejoice. Your old bones will become strong again like in the springtime, when the grass grows. When that happens, everyone will know that Yahweh has power to help those who worship and obey him, but that he is angry with his enemies.

Isaiah 66:15

coming with fire

Yahweh's appearances in the Old Testament are often accompanied by fire that represents Yahweh's anger and judgment. (See:

[Metaphor](#))

like the windstorm

Storms represent Yahweh's powerful actions to make his judgment effective. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

15 For look, Yahweh is coming with fire, and his chariots are coming like the windstorm to bring the heat of his anger and his rebuke with flames of fire.

UST

15 Yahweh will come down with flames of fire, and his chariots will come down like a whirlwind; he will be extremely angry, and he will punish his enemies by burning them in a fire.

Isaiah 66:16

with his sword

“Sword” is one weapon that represents all of warfare and killing.
(See: [Synecdoche](#))

Those killed by Yahweh will be many

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will kill many people” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

16 For Yahweh executes judgment on mankind by fire and with his sword. Those killed by Yahweh will be many.

UST

16 It is as though Yahweh had a big sword, and he will judge and execute many people.

Isaiah 66:17

They consecrate themselves

“They” are those who worship Yahweh but go against his laws.

enter the gardens

This is a place where people would go to worship idols. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the one in the middle

This describes the leader of those of go to worship idols.

this is Yahweh’s declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Translate as in [Isaiah 30:1](#). Alternate translation: “this is what Yahweh has declared” or “this is what I, Yahweh, have declared” (See: [First, Second or Third Person](#))

ULT

17 They consecrate themselves and make themselves pure, {so they may} enter the gardens, following the one in the middle of those who eat the flesh of pig and abominable things like mice. ^[1] “They will come to an end—this is Yahweh’s declaration.

UST

17 Yahweh says, “Some of you will prepare yourselves to enter the garden of idols by washings and special diets and clothing, and you follow into that place, those who eat the meat of pigs and mice, and other things that I have forbidden you to eat. I promise you, I will stop them and they will not do this any more!”

Isaiah 66:18

For I know

Here "I" refers to Yahweh.

their deeds ... their thoughts

Here "their" refers to the worshipers that are hypocrites whom Yahweh has described before.

ULT

18 For I {know} their deeds and their thoughts. The time is coming when I will gather all nations and languages. They will come and will see my glory. ^[2]

UST

18 I know all the evil things that they all think and do. It is now time for me to gather together the people who live in all nations and who speak all languages, and to show them that I am very great.

Isaiah 66:19

Put ... Lud ... Tubal ... Javan

These are names of areas that are far from the land of Israel. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

ULT

19 I will set a sign among them. Then I will send survivors from them to the nations: {To} Tarshish, Put, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal, Javan, and {to} the distant coastlands where they have not heard about me nor seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations.

UST

19 I will do something among them to show everyone who they are, and those whom I have spared will go to various distant countries: To Tarshish, Put, Lud (home of archers), Meshech, Tubal, Javan, and to distant islands. I will send them to proclaim to nations that have never heard about me that I am very great and glorious.

Isaiah 66:20

They will bring

Here “they” refers to the foreigners who survived and witnessed to the nations. They will return to Jerusalem with exiled Israelites.

holy mountain

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 11:9](#).

ULT

²⁰ They will bring back all your brothers out of all the nations, as an offering to Yahweh. They will come on horses, and in chariots, in wagons, on mules, and on camels, to my holy mountain Jerusalem —says Yahweh. For the people of Israel will bring a grain offering in a clean vessel into the house of Yahweh.

UST

²⁰ Then they will bring back here your relatives who have been exiled, like the offerings that my Israelite people used to bring in the correct manner to the temple. They will travel to Jerusalem, where my holy mountain is; they will come on horses and in chariots, in wagons, on mules and on camels.

Isaiah 66:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ Some of these I will even choose as priests {and} Levites—says Yahweh.

UST

²¹ I solemnly promise that I will appoint some of them to be priests, and others to do other work in my temple. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

Isaiah 66:22

the new heavens and the new earth

See how you translated this in [Isaiah 65:17](#).

ULT

²² For just as the new heavens and the new earth that I will make will remain before me—this is Yahweh's declaration—so your descendants will remain, and your name will remain.

UST

²² I also promise that just like the new heaven and the new earth will last forever, you will always have descendants, and you will always be honored.

Isaiah 66:23

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²³ From one month to the next, and from one Sabbath to the next, all people will come to bow down to me—says Yahweh.

UST

²³ At every festival to celebrate the Sabbath each week and the new moon each month, everyone will come and worship me. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

Isaiah 66:24

General Information:

Yahweh finishes speaking.

They will go out

Here “they” refers to all the people, the faithful Israelites and foreigners, who come to worship Yahweh.

the worms ... and the fire

Both clauses describe the same idea to emphasize Yahweh's punishment. (See: [Parallelism](#))

the worms that eat them

The worms represent the horror of decay and rot that are Yahweh's punishment on the wicked. (See: [Metonymy](#))

the fire that consumes

Fire also represents Yahweh's judgment. (See: [Metonymy](#))

will not be quenched

This can be expressed positively. Alternate translation: “will burn forever” (See: [Litotes](#))

all flesh

This expression represents all created living beings that shrink from the dead. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁴ They will go out and see the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me, for the worms that eat them will not die, and the fire that consumes them will not be quenched; and it will be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

UST

²⁴ Then they will go out of Jerusalem and look at the corpses of those who rebelled against me. The maggots in those corpses will never die, the fire will never stop burning them, and everyone who sees their corpses will detest them.”



unfoldingWord® Translation Academy

Version 29

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: Isaiah 1:7; 1:13; 1:17; 2:10; 2:17; 5:7; 5:12; 7:11; 7:22; 10:16; 10:25; 10:33; 11:13; 12:2; 12:4; 13:6; 13:9; 13:19; 14:21; 15:5; 16:5; 19:3; 19:20; 22:8; 24:12; 25:1; 26:16; 26:18; 26:20; 27:5; 28:6; 28:12; 28:22; 30:1; 30:2; 30:3; 30:13; 31:9; 32:6; 33:2; 33:6; 33:13; 33:15; 34:6; 35:4; 37:28; 40:6; 42:25; 43:28; 44:26; 45:3; 46:13; 49:8; 51:20; 54:8; 54:14; 57:1; 59:14; 59:15; 59:16; 63:7)

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: Isaiah 1:5; 1:6; 1:7; 1:8; 1:26; 1:27; 1:28; 2:2; 2:9; 2:11; 2:12; 2:17; 3:5; 4:3; 5:5; 5:6; 5:15; 5:16; 5:30; 6:4; 6:5; 6:7; 6:10; 6:13; 7:2; 7:4; 7:8; 7:20; 7:25; 8:4; 8:9; 8:10; 8:15; 8:22; 9:1; 9:5; 9:6; 9:10; 9:16; 9:19; 10:22; 10:23; 10:27; 10:33; 11:13; 13:10; 13:15; 13:16; 13:19; 13:20; 13:22; 14:15; 14:20; 14:25; 14:26; 15:1; 16:5; 17:2; 17:9; 18:3; 19:3; 19:18; 19:21; 19:25; 20:6; 21:2; 21:3; 22:2; 22:3; 22:14; 22:19; 23:1; 23:8; 23:14; 23:15; 23:16; 23:18; 24:3; 24:5; 24:6; 24:10; 24:18; 24:19; 24:22; 25:1; 25:5; 25:9; 25:10; 26:1; 26:6; 26:10; 26:11; 27:7; 27:9; 27:10; 27:11; 27:12; 27:13; 28:3; 28:7; 28:9; 28:11; 28:13; 28:18; 28:22; 28:27; 28:28; 29:4; 29:12; 29:13; 29:17; 29:20; 30:1; 30:14; 30:15; 30:24; 30:29; 30:31; 30:32; 30:33; 31:3; 31:4; 31:8; 32:5; 32:10; 32:14; 32:15; 32:19; 32:20; 33:1; 33:3; 33:4; 33:5; 33:8; 33:10; 33:12; 33:20; 33:23; 33:24; 34:3; 34:4; 35:2; 35:8; 35:9; 36:15; 37:10; 38:10; 38:12; 38:14; 38:16; 39:2; 39:6; 40:2; 40:4; 40:5; 40:15; 40:17; 40:21; 40:24; 42:17; 42:22; 43:2; 43:7; 43:10; 43:17; 43:26; 44:9; 44:11; 44:21; 44:26; 44:28; 45:14; 45:16; 45:17; 45:18; 45:22; 45:25; 46:3; 46:5; 47:1; 47:3; 47:5; 48:1; 48:8; 48:19; 49:5; 49:7; 49:23; 49:24; 49:25; 50:1; 50:4; 50:7; 51:1; 51:3; 51:7; 51:12; 52:3; 52:5; 52:13; 52:15; 53:1; 53:3; 53:4; 53:5; 53:7; 53:8; 53:10; 53:12; 54:5; 54:10; 54:13; 54:14; 54:17; 55:6; 55:12; 55:13; 56:1; 56:5; 56:7; 57:1; 57:6; 58:12; 59:5; 59:6; 59:14; 59:19; 60:2; 60:4; 60:7; 60:11; 60:12; 60:18; 60:21; 61:3; 61:6; 61:9; 62:4; 62:12; 63:15; 63:19; 64:11; 65:8; 65:16; 65:17; 65:19; 65:20; 65:23; 66:5; 66:11; 66:12; 66:13; 66:14; 66:16)

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**.’”

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**.

(Go back to: [Isaiah 1:2](#); [8:9](#); [21:2](#); [23:1](#); [23:2](#); [24:15](#); [41:1](#); [44:23](#); [45:8](#); [49:13](#); [51:17](#); [52:1](#); [54:11](#))

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: Isaiah 1:8; 1:9; 1:18; 2:6; 2:19; 2:22; 3:4; Notes; 5:2; 5:7; 5:8; 5:10; 5:13; 6:8; 7:8; 7:9; 7:15; 7:24; 8:3; 8:6; 8:12; 9:5; 9:9; 9:10; 10:7; 10:20; 10:22; 10:24; 11:3; 11:8; 12:1; 13:3; 13:9; 13:12; 13:16; Notes; 14:8; 14:13; 14:18; 14:31; 17:9; 18:3; 18:4; 18:5; 19:8; 19:19; 19:20; 19:21; 19:23; 20:4; 21:1; 21:5; 21:13; 21:16; 22:4; 22:9; 22:16; 24:14; 24:21; 26:18; Notes; 27:11; 28:17; 28:21; 28:29; 29:9; 29:15; 29:21; 29:22; 29:24; 30:15; 30:16; 30:30; 30:33; 31:3; 31:4; 32:6; 32:10; 32:11; 32:12; 32:14; 32:20; 33:3; 33:7; 33:14; 33:18; 34:8; 35:7; 35:8; 36:7; 36:11; 36:12; 37:4; 37:9; 37:16; 37:17; 37:24; 37:26; 37:29; 38:1; 38:8; 38:14; 38:15; 38:17; 38:20; 38:21; Notes; 39:2; 40:9; Notes; 43:9; 43:10; 43:14;

43:16; 43:17; 44:11; 49:8; 51:2; 51:5; 51:21; 51:23; 52:2; 52:11; 52:14; 53:4; 53:5; 54:9; 55:2; 55:11; Notes; 56:3; 57:5; 57:7; Notes; 63:9; 63:11; 65:3; 65:4; 65:8; 66:17)

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:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-events\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro\]\]](#)

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: [Isaiah 38:21](#))

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: [Isaiah 7:23](#))

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: [Isaiah 5:10](#))

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.

<div style="background-color: #ccc; width: 10px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <div style="background-color: #ccc; width: 10px; height: 40px;"></div>	<p>.A man's name in Hebrew letters — זְפַנְיָהּ</p> <p>"Zephaniah" — The same name in Roman letters</p>
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(2) You can spell the word as the Other Language spells it, and pronounce it the way your language normally pronounces those letters.

<div style="background-color: #ccc; width: 10px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <div style="background-color: #ccc; width: 10px; height: 40px;"></div>	<p>Zephaniah — This is a man's name.</p> <p>"Zephaniah" — The name as it is spelled in English, but you can pronounce it according to the rules of your language.</p>
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(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.

<div style="background-color: #ccc; width: 10px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <div style="background-color: #ccc; width: 10px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 10px;"></div> <div style="background-color: #ccc; width: 10px; height: 40px;"></div>	<p>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."</p> <p>"Sefania"</p> <p>"Sefanaia"</p> <p>"Sefanaya"</p>
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(Go back to: [Isaiah 6:2](#); [6:6](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What are direct and indirect quotations?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Pronouns](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-quotations\]\]](#)

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!**'

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:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-quotesinquotes\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Isaiah 8:11](#); [8:13](#); [36:7](#))

Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding

Description

In some languages, phrases that modify a noun can be used with the noun for two different purposes. They can either (1) distinguish the noun from other similar items, or (2) they can give more information about the noun. That information could be new to the reader, or a reminder about something the reader might already know. Other languages use modifying phrases with a noun only for distinguishing the noun from other similar things. When people who speak these languages hear a modifying phrase along with a noun, they assume that its function is to distinguish one item from another similar item.

This page answers the question: *When a phrase is used with a noun, what is the difference between phrases that distinguish the noun from others and phrases that simply inform or remind?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences\]\]](#)

Some languages use a comma to mark the difference between (1) making a distinction between similar items and (2) giving more information about an item. Without the comma, the sentence below communicates that it is making a distinction:

- Mary gave some of the food to **her sister who was very thankful**.
 - If her sister was usually thankful, the phrase “who was thankful” could distinguish this sister of Mary’s from another sister who was not usually thankful.

With the comma, the sentence is giving more information:

- Mary gave some of the food to **her sister, who was very thankful**.
 - This same phrase can be used to give us more information about Mary’s sister. It tells us about how Mary’s sister responded when Mary gave her the food. In this case it does not distinguish one sister from another sister.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Many source languages of the Bible use phrases that modify a noun both for distinguishing the noun from another similar item and also for giving more information about the noun. You (the translator) must be careful to understand which meaning the author intended in each case.
- Some languages use phrases that modify a noun only for distinguishing the noun from another similar item. When translating a phrase that is used for giving more information, translators who speak these languages will need to separate the phrase from the noun. Otherwise, people who read it or hear it will think that the phrase is meant to distinguish the noun from other similar items.

Examples From the Bible

Examples of words and phrases that are used to distinguish one item from other possible items:

(These usually do not cause any problem in translation.)

■ The curtain is to separate **the holy place** from **the most holy place**. (Exodus 26:33b ULT)

The words “holy” and “most holy” distinguish two different places from each other and from any other place.

■ A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to **the woman who bore him**. (Proverbs 17:25 ULT)

The phrase “who bore him” distinguishes which woman the son is bitterness to. He is not bitterness to all women, but to his mother.

Examples of words and phrases that are used to give added information or a reminder about an item:

(These are a translation issue for languages that do not use these.)

... for **your righteous judgments** are good. (Psalm 119:39b ULT)

The word “righteous” simply reminds us that God’s judgments are righteous. It does not distinguish his righteous judgments from his unrighteous judgments, because all of his judgments are righteous.

How can Sarah, **who is 90 years old**, bear a son? (Genesis 17:17b ULT)

The phrase “who is 90 years old” is the reason that Abraham did not think that Sarah could bear a son. He was not distinguishing one woman named Sarah from another woman named Sarah who was a different age, and he was not telling anyone something new about her age. He simply did not think that a woman who was that old could bear a child.

I will wipe away mankind **whom I have created** from the surface of the earth. (Genesis 6:7 ULT)

The phrase “whom I have created” is a reminder of the relationship between God and mankind. It is the reason God had the right to wipe away mankind. There is not another mankind that God did not create.

Translation Strategies

If readers would understand the purpose of a phrase with a noun, then consider keeping the phrase and the noun together. For languages that use words or phrases with a noun only to distinguish one item from another, here are some strategies for translating phrases that are used to inform or remind.

- (1) Put the information in another part of the sentence and add words that show its purpose.
- (2) Use one of your language’s ways for expressing that this is just added information. It may be by adding a small word, or by changing the way the voice sounds. Sometimes changes in the voice can be shown with punctuation marks, such as parentheses or commas.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Put the information in another part of the sentence and add words that show its purpose.

I hate those who serve **worthless** idols (Psalm 31:6 ULT)

By saying “worthless idols,” David was commenting about all idols and giving his reason for hating those who serve them. He was not distinguishing worthless idols from valuable idols.

>

Because idols are worthless, I hate those who serve them.

... for your **righteous** judgments are good. (Psalm 119:39b ULT)

... for your judgments are good **because they are righteous**.

Can Sarah, **who is 90 years old**, bear a son? (Genesis 17:17b ULT)

The phrase “who is 90 years old” is a reminder of Sarah’s age. It tells why Abraham was asking the question. He did not expect that a woman who was that old could bear a child.

>

Can Sarah bear a son **even when she is 90 years old**?

I will call on Yahweh, **who is worthy to be praised**. (2 Samuel 22:4a ULT) There is only one Yahweh. The phrase “who is worthy to be praised” gives a reason for calling on Yahweh.

I will call on Yahweh, because **he is worthy to be praised**

(2) Use one of your language’s ways for expressing that this is just added information.

You are my Son, **whom I love**. I am pleased with you. (Luke 3:22 ULT)

You are my Son. **I love you** and I am pleased with you.

Receiving my love, you are my Son. I am pleased with you.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[*Double Negatives*](#)

(Go back to: [Isaiah 44:10](#))

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:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-parts-of-speech\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences\]\]](#)

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 English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one, creating a positive sentence. So, “He is not unintelligent” means “He is intelligent.”
- In some languages, such as French and Spanish, two negative words in a clause do not cancel each other to become a positive. 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 double negative creates a stronger negative statement.
- In some languages, a 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, including the languages of the Bible, a double negative can produce a stronger positive meaning than a simple positive statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” can mean “He is very intelligent.” In this case, the double negative is actually the figure of speech called [litotes](#).

Biblical Greek can do all of the above. So to translate sentences with double negatives accurately and clearly in your language, you need to know what each double negative means in the Bible and how to express the same idea in your language.

Examples From the Bible

The Greek of John 15:5 says:

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν

Without me **not** you can do **nothing**

We cannot reproduce this double negative in the English ULT because in English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one. In English, and perhaps in your language, we need to choose only one of the negatives and say either:

Without me, you can do **nothing**.

or:

Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

... in order **not** to be **unfruitful**. (Titus 3:14b ULT)

This means "in order to be fruitful."

A prophet is **not without** honor (Mark 6:4 ULT)

This means "a prophet is honored."

I do **not** want you to be **ignorant**. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

This means "I want you to be knowledgeable."

Translation Strategies

If the way that the double negative is used in the Bible is natural and has the same meaning as in your language, consider using it in the same way. Otherwise, you could consider these strategies:

(1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is 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 negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.

(3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is 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 negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν

Without me **not** you can do **nothing** (John 15:5)

Without me, you can do **nothing**.

or:

Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

(3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

...ἰώτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία **οὐ μὴ** παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου (Matthew 5:18)

...iota one or one serif **not not** may pass away from the law

...**not even** one iota or one serif may pass away from the law

or:

...**certainly no** iota or serif may pass away from the law

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Isaiah 1:6](#); [7:9](#); [34:16](#); [39:2](#); [39:4](#); [48:16](#))

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: [Isaiah 2:12](#); [5:26](#); [5:29](#); [6:1](#); [7:4](#); [7:23](#); [8:14](#); [8:15](#); [9:18](#); [10:7](#); [10:17](#); [10:32](#); [13:20](#); [14:3](#); [15:1](#); [16:2](#); [28:5](#); [28:21](#); [29:2](#); [29:7](#); [29:9](#); [30:13](#); [31:4](#); [35:2](#); [35:4](#); [35:10](#); [40:26](#); [40:27](#); [41:4](#); [41:5](#); [41:11](#); [41:14](#); [42:14](#); [42:22](#); [43:4](#); [43:7](#); [43:11](#); [43:25](#); [44:8](#); [44:21](#); [45:4](#); [45:13](#); [45:16](#); [45:17](#); [47:1](#); [48:12](#); [48:15](#); [48:19](#); [49:19](#); [51:3](#); [51:11](#); [51:19](#); [56:5](#); [57:11](#))

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 ?*

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: Isaiah 1:3; 1:27; 2:3; 5:7; 6:2; 6:9; 11:5; 11:6; 13:4; 13:16; 13:22; 14:4; 16:11; 17:3; 17:6; 19:2; 19:22; 19:23; 21:2; 24:2; 27:4; 27:13; 29:5; 30:13; 30:17; 33:2; 33:6; 34:1; 35:2; 35:6; 37:24; 37:30; 40:4; 41:26; 42:7; 42:8; 43:20; 43:28; 44:2; 44:3; 44:22; 46:10; 48:18; 49:18; 52:1; 55:7; 60:17; 61:9)

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: [Isaiah 7:20](#); [8:3](#); [26:19](#); [43:17](#); [47:3](#); [50:11](#); [57:1](#); [57:2](#); [57:7](#))

Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

Description

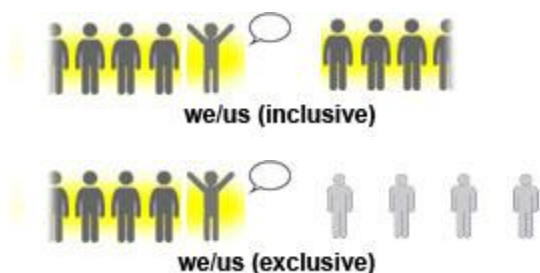
Some languages have more than one form of “we”: an inclusive form that means “I and you” and an exclusive form that means “I and someone else but not you.” The exclusive form excludes the person being spoken to. The inclusive form includes the person being spoken to and possibly others. This is also 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:

[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: [Isaiah 1:9](#); [1:18](#); [6:8](#); [9:6](#); [24:16](#); [26:8](#); [26:12](#); [33:21](#); [33:22](#); [38:20](#); [42:24](#); [47:4](#); [53:1](#); [59:9](#); [59:12](#); [63:7](#))

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:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-explicitinfo\]\]](#)

[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: [Isaiah 1:24](#); [3:15](#); [6:12](#); [14:22](#); [17:3](#); [17:6](#); [19:4](#); [25:12](#); [26:16](#); [29:23](#); [30:1](#); [30:12](#); [37:34](#); [40:2](#); [41:14](#); [48:2](#); [49:10](#); [52:5](#); [54:8](#); [54:10](#); [54:13](#); [54:17](#); [59:20](#); [61:7](#); [66:2](#); [66:17](#))

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: [Isaiah 1:5](#); [3:14](#); [7:5](#); [7:16](#); [8:19](#); [9:3](#); [10:22](#); [14:3](#); [27:8](#); [29:6](#); [37:30](#); [38:12](#); [38:18](#); [40:1](#); [40:18](#); [41:24](#); [42:6](#); [42:9](#); [42:18](#); [42:23](#); [43:10](#); [45:14](#); [48:17](#); [54:3](#); [58:1](#); [59:2](#); [59:3](#); [59:12](#); [65:18](#))

Generic Noun Phrases

Description

Generic noun phrases refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things. This happens frequently in proverbs, because proverbs tell about things that are true about people in general.

This page answers the question: *What are generic noun phrases and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech\]\]](#)

Can **a man** walk on hot coals without scorching his feet?
So is **the man who goes in to his neighbor's wife;**
the one who touches her will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 6:28-29 ULT)

The phrases in bold above do not refer to a specific man. They refer to any man who does these things.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of showing that noun phrases refer to something in general. You (the translator) should refer to these general ideas in ways that are natural in your language.

Examples From the Bible

The **righteous person** is kept away from trouble and it comes upon **the wicked** instead. (Proverbs 11:8 ULT)

The bold phrases above do not refer to a specific person but to anyone who does what is right or anyone who is wicked.

People curse **the man who refuses to sell grain**. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

This does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who refuses to sell grain.

Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)

The phrase “a good man” does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who is good. The phrase “a man who makes evil plans” does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who makes evil plans.

Translation Strategies

If your language can use the same wording as in the ULT to refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things, consider using the same wording. If not, here are some strategies you might use.

- (1) Use the word “the” in the noun phrase.
- (2) Use the word “a” in the noun phrase.
- (3) Use the word “any,” as in “any person” or “anyone.”
- (4) Use the plural form, as in “people.”

(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the word “the” in the noun phrase.

Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)

“Yahweh gives favor to **the good man**, but he condemns **the man who makes evil plans**.” (Proverbs 12:2)

(2) Use the word “a” in the noun phrase.

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

“People curse **a man** who refuses to sell grain.”

(3) Use the word “any,” as in “any person” or “anyone.”

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

“People curse **any man** who refuses to sell grain.”

(4) Use the plural form, as in “people” (or in this sentence, “men”).

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

“People curse **men** who refuse to sell grain”

(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

“People curse **whoever** refuses to sell grain.”

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-gendernotations\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Isaiah 3:2](#); [3:3](#); [3:10](#); [4:3](#); [5:3](#); [5:7](#); [11:6](#); [11:7](#); [11:8](#); [13:20](#); [19:23](#); [23:2](#); [24:2](#); [24:12](#); [25:2](#); [26:5](#); [26:10](#); [27:10](#); [28:7](#); [30:6](#))

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: [Isaiah 30:4](#))

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: [Isaiah 1:19](#); [2:19](#); [49:10](#))

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 Isaiah](#); [Isaiah 1:1](#); [7:1](#); [7:3](#); [7:6](#); [7:14](#); [8:6](#); [9:11](#); [10:9](#); [10:26](#); [10:28](#); [10:29](#); [10:30](#); [10:31](#); [10:32](#); [11:11](#); [13:1](#); [13:12](#); [15:1](#); [15:2](#); [15:4](#); [15:5](#); [15:6](#); [15:8](#); [15:9](#); [16:1](#); [16:7](#); [16:8](#); [17:1](#); [17:2](#); [17:5](#); [19:11](#); [19:13](#); [20:1](#); [21:11](#); [21:13](#); [21:14](#); [21:16](#); [22:6](#); [22:15](#); [22:20](#); [23:1](#); [23:3](#); [28:21](#); [29:1](#); [30:4](#); [30:7](#); [34:6](#); [36:1](#); [36:2](#); [36:3](#); [36:11](#); [36:19](#); [36:22](#); [37:2](#); [37:8](#); [37:9](#); [37:12](#); [37:13](#); [37:17](#); [37:37](#); [37:38](#); [39:1](#); [42:11](#); [43:3](#); [44:2](#); [45:14](#); [46:1](#); [49:12](#); [60:6](#); [60:7](#); [63:1](#); [65:10](#); [66:19](#))

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: [Isaiah 32:14](#); [34:12](#); [35:6](#); [37:18](#); [37:25](#); [39:2](#); [39:4](#); [41:2](#); [41:15](#); [51:20](#); [57:9](#); [60:20](#))

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: [Isaiah 1:9](#); [48:18](#); [54:10](#); [64:1](#); [64:2](#))

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: Isaiah 1:1; 1:8; 1:15; 2:11; 2:14; 4:1; 6:11; 7:1; 8:11; 9:2; 9:4; 9:8; 9:11; 9:19; 10:20; 10:30; 10:32; 13:10; 13:20; 15:2; 16:1; 17:7; 22:8; 23:2; 24:14; 25:10; 26:3; 26:16; 28:6; 28:19; 28:21; 29:16; 29:22; 30:12; 31:2; 31:4; 32:8; 33:3; 33:15; 34:8; 34:10; 34:17; 35:8; 36:11; 36:16; 36:22; 37:2; 37:7; 37:16; 37:22; 37:23; 37:26; 37:36; 38:3; 38:4; 38:15; 41:25; 47:8; 49:23; 51:13; 52:2; 52:8; 52:15; 53:8; 53:10; 54:8; 54:15; 55:2; 56:2; 57:17; 58:7; 58:8; 62:11; 64:5; 64:7; 64:9; 65:2; 65:6; 65:16)

Imperatives — Other Uses

Description

Imperative sentences are mainly used to express a desire or requirement that someone do something. In the Bible, sometimes imperative sentences have other uses.

This page answers the question: *What other uses are there for imperative sentences in the Bible?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentencetypes\]\]](#)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use an imperative sentence for some of the functions that they are used for in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

Speakers often use imperative sentences to tell or ask their listeners to do something. In Genesis 26, God spoke to Isaac and told him not to go to Egypt but to live where God would tell him to live.

Now Yahweh appeared to him and said, “**Do not go down** to Egypt; **live** in the land that I tell you to live in.” (Genesis 26:2 ULT)

Sometimes imperative sentences in the Bible have other uses.

Imperatives that make things happen

God can make things happen by commanding that they happen. Jesus healed a man by commanding that the man be healed. The man could not do anything to obey the command, but Jesus caused him to be healed by commanding it. (In this context, the command “Be clean” means to “be healed” so that others around would know that it was safe to touch the man again.)

“I am willing. **Be clean.**” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. (Matthew 8:3b ULT)

In Genesis 1, God commanded that there should be light, and by commanding it, he caused it to exist. Some languages, such as the Hebrew of the Bible, have commands that are in the third person. English does not do that, and so it must turn the third-person command into a general, second-person command, as in the ULT:

God said, “**Let there be** light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

Languages that have third-person commands can follow the original Hebrew, which translates into English as something like “light must be.”

Imperatives that function as blessings

In the Bible, God blesses people by using imperatives. This indicates what his will is for them.

God blessed them and said to them, “**Be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **Have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28 ULT)

Imperatives that function as conditions

An imperative sentence can also be used to tell the **condition** under which something will happen. The proverbs mainly tell about life and things that often happen. The purpose of Proverbs 4:6 below is not primarily to give a command, but to teach what people can expect to happen **if** they love wisdom.

Do not abandon wisdom and she will watch over you;
love her and she will keep you safe. (Proverbs 4:6 ULT)

The purpose of Proverbs 22:6, below, is to teach what people can expect to happen if they teach their children the way they should go.

Teach a child the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction. (Proverbs 22:6 ULT)

Translation Strategies

- (1) If people would not use an imperative sentence for one of the functions in the Bible, try using a statement instead.
- (2) If people would not understand that a sentence is used to cause something to happen, add a connecting word like “so” to show that what happened was a result of what was said.
- (3) If people would not use a command as a condition, translate it as a statement with the words “if” and “then.”

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If people would not use an imperative sentence for one of the functions in the Bible, try using a statement instead.

Be clean. (Matthew 8:3b ULT)

“You are now clean.”
“I now cleanse you.”

God said, “**Let there be** light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

God said, “**There is now light**” and there was light.

God blessed them and said to them, “**Be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **Have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28 ULT)

God blessed them and said to them, “**My will for you is that you be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **I want you to have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

- (2) If people would not understand that a sentence is used to cause something to happen, add a connecting word like “so” to show that what happened was a result of what was said.

God said, “**Let there be** light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

God said, ‘Let there be light,’ **so** there was light.
God said, “Light must be;” **as a result**, there was light.

(3) If people would not use a command as a condition, translate it as a statement with the words “if” and “then.”

Teach a child the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction. (Proverbs 22:6 ULT)

Translated as:

If you teach a child the way he should go,
then when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction.”

(Go back to: [Isaiah 6:9](#))

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.

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:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-events\]\]](#)

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.

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](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-participants]]

(Go back to: [Isaiah 37:1](#))

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: [Isaiah 5:19](#); [19:12](#); [29:1](#); [36:8](#); [41:21](#); [43:9](#); [43:26](#); [47:12](#); [55:1](#); [57:12](#); [57:13](#))

Litotes

Description

Litotes is a figure of speech in which the speaker expresses a strong positive meaning by negating a word or phrase that means the opposite of the meaning that he intends. For example, someone could intend to communicate that something is extremely good by describing it as "not bad." The difference between a litotes and a **double negative** is that a litotes heightens the positive meaning beyond what a plain positive statement would do, and a double negative does not. In the example above, the literal meaning of "not bad," taken as a plain double negative, would be "acceptable" or even "good." But if the speaker intended it as a litotes, then the meaning is "very good" or "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: [Isaiah 40:26](#); [41:9](#); [62:6](#); [65:8](#); [66:24](#))

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.

"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)

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:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

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: [Isaiah 1:2](#); [5:11](#); [7:11](#); [10:18](#); [18:2](#); [18:7](#); [27:3](#); [28:19](#); [33:13](#); [34:10](#); [37:16](#); [37:28](#); [40:28](#); [41:23](#); [43:2](#); [43:5](#); [44:6](#); [44:23](#); [45:6](#); [45:7](#); [45:22](#); [48:12](#); [48:20](#); [49:6](#); [59:19](#); [60:11](#); [62:6](#); [62:11](#); [65:17](#))

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: Isaiah 1 General Notes; 1:2; 1:4; 1:5; 1:6; 1:10; 1:14; 1:16; 1:17; 1:18; 1:20; 1:21; 1:22; 1:23; 1:25; 2:2; 2:3; 2:5; 2:6; 2:7; 2:8; 2:9; 2:11; 2:12; 2:13; 2:14; 2:15; 3:1; 3:4; 3:6; 3:7; 3:8; 3:10; 3:12; 3:13; 3:14; 3:15; 3:16; Notes; 4:2; 4:4; 5:3; 5:7; 5:11; 5:14; 5:15; 5:16; 5:18; 5:19; 5:20; 5:24; 5:25; 5:26; 5:29; 5:30; 6:3; 6:5; 6:7; 6:10; 6:13; 7:4; 7:18; 7:20; 8:6; 8:7; 8:8; 8:14; 8:20; 9:1; 9:2; 9:4; 9:6; 9:12; 9:14; 9:16; 9:17; 9:18; 9:19; 9:20; 9:21; 10:2; 10:4; 10:5; 10:6; 10:13; 10:17; 10:18; 10:24; 10:26; 10:27; 10:33; 10:34; 11:1; 11:2; 11:5; 11:12; 11:14; 11:15; 12:2; 12:3; 13:5; 13:6; 13:7; 13:8; 13:9; 13:11; 13:17; 14:8; 14:11; 14:12; 14:16; 14:19; 14:20; 14:21; 14:23; 14:25; 14:26; 14:27; 14:29; 14:30; 14:31; 15:5; 15:8; 16:3; 16:4; 16:5; 16:8; 16:9; 17:4; 17:6; 17:10; 17:14; Notes; 18:1; 18:2; 19:1; 19:10; 19:13; 19:14; 19:15; 19:16; Notes; Notes; 21:9; 21:10; 21:15; Notes; 22:18; 22:19; 22:21; 22:22; 22:23; 22:24; 22:25; 23:8; 23:11; 23:15; 23:16; 23:17; 24:5; 24:6; 24:18; 24:20; 25:4; 25:7; 25:8; 25:10; 25:11; 26:1; 26:4; 26:5; 26:7; 26:8; 26:9; 26:11; 26:14; 26:19; 27:1; 27:2; 27:4; 27:6; 27:8; 27:9; 27:11; 27:12; Notes; 28:1; 28:2; 28:3; 28:4; 28:5; 28:7; 28:13; 28:15; 28:16; 28:17; 28:18; 28:22; 29:9; 29:10; 29:13; 29:14; 29:15; 29:16; 29:17; 29:18; 29:21; 30:1; 30:2; 30:3; 30:8; 30:9; 30:11; 30:14; 30:15; 30:21; 30:26; 30:27; 30:28; 30:29; 30:30; 30:31; 30:32; 31:1; 31:2; 31:3; 31:5; 31:9; 32:3; 32:15; 33:2; 33:5; 33:6; 33:10; 33:11; 33:16; 33:20; 33:21; 33:23; Notes; 34:5; 34:6; 34:9; 34:11; 34:17; 35:2; 35:8; 36:6; 37:4; 37:23; 37:27; 37:29; 37:31; 38:3; 38:10; 38:17; 40:3; 40:4; 40:6; 40:7; 40:8; 40:11; 40:12; 40:21; 40:22; 40:24; 40:26; 40:27; 40:28; 40:31; 41:2; 41:3; 41:5; 41:9; 41:10; 41:13; 41:14; 41:15; 41:16; 41:17; 41:25; 41:29; 42:3; 42:5; 42:6; 42:7; 42:13; 42:15; 42:16; 42:17; 42:18; 42:20; 42:24; 42:25; 43:2; 43:6; 43:8; 43:13; 43:17; 43:25; 44:2; 44:3; 44:4; 44:8; 44:9; 44:18; 44:20; 44:24; 44:26; 44:28; 45:1; 45:2; 45:8; 45:9; 45:10; 45:13; 45:16; 45:22; 46:1; 46:2; 46:3; 46:4; 46:11; 46:12; 47:1; 47:3; 47:5; 47:6; 47:7; 47:8; 47:10; 47:11; 47:12; 47:14; 48:1; 48:4; 48:8; 48:10; 48:13; 48:17; 48:18; 48:19; 48:20; 49:2; 49:5; 49:6; 49:8; 49:9; 49:10; 49:11; 49:16; 49:17; 49:18; 49:19; 49:20; 49:21; 49:22; 49:23; 49:25; 49:26; 50:1; 50:2; 50:3; 50:4; 50:5; 50:6; 50:7; 50:9; 50:10; 50:11; 51:1; 51:4; 51:5; 51:6; 51:7; 51:8; 51:9; 51:13; 51:15; 51:16; 51:17; 51:18; 51:20; 51:21; 51:22; 51:23; 52:1; 52:3; 52:5; 52:10; 52:11; 52:12; 52:15; 53:2; 53:4; 53:6; 53:10; 53:11; 53:12; 54:1; 54:2; 54:4; 54:5; 54:6; 54:8; 54:10; 54:11; 54:17; 55:1; 55:2; 55:3; 55:7; 55:9; 55:11; 55:13; 56:3; 56:9; 56:10; 56:11; 57:3; 57:10; 57:14; 58:8; 58:10; 58:11; 58:14; 59:1; 59:4; 59:5; 59:6; 59:7; 59:8; 59:9; 59:12; 59:17; 60:1; 60:2; 60:5; 60:16; 60:20; 60:21; 61:3; 61:10; 61:11; 62:4; 62:6; 62:11; 63:3; 63:6; 63:9; 63:11; 63:17; 64:1; 64:8; 65:5; 65:6; 65:8; 65:14; 66:1; 66:4; 66:7; 66:9; 66:11; 66:12; 66:15)

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: Isaiah 1:1; 1:3; 1:14; 1:15; 1:20; 1:21; 1:25; 1:26; 1:27; 2:1; 2:2; 2:4; 2:5; 2:7; 2:8; 2:11; 3:9; 3:11; 3:18; 3:25; 3:26; 4:4; 5:7; 5:15; 5:21; 5:25; 5:29; 6:5; 6:10; 7:1; 7:2; 7:5; 7:8; 7:13; 7:20; 8:8; 8:17; 9:1; 9:7; 9:20; 10:10; 10:11; 10:13; 10:14; 10:27; 10:29; 10:30; 10:31; 10:32; 11:2; 11:4; 11:9; 11:10; 11:11; 12:4; 13:1; 13:2; 13:3; 13:5; 13:11; 13:18; 14:1; 14:2; 14:4; 14:5; 14:7; 14:16; 14:19; 14:21; 14:26; 14:31; 15:2; 15:4; 15:9; 16:5; 16:6; 16:7; 16:8; 16:9; 16:10; 16:11; 16:12; 16:13; 17:3; 17:4; 17:8; 18:2; 18:7; 19:2; 19:4; 19:13; 19:14; 19:16; 19:17; 19:18; 19:21; 19:22; 19:24; 19:25; 20:1; 20:4; 20:5; 21:1; 21:2; 21:5; 21:9; 21:11; 21:13; 21:15; 21:16; 22:1; 22:2; 22:4; 22:6; 22:13; 22:15; 22:18; 22:21; 22:22; 22:23; 22:25; 23:1; 23:3; 23:7; 23:8; 23:9; 23:10; 23:11; 23:12; 23:14; 23:17; 24:3; 24:4; 24:11; 24:15; 24:20; 25:1; 25:3; 25:10; 25:11; 25:12; 26:2; 26:3; 26:5; 26:8; 26:10; 26:11; 26:13; 26:15; 26:18; 27:6; 27:7; 27:8; 27:9; 28:23; 29:1; 29:2; 29:3; 29:7; 29:8; 29:13; 29:17; 29:22; 29:23; 29:24; 30:12; 30:14; 30:20; 30:27; 30:29; 30:30; 30:31; 31:2; 31:3; 31:5; 31:8; 32:9; 32:14; 32:15; 33:2; 33:6; 33:9; 33:11; 33:14; 33:16; 33:17; 34:1; 34:5; 36:5; 36:6; 36:7; 36:9; 36:10; 36:15; 36:17; 36:18; 36:20; 37:4; 37:9; 37:10; 37:20; 37:21; 37:29; 37:31; 37:32; 38:3; 38:6; 38:18; 40:2; 40:9; 40:10; 41:1; 41:5; 41:10; 42:4; 42:5; 42:6; 42:11; 43:6; 43:7; 43:13; 43:28; 44:1; 44:20; 44:21; 45:4; 45:22; 47:1; 47:6; 47:10; 47:14; 48:1; 48:9; 48:12; 48:19; 48:20; 49:1; 49:2; 49:8; 49:16; 50:2; 50:4; 50:10; 51:2; 51:3; 51:5; 51:6; 51:8; 51:14; 51:16; 51:17; 51:19; 51:22; 52:1; 52:2; 52:4; 52:5; 52:6; 52:7; 52:9; 52:10; 52:15; 53:1; 53:3; 53:7; 53:9; 53:11; 53:12; 54:3; 54:6; 54:11; 54:17; 55:13; 56:6; 57:15; 57:17; 57:19; 58:4; 58:6; 59:1; 59:3; 59:6; 59:16; 59:19; 60:9; 60:13; 60:18; 61:2; 61:3; 62:1; 62:3; 62:8; 62:10; 63:4; 63:5; 63:12; 63:14; 63:19; 64:7; 66:6; 66:14; 66:24)

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: [Isaiah 3:14](#); [7:15](#); [7:16](#); [11:4](#); [13:11](#); [25:4](#); [26:19](#); [29:20](#); [32:4](#); [32:5](#); [32:6](#); [32:7](#); [33:23](#); [34:3](#); [35:5](#); [35:8](#); [35:9](#); [35:10](#); [38:11](#); [51:11](#); [52:1](#); [55:7](#))

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: [Isaiah 3:3](#); [7:8](#); [7:23](#); [23:15](#); [23:17](#); [30:17](#); [36:8](#); [37:36](#); [38:5](#); [60:22](#); [65:20](#))

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: [Isaiah 19:24](#); [36:1](#); [37:30](#))

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: [Isaiah 5:1](#); [5:3](#); [5:7](#); [18:6](#); [28:23](#))

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: [Isaiah 1:2; 1:4; 1:5; 1:7; 1:9; 1:10; 1:12; 1:14; 1:16; 1:21; 1:23; 1:24; 1:26; 1:27; 1:29; 1:31; 2:1; 2:3; 2:4; 2:5; 2:7; 2:8; 2:9; 2:12; 3:4; 3:13; 4:3; 5:15; 5:18; 5:24; 5:26; 6:7; 8:9; 8:16; 9:6; 10:1; 10:2; 10:5; 10:15; 10:27; 11:1; 11:4; 13:12; 13:15; 13:22; 14:24; 14:25; 14:29; 17:13; 18:3; 19:5; 19:8; 19:11; 21:11; 22:16; 24:4; 24:11; 24:16; 25:7; 26:6; 26:7; 26:15; 27:11; 28:7; 28:15; 28:23; 28:26; 29:4; 29:14; 29:19; 31:3; 31:4; 31:9; 32:17; 33:1; 33:8; 33:10; 33:16; 34:1; 35:1; 36:17; 37:32; 38:14; 38:19; 39:4; 40:3; 40:10; 40:18; 40:21; 40:22; 40:24; 40:25; 40:29; 40:31; 41:1; 41:9; 41:16; 42:5; 42:7; 42:13; 42:14; 42:16; 42:22; 42:24; 43:1; 43:2; 43:3; 43:4; 43:18; 43:24; 43:28; 44:15; 44:22; 44:26; 45:16; 46:10; 46:11; 47:1; 48:5; 48:9; 48:14; 48:18; 48:19; 49:5; 49:8; 49:22; 50:2; 50:3; 50:5; 50:10; 51:3; 51:4; 51:9; 51:18; 52:13; 53:5; 53:12; 54:1; 57:13; 57:15; 58:1; 58:6; 59:9; 60:2; 60:5; 60:16; 60:20; 60:21; 61:1; 61:2; 61:9; 61:11; 62:1; 62:3; 62:4; 62:8; 62:9; 62:11; 65:12; 65:13; 65:14; 65:17; 66:3; 66:24](#))

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: [Isaiah 1:2](#); [3:9](#); [3:26](#); [10:24](#); [12:1](#); [13:8](#); [14:8](#); [14:9](#); [14:23](#); [19:1](#); [19:3](#); [19:14](#); [23:4](#); [24:23](#); [26:21](#); [30:22](#); [32:13](#); [32:16](#); [33:9](#); [33:14](#); [34:1](#); [34:5](#); [34:7](#); [35:1](#); [35:2](#); [35:7](#); [35:10](#); [40:2](#); [40:9](#); [43:6](#); [43:20](#); [44:3](#); [44:23](#); [46:13](#); [47:1](#); [47:3](#); [47:6](#); [47:8](#); [47:10](#); [47:12](#); [47:14](#); [48:13](#); [49:13](#); [49:14](#); [51:3](#); [51:9](#); [51:11](#); [52:9](#); [55:11](#); [55:12](#); [59:2](#); [59:12](#); [59:14](#); [59:15](#); [59:16](#); [60:9](#); [60:17](#); [64:9](#); [65:16](#))

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.
 - The clothes of me - my clothes — The clothes that I own
- Social Relationship — Someone has some kind of social relationship with another.
 - The mother of John — John's mother - the woman who gave birth to John, or the woman who cared for John
 - A teacher of Israel - Israel's teacher — a person who teaches Israel
- Association — A particular thing is associated with a particular person, place, or thing.
 - The sickness of David - 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.

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)

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:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences\]\]](#)

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: [Isaiah 23:3](#); [33:2](#); [33:20](#); [34:16](#); [36:17](#))

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)

This page answers the question: *What is the predictive past?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

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.

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: [Isaiah 5:13](#); [5:14](#); [5:15](#); [5:25](#); [9:4](#); [10:28](#); [10:29](#); [15:1](#); [21:1](#); [24:15](#); [24:16](#); [27:10](#); [34:2](#); [51:3](#); [54:1](#))

Pronouns

Description

Pronouns are words that people might use instead of using a noun when referring to someone or something. Some examples are "I," "you," "he," "it," "this," "that," "himself," "someone," and others. The personal pronoun is the most common type of pronoun.

This page answers the question: *What are pronouns, and what kinds of pronouns are in some languages?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech\]\]](#)

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to people or things and show whether the speaker is referring to himself, the person he is speaking to, or someone or something else. The following are kinds of information that personal pronouns may provide. Other types of pronouns may give some of this information, as well.

Person

- First Person — The speaker and possibly others (I, me, we, us)
 - [Exclusive and Inclusive "We"](#)
- Second Person — The person or people that the speaker is talking to and possibly others (you)
 - [Forms of You](#)
- Third Person — Someone or something other than the speaker and those he is talking to (he, she, it, they)

Number

- Singular — one (I, you, he, she, it)
- Plural — more than one (we, you, they)
 - Singular Pronouns that Refer to Groups
- Dual — two (Some languages have pronouns specifically for two people or two things.)

Gender

- Masculine — he
- Feminine — she
- Neuter — it

Relationship to other words in the sentence

- Subject of the verb: I, you, he, she, it, we, they
- Object of the verb or preposition: me, you, him, her, it, us, them
- Possessor with a noun: my, your, his, her, its, our, their
- Possessor without a noun: mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs

Other Types of pronouns

Reflexive Pronouns refer to another noun or pronoun in the same sentence: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves.

- John saw **himself** in the mirror. The word “himself” refers to John.

Interrogative Pronouns are used to make a question that needs more than just a yes or no for an answer: what, which, who, whom, whose.

- **Who** built the house?

Relative Pronouns mark a relative clause. The relative pronouns, who, whom, whose, which and that give more information about a noun in the main part of the sentence. Sometimes, the relative adverbs when and where can also be used as relative pronouns.

- I saw the house **that John built**. The clause “that John built” tells which house I saw.
- I saw the man **who built the house**. The clause “who built the house” tells which man I saw.

Demonstrative Pronouns are used to draw attention to someone or something and to show distance from the speaker or something else. The demonstrative pronouns are: this, these, that, and those.

- Have you seen **this** here?
- Who is **that** over there?

Indefinite pronouns are used when no particular noun is being referred to. The indefinite pronouns are: any, anyone, someone, anything, something, and some. Sometimes a personal pronoun is used in a generic way to do this: you, they, he or it.

- He does not want to talk to **anyone**.
- **Someone** fixed it, but I do not know who.
- **They** say that **you** should not wake a sleeping dog.

In the last example, “they” and “you” just refer to people in general.

(Go back to: [Isaiah 2:6](#); [8:7](#); [8:13](#))

Proverbs

Description

Proverbs are short sayings that give wise advice or teach something that is generally true about life. People enjoy proverbs because they give a lot of wisdom in few words. Proverbs in the Bible often use metaphor and parallelism. Proverbs should not be understood as absolute and unchangeable laws. Rather, proverbs offer general advice to a person about how to live his life.

This page answers the question: *What are proverbs, and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Metaphor](#)

[Parallelism](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro\]\]](#)

Hatred stirs up conflicts, but love covers over all offenses. (Proverbs 10:12 ULT)

Here is another example from the book of Proverbs.

Look at the ant, you lazy person, consider her ways, and be wise. It has no commander, officer, or ruler, yet it prepares its food in the summer, and during the harvest it stores up what it will eat. (Proverbs 6:6-8 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Each language has its own ways of saying proverbs. There are many proverbs in the Bible. They need to be translated in the way that people say proverbs in your language so that people recognize them as proverbs and understand what they teach.

Examples From the Bible

A good name is to be chosen over great riches,
and favor is better than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1 ULT)

This means that it is better to be a good person and to have a good reputation than it is to have a lot of money.

Like vinegar on the teeth and smoke in the eyes,
so is the sluggard to those who send him. (Proverbs 10:26 ULT)

This means that a lazy person is very annoying to those who send him to do something.

The way of Yahweh protects those who have integrity,
but it is destruction for the wicked. (Proverbs 10:29 ULT)

This means that Yahweh protects people who do what is right, but he destroys those who are wicked.

Translation Strategies

If translating a proverb literally would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing that. If not, here are some options:

- (1) Find out how people say proverbs in your language, and use one of those ways.
- (2) If certain objects in the proverb are not known to many people in your language group, consider replacing them

with objects that people know and that function in the same way in your language.

(3) Substitute a proverb in your language that has the same teaching as the proverb in the Bible.

(4) Give the same teaching but not in a form of a proverb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Find out how people say proverbs in your language, and use one of those ways.

A good name is to be chosen over great riches,
and favor is better than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1 ULT)

Here are some ideas for ways that people might say a proverb in their language.

It is better to have a good name than to have great riches,
and to be favored by people than to have silver and gold.
Wise people choose a good name over great riches,
and favor over silver and gold.
Try to have a good reputation rather than great riches.
Will riches really help you?
I would rather have a good reputation.

(2) If certain objects in the proverb are not known to many people in your language group, consider replacing them with objects that people know and that function in the same way in your language.

Like **snow in summer** or rain in harvest,
so a fool does not deserve honor. (Proverbs 26:1 ULT)

It is not natural for **a cold wind to blow in the hot season** or for it to rain
in the harvest season;
And it is not natural to honor a foolish person.

(3) Substitute a proverb in your language that has the same teaching as the proverb in the Bible.

Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may bring. (Proverbs 27:1a ULT)
Do not count your chickens before they hatch.

(4) Give the same teaching but not in a form of a proverb.

There is a generation that curses their father
and does not bless their mother.
There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes,

and yet they are not washed of their filth. (Proverbs 30:11-12 ULT)

People who do not respect their parents think that they are righteous,
and they do not turn away from their sin.

(Go back to: [Isaiah 28:20](#))

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: Isaiah 1 General Notes; 1:5; 1:11; 1:12; 2:22; 3:15; 5:4; 7:13; 8:19; Notes; 10:3; 10:8; 10:9; 10:11; 10:15; 14:16; 14:27; 14:32; 19:11; 19:12; 20:6; 22:1; 22:16; 23:7; 23:8; 27:7; 28:9; 28:24; 28:25; 29:15; 29:16; 33:14; 33:18; Notes; 36:4; 36:5; 36:7; 36:9; 36:10; 36:12; 36:18; 36:19; 36:20; 37:11; 37:12; 37:13; 37:23; 37:26; 38:15; Notes; 40:12; 40:13; 40:14; 40:18; 40:21; 40:25; 40:26; 40:27; 40:28; 41:2; 41:4; 41:26; 42:19; 42:24; 43:9; 43:13; 43:19; 44:7; 44:8; 44:10; 44:19; 45:9; 45:10; 45:11; 45:21; 46:5; 48:6; 48:11; 48:14; 49:15; 49:21; 49:24; Notes; 50:1; 50:2; 50:8; 50:9; 50:10; Notes; 51:9; 51:10; 51:12; 51:13; 51:19; 52:5; 53:1; 53:8; 55:2; 57:4; 57:6; 57:11; 58:3; 58:5; 58:6; 58:7; 60:8; 63:1; 63:2; 63:15; 63:17; 64:12; 66:1; 66:8; 66:9)

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: Isaiah 1:8; 1:9; 1:18; 1:30; 1:31; 3:9; 5:7; 5:17; 5:24; 5:25; 5:28; 6:13; 7:2; 7:18; 9:3; 10:6; 10:13; 10:14; 10:16; 10:18; 10:22; 11:9; 11:10; 13:14; 14:19; 16:2; 16:3; 16:11; 17:5; 17:6; 17:12; 17:13; 18:4; 19:14; 19:16; 21:1; 21:3; 23:10; 24:13; 24:20; 25:4; 25:5; 25:10; 25:11; 26:17; 26:18; 28:2; 28:4; 29:2; 29:4; 29:5; 29:7; 29:8; 29:11; 30:13; 30:14; 30:17; 30:22; 30:27; 30:28; 30:29; 30:33; 31:4; 31:5; 32:2; 32:15; 33:4; 33:9; 33:12; 34:4; 35:2; 35:6; 37:3; 38:12; 38:13; 38:14; 40:6; 40:15; 40:22; 40:24; 41:2; 41:15; 41:25; 42:13; 42:14; 44:22; 47:14; 48:4; 49:2; 50:4; 51:6; 51:12; 51:20; 51:23; 53:2; 53:6; 53:7; 54:6; 57:20; 58:1; 58:5; 58:11; 59:10; 59:11; 59:17; 59:19; 60:8; 61:10; 61:11; 62:1; 62:5; 63:13; 63:14; 64:2; 64:6; 66:12; 66:14; 66:15)

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: [Isaiah 2:6](#); [5:15](#); [15:2](#); [15:3](#); [16:1](#); [22:12](#); [32:11](#); [36:22](#); [37:1](#); [37:2](#); [37:22](#); [47:1](#))

Symbolic Language

Description

Symbolic language in speech and writing is the use of symbols to represent other things, other events, etc. In the Bible it occurs most in prophecy and poetry, especially in visions and dreams about things that will happen in the future. Though people may not immediately know the meaning of a symbol, it is important to keep the symbol in the translation.

This page answers the question: *What is symbolic language and how do I translate it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro\]\]](#)

■ Eat this scroll; then go speak to the house of Israel. (Ezekiel 3:1 ULT)

This was in a dream. Eating the scroll is a symbol of Ezekiel reading and understanding well what was written on the scroll, and accepting these words from God into himself.

Purposes of Symbolism

- One purpose of symbolism is to help people understand the importance or severity of an event by putting it in other, very dramatic terms.
- Another purpose of symbolism is to tell some people about something while hiding the true meaning from others who do not understand the symbolism.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

People who read the Bible today may find it hard to recognize that the language is symbolic, and they may not know what the symbol stands for.

Translation Principles

- When symbolic language is used, it is important to keep the symbol in the translation.
- It is also important not to explain the symbol more than the original speaker or writer did, since he may not have wanted everyone living then to be able to understand it easily.

Examples From the Bible

■ After this I saw in my visions of the night **a fourth animal**, terrifying, frightening, and very strong. It had **large iron teeth**; it devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled underfoot what was left. It was different from the other animals, and it had **ten horns**. (Daniel 7:7 ULT)

The meaning of the bolded symbols is explained in Daniel 7:23-24 as shown below. The animals represent kingdoms, iron teeth represent a powerful army, and the horns represent powerful leaders.

■ This is what that person said, 'As for the fourth animal, it will be **a fourth kingdom** on earth that will be different from all the other kingdoms. It will devour the whole earth, and it will trample it down and break it into pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom **ten kings** will arise, and another will arise after them. He will be different from the previous ones, and he will conquer the three kings.' (Daniel 7:23-24 ULT)

■ I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me, and as I turned I saw **seven golden lampstands**. In the middle of the lampstands there was one like a son of man ... He had **seven**

stars in his right hand and **a sword with two sharp edges** was coming out of his mouth. As for the hidden meaning about the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches**, and **the seven lampstands are the seven churches**. (Revelation 1:12-13a, 16a, 20 ULT)

This passage explains the meaning of the seven lampstands and the seven stars. The two-edged sword represents God's word and judgment.

Translation Strategies

- (1) Translate the text with the symbols. Often the speaker or author explains the meaning later in the passage.
- (2) Translate the text with the symbols. Then explain the symbols in footnotes.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Translate the text with the symbols. Often the speaker or author explains the meaning later in the passage.

This is what that person said, 'As for the fourth animal, it will be **a fourth kingdom** on earth that will be different from all the other kingdoms. It will devour the whole earth, and it will trample it down and break it into pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom **ten kings** will arise, and another will arise after them. He will be different from the previous ones, and he will conquer the three kings.' (Daniel 7:23-24 ULT)

- (2) Translate the text with the symbols. Then explain the symbols in footnotes.

After this I saw in my visions of the night **a fourth animal**, terrifying, frightening, and very strong. It had **large iron teeth**; it devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled underfoot what was left. It was different from the other animals, and it had **ten horns**. (Daniel 7:7 ULT)

After this I saw in my dream at night a fourth animal, ¹ terrifying, frightening, and very strong. It had large iron teeth; ² it devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled underfoot what was left. It was different from the other animals, and it had ten horns. ³

The footnotes would look like:

[1] The animal is a symbol for a kingdom.

[2] The iron teeth is a symbol for the kingdom's powerful army.

[3] The horns are a symbol of powerful kings.

(Go back to: [Isaiah 5:6](#))

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: Isaiah 1:14; 1:20; 2:4; 2:8; 3:8; 4:2; 5:12; 6:5; 6:8; 7:1; 7:2; 7:5; 9:11; 9:17; 10:6; 10:13; 10:24; 11:12; 13:16; 14:25; 15:5; 16:11; 17:3; 17:7; 17:8; 17:12; 21:14; 22:14; 23:7; 24:17; 24:18; 26:9; 28:2; 28:11; 28:17; 28:18; 29:18; 30:20; 30:21; 30:23; 30:27; 31:7; 32:6; 33:2; 33:9; 33:17; 33:18; 33:20; 34:16; 35:1; 35:3; 35:4; 35:5; 35:6; 35:10; 36:1; 37:12; 37:14; 37:19; 37:24; 37:25; 37:33; 37:34; 37:37; 38:14; 40:2; 40:3; 40:5; 41:3; 41:20; 44:18; 45:11; 45:12; 45:23; 48:3; 48:8; 48:13; 50:4; 50:6; 50:7; 51:9; 51:11; 51:14; 51:17; 51:21; 52:7; 52:8; 54:3; 55:2; 55:11; 56:2; 58:13; 58:14; 59:7; 62:10; 63:16; 64:4; 65:12; 66:2; 66:14; 66:16)

Textual Variants

Description

Thousands of years ago, people wrote the books of the Bible. Other people then copied them by hand and translated them. They did this work very carefully, and over the years many people made thousands of copies. However, people who looked at them later saw that there were small differences between them. Some copiers accidentally left out some words, or some mistook one word for another that looked like it. Occasionally, they added words or even whole sentences, either by accident or because they wanted to explain something. Modern Bibles are translations of the old copies. Some modern Bibles include some of these sentences that were added. In the ULT, these added sentences are usually written in footnotes.

Bible scholars have read many old copies and compared them with each other. For each place in the Bible where there was a difference, they have figured out which wordings are most likely correct. The translators of the ULT based the ULT on wordings that scholars say are most likely correct. Because people who use the ULT may have access to Bibles that are based on other copies, the ULT translators have sometimes included information about some of the differences between them, either in the ULT footnotes or in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

Translators are encouraged to translate the text in the ULT and to write about added sentences in footnotes, as is done in the ULT. However, if the local church really wants those sentences to be included in the main text, translators may put them in the text and include a footnote about them.

This page answers the question: *Why does the ULT have missing or added verses, and should I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-source-text\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-manuscripts\]\]](#)

Examples From the Bible

Matthew 18:10-11 ULT has a footnote about verse 11.

¹⁰ See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven their angels always look on the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ ^[1]

^[1] Many authorities, some ancient, insert v. 11: **For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.**

John 7:53-8:11 is not in the best earliest manuscripts. It has been included in the ULT, but it is marked off with square brackets ([]) at the beginning and end, and there is a footnote after verse 11.

53 [Then everyone went to his own house ... 11 She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."] ^[2]

^[2] Some ancient manuscripts include John 7:53-8:11

Translation Strategies

When there is a textual variant, you may choose to follow the ULT or another version that you have access to.

- (1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.
- (2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The translation strategies are applied to Mark 7:14-16 ULT, which has a footnote about verse 16.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ ^[1]

^[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ ^[1]

^[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man. ¹⁶ If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." ^[1]

^[1] Some ancient manuscripts do not include verse 16.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-chapverse\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-manuscripts\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-terms\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-original\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Isaiah 19:18](#))

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: [Isaiah 2:20](#); [5:12](#); [6:2](#); [6:6](#); [6:13](#); [11:6](#); [11:7](#); [13:14](#); [13:21](#); [13:22](#); [18:2](#); [19:8](#); [19:9](#); [28:25](#); [29:3](#); [30:28](#); [41:19](#); [44:14](#); [51:20](#); [54:11](#); [54:12](#); [55:13](#))



unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 32

anoint, anointed, anointing

Definition:

The term “anoint” means to rub or pour oil on a person or object. Sometimes the oil was mixed with spices, giving it a sweet, perfumed smell. In biblical times, there were several reasons for anointing someone with oil.

- In the Old Testament, priests, kings, and prophets were anointed with oil to set them apart for special service to God. (This and the other uses are symbolic actions, see [Symbolic Action](#).)
- Objects such as altars or the tabernacle were also anointed with oil to show that they were to be used to worship and glorify God.
- In the New Testament, sick people were anointed with oil for their healing.
- The New Testament records two times that Jesus was anointed with perfumed oil by a woman, as an act of worship. One time Jesus commented that in doing this she was preparing him for his future burial.
- After Jesus died, his friends prepared his body for burial by anointing it with oils and spices.
- The titles “Messiah” (Hebrew) and “Christ” (Greek) mean “the Anointed (One).”
- Jesus the Messiah is the one who was chosen and anointed as a Prophet, High Priest, and King.
- In biblical times, a woman might anoint herself with perfume to make herself more sexually attractive.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the term “anoint” could be translated as “pour oil on” or “put oil on” or “consecrate by pouring perfumed oil on.”
- To “be anointed” could be translated as “be consecrated with oil.” or “be appointed” or “be consecrated.”
- In some contexts the term “anoint” could be translated as “appoint.”
- A phrase like “the anointed priest,” could be translated as “the priest who was consecrated with oil” or “the priest who was set apart by the pouring on of oil.”

(See also: [Christ](#), consecrate, high priest, King of the Jews, priest, [prophet](#))

Bible References:

- 1 John 2:20
- 1 John 2:27
- 1 Samuel 16:2-3
- Acts 4:27-28
- Amos 6:5-6
- Exodus 29:5-7
- James 5:13-15

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0047, H0430, H1101, H1878, H3323, H4397, H4398, H4473, H4886, H4888, H4899, H5480, H8136, G00320, G02180, G07430, G14720, G20250, G34620, G55450, G55480

(Go back to: [Isaiah 45 General Notes](#))

atonement, atone, atoned

Definition:

The terms “atone” and “atonement” refer to how God provided a sacrifice to pay for people’s sins and to appease his wrath for sin.

- In Old Testament times, God allowed temporary atonement to be made for the sins of the Israelites by the offering of a blood sacrifice, which involved killing an animal.
- As recorded in the New Testament, Christ’s death on the cross is the only true and permanent atonement for sin.
- When Jesus died, he took the punishment that people deserve because of their sin. He paid the atonement price with his sacrificial death.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “atone” could be translated by a word or phrase that means “pay for” or “provide payment for” or “cause someone’s sins to be forgiven” or “make amends for a crime.”
- Ways to translate “atonement” could include “payment” or “sacrifice to pay for sin” or “providing the means of forgiveness.”
- Make sure the translation of this term does not refer to payment of money.

(See also: atonement lid, forgive, propitiation, reconcile, redeem)

Bible References:

- Ezekiel 43:25-27
- Ezekiel 45:18-20
- Leviticus 4:20
- Numbers 5:8
- Numbers 28:22

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H3722, H3725, G26430

(Go back to: [Isaiah 53 General Notes](#))

blasphemy, blaspheme, blasphemous

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “blasphemy” refers to speaking in a way that shows a deep disrespect for God or people. To “blaspheme” someone is to speak against that person so that others think something false or bad about him.

- Most often, to blaspheme God means to slander or insult him by saying things that are not true about him or by behaving in an immoral way that dishonors him.
- It is blasphemy for a human being to claim to be God or to claim that there is a God other than the one true God.
- Some English versions translate this term as “slander” when it refers to blaspheming people.

Translation Suggestions:

- To “blaspheme” can be translated as to “say evil things against” or to “dishonor God” or to “slander.”
- Ways to translate “blasphemy” could include “speaking wrongly about others” or “slander” or “spreading false rumors.”

(See also: dishonor, slander)

Bible References:

- 1 Timothy 1:12-14
- Acts 6:11
- Acts 26:9-11
- James 2:5-7
- John 10:32-33
- Luke 12:10
- Mark 14:64
- Matthew 12:31
- Matthew 26:65
- Psalms 74:10

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1288, H1442, H2778, H5006, H5007, H5344, G09870, G09880, G09890

(Go back to: [Isaiah 37 General Notes](#))

call, call out

Definition:

The terms “call” and “call out” usually mean to speak loudly, but the term “call” can also mean to name or summon a person. There are also some other meanings.

- To “call out” to someone means to shout, to announce, or to proclaim. It can also mean to ask someone for help, especially God.
- Often in the Bible, “call” has a meaning of “summon” or “command to come” or “request to come.”
- God calls people to come to him and be his people. This is their “calling.”
- When God “calls” people, it means that God has appointed or chosen people to be his children, to be his servants and proclaimers of his message of salvation through Jesus.
- This term is also used in the context of naming someone. For example, “His name is called John,” means “He is named John” or “His name is John.”
- To be “called by the name of” means that someone is given the name of someone else. God says that he has called his people by his name.
- A different expression, “I have called you by name” means that God has specifically chosen that person.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “call” could be translated by a word that means “summon,” which includes the idea of being intentional or purposeful in calling.
- The expression “call out to you” could be translated as “ask you for help” or “pray to you urgently.”
- When the Bible says that God has “called” us to be his servants, this could be translated as “specially chose us” or “appointed us” to be his servants.
- “You must call his name” can also be translated as “you must name him.”
- “His name is called” could also be translated as “his name is” or “he is named.”
- To “call out” could be translated as “say loudly” or “shout” or “say with a loud voice.” Make sure the translation of this does not sound like the person is angry.
- The expression “your calling” could be translated as “your purpose” or “God’s purpose for you” or “God’s special work for you.”
- To “call on the name of the Lord” could be translated as “seek the Lord and depend on him” or “trust in the Lord and obey him.”
- To “call for” something could be translated by “demand” or “ask for” or “command.”
- The expression “you are called by my name” could be translated as “I have given you my name, showing that you belong to me.”
- When God says, “I have called you by name,” this could be translated as “I know you and have chosen you.”

(See also: pray, cry)

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 18:24
- 1 Thessalonians 4:7
- 2 Timothy 1:9
- Ephesians 4:1
- Galatians 1:15
- Matthew 2:15
- Philippians 3:14

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0559, H2199, H4744, H6817, H7121, H7123, H7769, H7773, G01540, G03630, G14580, G15280, G19410, G19510, G20280, G20460, G25640, G28210, G28220, G28400, G29190, G30040, G31060, G33330, G33430, G36030, G36860, G36870, G43160, G43410, G43770, G47790, G48670, G54550, G55370, G55810

(Go back to: [Isaiah 6 General Notes](#))

Christ, Messiah

Facts:

The terms “Messiah” and “Christ” mean “Anointed One” and refer to Jesus, God’s Son.

- Both “Messiah” and “Christ” are used in the New Testament to refer to God’s Son, whom God the Father appointed to rule as king over his people, and to save them from sin and death.
- In the Old Testament, the prophets wrote prophecies about the Messiah hundreds of years before he came to earth.
- Often a word meaning “anointed (one)” is used in the Old Testament to refer to the Messiah who would come.
- Jesus fulfilled many of these prophecies and did many miraculous works that proves he is the Messiah; the rest of these prophecies will be fulfilled when he returns.
- The word “Christ” is often used as a title, as in “the Christ” and “Christ Jesus.”
- “Christ” also came to be used as part of his name, as in “Jesus Christ.”

Translation Suggestions:

- This term could be translated using its meaning, “the Anointed One” or “God’s Anointed Savior.”
- Many languages use a transliterated word that looks or sounds like “Christ” or “Messiah.” (See: [How to Translate Unknowns](#))
- The transliterated word could be followed by the definition of the term as in, “Christ, the Anointed One.”
- Be consistent in how this is translated throughout the Bible so that it is clear that the same term is being referred to.
- Make sure the translations of “Messiah” and “Christ” work well in contexts where both terms occur in the same verse (such as John 1:41).

(See also: [How to Translate Names](#))

(See also: Son of God, David, Jesus, [anoint](#))

Bible References:

- 1 John 5:1-3
- Acts 2:35
- Acts 5:40-42
- John 1:40-42
- John 3:27-28
- John 4:25
- Luke 2:10-12
- Matthew 1:16

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **17:7** The **Messiah** was God’s Chosen One who would save the people of the world from sin.
- **17:8** As it happened, the Israelites would have to wait a long time before the **Messiah** came, almost 1,000 years.
- **21:1** From the very beginning, God planned to send the **Messiah**.
- **21:4** God promised King David that the **Messiah** would be one of David’s own descendants.
- **21:5** The **Messiah** would start the New Covenant.
- **21:6** God’s prophets also said that the **Messiah** would be a prophet, a priest, and a king.

- **21:9** The prophet Isaiah prophesied that the **Messiah** would be born from a virgin.
- **43:7** "But God raised him to life again to fulfill the prophecy which says, 'You will not let your **Holy One** rot in the grave.'"
- **43:9** "But know for certain that God has caused Jesus to become both Lord and **Messiah**!"
- **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."
- **46:6** Saul reasoned with the Jews, proving that Jesus was the **Messiah**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H4899, G33230, G55470

(Go back to: [Introduction to Isaiah](#); [Isaiah 4 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

covenant

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “covenant” refers to a formal, binding agreement between two parties that one or both parties must fulfill.

- This agreement can be between individuals, between groups of people, or between God and people.
- When people make a covenant with each other, they promise that they will do something, and they must do it.
- Examples of human covenants include marriage covenants, business agreements, and treaties between countries.
- Throughout the Bible, God made several different covenants with his people.
- In some of the covenants, God promised to fulfill his part without conditions. For example, when God established his covenant with mankind promising to never destroy the earth again with a worldwide flood, this promise had no conditions for people to fulfill.
- In other covenants, God promised to fulfill his part only if the people obeyed him and fulfilled their part of the covenant.

The term “new covenant” refers to the commitment or agreement God made with his people through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus.

- God’s “new covenant” was explained in the part of the Bible called the “New Testament.”
- This new covenant is in contrast to the “old” or “former” covenant that God had made with the Israelites in Old Testament times.
- The new covenant is better than the old one because it is based on the sacrifice of Jesus, which completely atoned for people’s sins forever. The sacrifices made under the old covenant did not do this.
- God writes the new covenant on the hearts of those who become believers in Jesus. This causes them to want to obey God and to begin to live holy lives.
- The new covenant will be completely fulfilled in the end times when God establishes his reign on earth. Everything will once again be very good, as it was when God first created the world.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, ways to translate this term could include, “binding agreement” or “formal commitment” or “pledge” or “contract.”
- Some languages may have different words for covenant depending on whether one party or both parties have made a promise they must keep. If the covenant is one-sided, it could be translated as “promise” or “pledge.”
- Make sure the translation of this term does not sound like people proposed the covenant. In all cases of covenants between God and people, it was God who initiated the covenant.
- The term “new covenant” could be translated as “new formal agreement” or “new pact” or “new contract.”
- The word “new” in these expressions has the meaning of “fresh” or “new kind of” or “another.”

(See also: [covenant](#), [promise](#))

Bible References:

- Genesis 9:12
- Genesis 17:7
- Genesis 31:44
- Exodus 34:10-11
- Joshua 24:24-26

- 2 Samuel 23:5
- 2 Kings 18:11-12
- Mark 14:24
- Luke 1:73
- Luke 22:20
- Acts 7:8
- 1 Corinthians 11:25-26
- 2 Corinthians 3:6
- Galatians 3:17-18
- Hebrews 12:24

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **4:9** Then God made a **covenant** with Abram. A **covenant** is an agreement between two parties.
- **5:4** "I will make Ishmael a great nation, too, but my **covenant** will be with Isaac."
- **6:4** After a long time, Abraham died and all of the promises that God had made to him in the **covenant** were passed on to Isaac.
- **7:10** "The **covenant** promises God had promised to Abraham and then to Isaac now passed on to Jacob."
- **13:2** God said to Moses and the people of Israel, "If you will obey my voice and keep my **covenant**, you will be my prized possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."
- **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."
- **15:13** Then Joshua reminded the people of their obligation to obey the **covenant** that God had made with the Israelites at Sinai.
- **21:5** Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised that he would make a **New Covenant**, but not like the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai. 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. The Messiah would start the **New Covenant**.
- **21:14** Through the Messiah's death and resurrection, God would accomplish his plan to save sinners and start the **New Covenant**.
- **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. Do this to remember me every time you drink it."
- **48:11** But God has now made a **New Covenant** that is available to everyone. Because of this **New Covenant**, anyone from any people group can become part of God's people by believing in Jesus.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1285, H2319, H3772, G08020, G12420, G49340

(Go back to: [Isaiah 24 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

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: [Isaiah 54 General Notes](#))

deliver, hand over, turn over, release, rescue

Definition:

To “deliver” someone means to rescue that person. The term “deliverer” refers to someone who rescues or frees people from slavery, oppression, or other dangers. The term “deliverance” refers to what happens when someone rescues or frees people from slavery, oppression, or other dangers.

- In the Old Testament, God appointed deliverers to protect the Israelites by leading them in battle against other people groups who came to attack them.
- These deliverers were also called “judges” and the Old Testament book of Judges records the time in history when these judges were governing Israel.
- God is also called a “deliverer.” Throughout the history of Israel, he delivered or rescued his people from their enemies.
- The term “deliver over to” or “deliver up to” has a very different meaning of handing or turning someone over to an enemy, such as when Judas delivered Jesus over to the Jewish leaders.

Translation Suggestions:

- In the context of helping people escape from their enemies, the term “deliver” can be translated as “rescue” or “liberate” or “save.”
- When it means to deliver someone over to the enemy, “deliver over” can be translated as “betray to” or “hand over” or “give over.”
- The word “deliverer” can also be translated as “rescuer” or “liberator.”
- When the term “deliverer” refers to the judges who led Israel, it could also be translated as “governor” or “judge” or “leader.”

(See also: [judge](#), [save](#))

Bible References:

- 2 Corinthians 1:10
- Acts 7:35
- Galatians 1:4
- Judges 10:12

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **16:3** Then God provided a **deliverer** who rescued them from their enemies and brought peace to the land.
- **16:16** They (Israel) finally asked God for help again, and God sent them another **deliverer**.
- **16:17** Over many years, God sent many **deliverers** who saved the Israelites from their enemies.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1350, H2020, H2502, H3205, H3444, H3467, H4042, H4422, H4672, H5337, H5414, H5462, H6299, H6403, H6413, H6475, H6561, H7725, H7804, H8199, G03250, G05250, G06290, G10800, G13250, G15600, G16590, G18070, G19290, G26730, G30860, G38600, G45060, G49910, G50880, G54830

(Go back to: [Isaiah 25 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

eternity, everlasting, eternal, forever

Definition:

The terms “everlasting” and “eternal” have very similar meanings and refer to something that will always exist or that lasts forever.

- The term “eternity” refers to a state of being that has no beginning or end. It can also refer to life that never ends.
- After this present life on earth, humans will spend eternity either in heaven with God or in hell apart from God.
- The terms “eternal life” and “everlasting life” are used in the New Testament to refer to living forever with God in heaven.

The term “forever” refers to never-ending time.

- The phrase “forever and ever” has the idea of time that never ends and expresses what eternity or eternal life is like. It emphasizes that something will always happen or exist. It refers to time that never ends.
- God said that David’s throne would last “forever.” This is referred to the fact that David’s descendant Jesus will reign as king forever.

Translation Suggestions:

- Other ways to translate “eternal” or “everlasting” could include “unending” or “never stopping” or “always continuing.”
- The terms “eternal life” and “everlasting life” could also be translated as “life that never ends” or “life that continues without stopping” or “the raising up of our bodies to live forever.”
- Depending on the context, different ways to translate “eternity” could include “existing outside of time” or “unending life” or “life in heaven.”
- Also consider how this word is translated in a Bible translation in a local or national language. (See: [How to Translate Unknowns](#))
- “Forever” could also be translated by “always” or “never ending.”
- The phrase “will last forever” could also be translated as “always exist” or “will never stop” or “will always continue.”
- The emphatic phrase “forever and ever” could also be translated as “for always and always” or “not ever ending” or “which never, ever ends.”
- David’s throne lasting forever could be translated as “David’s descendant will reign forever” or “a descendant of David will always be reigning.”

(See also: David, reign, life)

Bible References:

- Genesis 17:8
- Genesis 48:4
- Exodus 15:17
- 2 Samuel 3:28-30
- 1 Kings 2:32-33
- Job 4:20-21
- Psalms 21:4
- Isaiah 9:6-7
- Isaiah 40:27-28
- Daniel 7:18

- Luke 18:18
- Acts 13:46
- Romans 5:21
- Hebrews 6:19-20
- Hebrews 10:11-14
- 1 John 1:2
- 1 John 5:12
- Revelation 1:4-6
- Revelation 22:3-5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **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**?”
- **28:1** One day, a rich young ruler came up to Jesus and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to have **eternal life**?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only One who is good, and that is God. But if you want to have **eternal life**, obey God’s laws.”
- **28:10** Jesus answered, “Everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, or property for my name’s sake, will receive 100 times more and will also receive **eternal life**.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H3117, H4481, H5331, H5703, H5705, H5769, H5865, H5957, H6924, G01260, G01650, G01660, G13360

(Go back to: [Isaiah 24 General Notes](#); [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: [Isaiah 1 General 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: [Isaiah 55 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [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: [Isaiah 4 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

fulfill, fulfilled, carried out

Definition:

The term “fulfill” means to complete or accomplish something that was expected.

- When a prophecy is fulfilled, it means that God causes to happen what was predicted in the prophecy.
- If a person fulfills a promise or a vow, it means that he does what he has promised to do.
- To fulfill a responsibility means to do the task that was assigned or required.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, “fulfill” could be translated as “accomplish” or “complete” or “cause to happen” or “obey” or “perform.”
- The phrase “has been fulfilled” could also be translated as “has come true” or “has happened” or “has taken place.”
- Ways to translate “fulfill,” as in “fulfill your ministry,” could include “complete” or “perform” or “practice” or “serve other people as God has called you to do.”

(See also: [prophet](#), [Christ](#), minister, [call](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 2:27
- Acts 3:17-18
- Leviticus 22:17-19
- Luke 4:21
- Matthew 1:22-23
- Matthew 5:17
- Psalms 116:12-15

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **24:4** John **fulfilled** what the prophets said, “See I send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way.”
- **40:3** The soldiers gambled for Jesus’ clothing. When they did this, they **fulfilled** a prophecy that said, “They divided my garments among them, and gambled for my clothing.”
- **42:7** Jesus said, “I told you that everything written about me in God’s word must be **fulfilled**.”
- **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.’”
- **44:5** “Although you did not understand what you were doing, God used your actions to **fulfill** the prophecies that the Messiah would suffer and die.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1214, H5487, G10960, G41380

(Go back to: [Isaiah 2 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

God

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “God” refers to the eternal being who created the universe out of nothing. God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God’s personal name is “Yahweh.”

- God has always existed; he existed before anything else existed, and he will continue to exist forever.
- He is the only true God and has authority over everything in the universe.
- God is perfectly righteous, infinitely wise, holy, sinless, just, merciful, and loving.
- He is a covenant-keeping God, who always fulfills his promises.
- People were created to worship God and he is the only one they should worship.
- God revealed his name as “Yahweh,” which means “he is” or “I am” or “the One who (always) exists.”
- The Bible also teaches about false “gods,” which are nonliving idols that people wrongly worship.

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate “God” could include “Deity” or “Creator” or “Supreme Being” or “Supreme Creator” or “Infinite Sovereign Lord” or “Eternal Supreme Being.”
- Consider how God is referred to in a local or national language. There may also already be a word for “God” in the language being translated. If so, it is important to make sure that this word fits the characteristics of the one true God as described above.
- Many languages capitalize the first letter of the word for the one true God, to distinguish it from the word for a false god. Another way to make this distinction would be to use different terms for “God” and “god.”
NOTE: In the biblical text, when a person who does not worship Yahweh speaks about Yahweh and uses the word “god,” it is acceptable to render the term without a capital letter in reference to Yahweh (see Jonah 1:6, 3:9).
- The phrase “I will be their God and they will be my people” could also be translated as “I, God, will rule over these people and they will worship me.”

(Translation suggestions: [How to Translate Names](#))

(See also: create, [false god](#), God the Father, Holy Spirit, [false god](#), Son of God, Yahweh)

Bible References:

- 1 John 1:7
- 1 Samuel 10:7-8
- 1 Timothy 4:10
- Colossians 1:16
- Deuteronomy 29:14-16
- Ezra 3:1-2
- Genesis 1:2
- Hosea 4:11-12
- Isaiah 36:6-7
- James 2:20
- Jeremiah 5:5
- John 1:3
- Joshua 3:9-11
- Lamentations 3:43
- Micah 4:5
- Philippians 2:6
- Proverbs 24:12

- Psalms 47:9

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:1 God** created the universe and everything in it in six days.
- **1:15 God** made man and woman in his own image.
- **5:3** "I am **God** Almighty. I will make a covenant with you."
- **9:14 God** said, "I AM WHO I AM. Tell them, 'I AM has sent me to you.' Also tell them, 'I am Yahweh, the **God** of your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is my name forever.'"
- **10:2** Through these plagues, **God** showed Pharaoh that he is more powerful than Pharaoh and all of Egypt's gods.
- **16:1** The Israelites began to worship the Canaanite gods instead of Yahweh, the true **God**.
- **22:7** "You, my son, will be called the prophet of the **Most High God** who will prepare the people to receive the Messiah!"
- **24:9** There is only one **God**. But John heard **God** the Father speak, and saw Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit when he baptized Jesus.
- **25:7** "Worship only the Lord your **God** and only serve him."
- **28:1** "There is only one who is good, and that is **God**."
- **49:9** But **God** loved everyone in the world so much that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in Jesus will not be punished for his sins, but will live with **God** forever.
- **50:16** But some day **God** will create a new heaven and a new earth that will be perfect.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0136, H0305, H0410, H0426, H0430, H0433, H2486, H2623, H3068, H3069, H3863, H4136, H6697, G01120, G05160, G09320, G09350, G10960, G11400, G20980, G21240, G21280, G21500, G21520, G21530, G22990, G23040, G23050, G23120, G23130, G23140, G23150, G23160, G23170, G23180, G23190, G23200, G33610, G37850, G41510, G52070, G53770, G54630, G55370, G55380

(Go back to: [Isaiah 15 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: [Isaiah 8 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

godly, godliness, ungodly, godless, ungodliness, godlessness

Definition:

The term “godly” is used to describe a person who acts in a way that honors God and shows what God is like. “Godliness” is the character quality of honoring God by doing his will.

- A person who has godly character will show the fruits of the Holy Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self control.
- The quality of godliness shows that a person has the Holy Spirit and is obeying him.

The terms “ungodly” and “godless” describe people who are in rebellion against God. Living in an evil way, without thought of God, is called “ungodliness” or “godlessness.”

- The meanings of these words are very similar. However, “godless” and “godlessness” may describe a more extreme condition in which people or nations do not even acknowledge God or his right to rule them.
- God pronounces judgment and wrath on ungodly people, on everyone who rejects him and his ways.

Translation Suggestions:

- The phrase “the godly” could be translated as “godly people” or “people who obey God.” (See: [nominaladj](#))
- The adjective “godly” could be translated as “obedient to God” or “righteous” or “pleasing to God.”
- The phrase “in a godly manner” could be translated as “in a way that obeys God” or “with actions and words that please God.”
- Ways to translate “godliness” could include “acting in a way that pleases God” or “obeying God” or “living in a righteous manner.”
- Depending on the context, the term “ungodly” could be translated as “displeasing to God” or “immoral” or “disobeying God.”
- The terms “godless” and “godlessness” literally mean that the people are “without God” or “having no thought of God” or “acting in a way that does not acknowledge God.”
- Other ways to translate “ungodliness” or “godlessness” could be “wickedness” or “evil” or “rebellion against God”.

(See also [evil](#), honor, obey, [righteous](#), [righteous](#))

Bible References:

- Job 27:10
- Proverbs 11:9
- Acts 3:12
- 1 Timothy 1:9-11
- 1 Timothy 4:7
- 2 Timothy 3:12
- Hebrews 12:14-17
- Hebrews 11:7
- 1 Peter 4:18
- Jude 1:16

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0430, H1100, H2623, H5760, H7563, G05160, G07630, G07640, G07650, G21240, G21500, G21520, G21530, G23160, G23170

(Go back to: [Isaiah 33 General Notes](#))

good news, gospel

Definition:

The term “gospel” literally means “good news” and refers to a message or announcement that tells people something that benefits them and makes them glad.

- In the Bible, this term usually refers to the message about God’s salvation for people through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.
- In most English Bibles, “good news” is usually translated as “gospel” and is also used in phrases such as, the “gospel of Jesus Christ,” the “gospel of God” and the “gospel of the kingdom.”

Translation Suggestions:

- Different ways to translate this term could include, “good message” or “good announcement” or “God’s message of salvation” or “the good things God teaches about Jesus.”
- Depending on the context, ways to translate the phrase, “good news of” could include, “good news/message about” or “good message from” or “the good things God tells us about” or “what God says about how he saves people.”

(See also: kingdom, sacrifice, [save](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:5
- Acts 8:25
- Colossians 1:23
- Galatians 1:6
- Luke 8:1-3
- Mark 1:14
- Philippians 2:22
- Romans 1:3

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **23:6** The angel said, “Do not be afraid, because I have some **good news** for you. The Messiah, the Master, has been born in Bethlehem!”
- **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. This is the year of the Lord’s favor.”
- **45:10** Philip also used other Scriptures to tell him the **good news of Jesus**.
- **46:10** Then they sent them off to preach the **good news about Jesus** in many other places.
- **47:1** One day, Paul and his friend Silas went to the town of Philippi to proclaim the **good news about Jesus**.
- **47:13** The **good news about Jesus** kept spreading, and the Church kept growing.
- **50:1** For almost 2,000 years, more and more people around the world have been hearing the **good news about Jesus** the Messiah.
- **50:2** When Jesus was living on earth he said, “My disciples will preach the **good news** about the kingdom of God to people everywhere in the world, and then the end will come.”
- **50:3** Before he returned to heaven, Jesus told Christians to proclaim the **good news** to people who have never heard it.

Word Data:

- Strong's: G20970, G20980, G42830

(Go back to: [Isaiah 49 General Notes](#))

heaven, sky, heavens, heavenly

Definition:

The term that is translated as “heaven” usually refers to where God lives. The same word can also mean “sky,” depending on the context.

- The term “heavens” refers to everything we see above the earth, including the sun, moon, and stars. It also includes the heavenly bodies, such as far-off planets, that we can’t directly see from the earth.
- The term “sky” refers to the blue expanse above the earth that has clouds and the air we breathe. Often the sun and moon are also said to be “up in the sky.”
- In some contexts in the Bible, the word “heaven” could refer to either the sky or the place where God lives.

Translation Suggestions:

- For “kingdom of heaven” in the book of Matthew, it is best to keep the word “heaven” since this is distinctive to Matthew’s gospel.
- The terms “heavens” or “heavenly bodies” could also be translated as “sun, moon, and stars” or “all the stars in the universe.”
- The phrase, “stars of heaven” could be translated as “stars in the sky” or “stars in the galaxy” or “stars in the universe.”

(See also: kingdom of God)

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 8:22-24
- 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10
- 1 Thessalonians 4:17
- Deuteronomy 9:1
- Ephesians 6:9
- Genesis 1:1
- Genesis 7:11
- John 3:12
- John 3:27
- Matthew 5:18
- Matthew 5:46-48

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **4:2** They even began building a tall tower to reach **heaven**.
- **14:11** He (God) gave them bread from **heaven**, called “manna.”
- **23:7** Suddenly, the skies were filled with angels praising God, saying, “Glory to God in **heaven** and peace on earth to the people he favors!”
- **29:9** Then Jesus said, “This is what my **heavenly** Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”
- **37:9** Then Jesus looked up to **heaven** and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me.”
- **42:11** Then Jesus went up to **heaven**, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1534, H6160, H6183, H7834, H8064, H8065, G09320, G20320, G33210, G37700, G37710, G37720

(Go back to: [Isaiah 6 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

holy, holiness, unholy, sacred

Definition:

The terms “holy” and “holiness” refer to the character of God that is totally set apart and separated from everything that is sinful and imperfect.

- Only God is absolutely holy. He makes people and things holy.
- A person who is holy belongs to God and has been set apart for the purpose of serving God and bringing him glory.
- An object that God has declared to be holy is one that he has set apart for his glory and use, such as an altar that is for the purpose of offering sacrifices to him.
- People cannot approach him unless he allows them to, because he is holy and they are merely human beings, sinful and imperfect.
- In the Old Testament, God set apart the priests as holy for special service to him. They had to be ceremonially cleansed from sin in order to approach God.
- God also set apart as holy certain places and things that belonged to him or in which he revealed himself, such as his temple.

Literally, the term “unholy” means “not holy.” It describes someone or something that does not honor God.

- This word is used to describe someone who dishonors God by rebelling against him.
- A thing that is called “unholy” could be described as being common, profane or unclean. It does not belong to God.

The term “sacred” describes something that relates to worshiping God or to the pagan worship of false gods.

- In the Old Testament, the term “sacred” was oftentimes used to describe the stone pillars and other objects used in the worship of false gods. This could also be translated as “religious.”
- “Sacred songs” and “sacred music” refer to music that was sung or played for God’s glory. This could be translated as “music for worshiping Yahweh” or “songs that praise God.”
- The phrase “sacred duties” referred to the “religious duties” or “rituals” that a priest performed to lead people in worshiping God. It could also refer to the rituals performed by a pagan priest to worship a false god.

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate “holy” might include “set apart for God” or “belonging to God” or “completely pure” or “perfectly sinless” or “separated from sin.”
- To “make holy” is often translated as “sanctify” in English. It could also be translated as “set apart (someone) for God’s glory.”
- Ways to translate “unholy” could include “not holy” or “not belonging to God” or “not honoring to God” or “not godly.”
- In some contexts, “unholy” could be translated as “unclean.”

(See also: Holy Spirit, consecrate, sanctify, set apart)

Bible References:

- Genesis 28:22
- 2 Kings 3:2
- Lamentations 4:1
- Ezekiel 20:18-20
- Matthew 7:6

- Mark 8:38
- Acts 7:33
- Acts 11:8
- Romans 1:2
- 2 Corinthians 12:3-5
- Colossians 1:22
- 1 Thessalonians 3:13
- 1 Thessalonians 4:7
- 2 Timothy 3:15

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:16** He (God) blessed the seventh day and made it **holy**, because on this day he rested from his work.
- **9:12** "You are standing on **holy** ground."
- **13:1** "If you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my prized possession, a kingdom of priests, and a **holy** nation."
- **13:5** "Always be sure to keep the Sabbath day **holy**."
- **22:5** "So the baby will be **holy**, the Son of God."
- **50:2** As we wait for Jesus to return, God wants us to live in a way that is **holy** and that honors him.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0430, H2455, H2623, H4676, H4720, H6918, H6922, H6942, H6944, H6948, G00370, G00380, G00400, G00400, G00410, G00420, G04620, G18590, G21500, G24120, G24130, G28390, G37410, G37420

(Go back to: [Isaiah 4 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

hope, hoped

Definition:

Hope is strongly desiring something to happen. Hope can imply either certainty or uncertainty regarding a future event.

- In the Bible, the term “hope” also has the meaning of “trust,” as in “my hope is in the Lord.” It refers to a sure expectation of receiving what God has promised his people.
- Sometimes the ULT translates the term in the original language as “confidence.” This happens mostly in the New Testament in situations where people who believe in Jesus as their Savior have the assurance (or confidence or hope) of receiving what God has promised.
- To have “no hope” means to have no expectation of something good happening. It means that it is actually very certain that it will not happen.

Translation Suggestions:

- In some contexts, the term to “hope” could also be translated as to “wish” or to “desire” or to “expect.”
- The expression “nothing to hope for” could be translated as “nothing to trust in” or “no expectation of anything good”
- To “have no hope” could be translated as “have no expectation of anything good” or “have no security” or “be sure that nothing good will happen.”
- The expression “have set your hopes on” could also be translated as “have put your confidence in” or “have been trusting in.”
- The phrase “I find hope in your Word” could also be translated as “I am confident that your Word is true” or “Your Word helps me trust in you” or “When I obey your Word, I am certain to be blessed.”
- Phrases such as “hope in” God could also be translated as, “trust in God” or “know for sure that God will do what he has promised” or “be certain that God is faithful.”

(See also: bless, confidence, good, obey, [trust](#), word of God)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 29:14-15
- 1 Thessalonians 2:19
- Acts 24:14-16
- Acts 26:6
- Acts 27:20
- Colossians 1:5
- Job 11:20

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0982, H0983, H0986, H2620, H2976, H3175, H3176, H3689, H4009, H4268, H4723, H7663, H7664, H8431, H8615, G00910, G05600, G16790, G16800, G20700

(Go back to: [Isaiah 65 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

Israel, Israelites

Facts:

The term "Israel" is the name that God gave to Jacob. Often it refers to the nation that is descended from him.

- The name Israel probably means "He struggles with God."
- The descendants of Jacob became known as the "sons of Israel" or the "people of Israel" or the "nation of Israel" or the "Israelites."
- God formed his covenant with the people of Israel. They were his chosen people.
- The nation of Israel consisted of twelve tribes.
- Soon after King Solomon died, Israel was divided into two kingdoms: the southern kingdom, called "Judah," and the northern kingdom, called "Israel."
- Often the term "Israel" can be translated as "the people of Israel" or "the nation of Israel," depending on the context.

(See also: Jacob, kingdom of Israel, Judah, nation, twelve tribes of Israel)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 10:1
- 1 Kings 8:2
- Acts 2:36
- Acts 7:24
- Acts 13:23
- John 1:49-51
- Luke 24:21
- Mark 12:29
- Matthew 2:6
- Matthew 27:9
- Philippians 3:4-5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **8:15** The descendants of the twelve sons became the twelve tribes of **Israel**.
- **9:3** The Egyptians forced the **Israelites** to build many buildings and even whole cities.
- **9:5** A certain **Israelite** woman gave birth to a baby boy.
- **10:1** They said, "This is what the God of **Israel** says, 'Let my people go!'"
- **14:12** But despite all this, the people of *_Israel_* complained and grumbled against God and against Moses.
- **15:9** God fought for **Israel** that day. He caused the Amorites to be confused and he sent large hailstones that killed many of the Amorites.
- **15:12** After this battle, God gave each tribe of **Israel** *its own section of the Promised Land. Then God gave _Israel_ peace along all its borders.*
- **16:16** So God punished *_Israel_* again for worshipping idols.
- **43:6** "Men of **Israel**, Jesus was a man who did many mighty signs and wonders by the power of God, as you have seen and already know."

Word Data:

- Strong's: H3478, H3479, H3481, H3482, G09350, G24740, G24750

(Go back to: [Introduction to Isaiah](#))

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: [Isaiah 3 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

just, justice, unjust, injustice, justify, justification

Definition:

“Just” and “justice” refer to treating people fairly according to God’s laws. Human laws that reflect God’s standard of right behavior toward others are also just.

- To be “just” is to act in a fair and right way toward others. It also implies honesty and integrity to do what is morally right in God’s eyes.
- To act “justly” means to treat people in a way that is right, good, and proper according to God’s laws.
- To receive “justice” means to be treated fairly under the law, either being protected by the law or being punished for breaking the law.
- Sometimes the term “just” has the broader meaning of “righteous” or “following God’s laws.”

The terms “unjust” and “unjustly” refer to treating people in an unfair and often harmful manner.

- An “injustice” is something bad that is done to someone that the person did not deserve. It refers to treating people unfairly.
- Injustice also means that some people are treated badly while others are treated well.
- Someone who is acting in an unjust way is being “partial” or “prejudiced” because he is not treating people equally.

The terms “justify” and “justification” refer to causing a guilty person to be righteous. Only God can truly justify people.

- When God justifies people, he forgives their sins and makes it as though they have no sin. He justifies sinners who repent and trust in Jesus to save them from their sins.
- “Justification” refers to what God does when he forgives a person’s sins and declares that person to be righteous in his sight.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, other ways to translate “just” could include “morally right” or “fair.”
- The term “justice” could be translated as “fair treatment” or “deserved consequences.”
- To “act justly” could be translated as “treat fairly” or “behave in a just way.”
- In some contexts, “just” could be translated as “righteous” or “upright.”
- Depending on the context, “unjust” could also be translated as “unfair” or “partial” or “unrighteous.”
- The phrase “the unjust” could be translated as “the unjust ones” or “unjust people” or “people who treat others unfairly” or “unrighteous people” or “people who disobey God.”
- The term “unjustly” could be translated as “in an unfair manner” or “wrongly” or “unfairly.”
- Ways to translate “injustice” could include, “wrong treatment” or “unfair treatment” or “acting unfairly.” (See: [abstractnouns](#))
- Other ways to translate “justify” could include “declare (someone) to be righteous” or “cause (someone) to be righteous.”
- The term “justification” could be translated as “being declared righteous” or “becoming righteous” or “causing people to be righteous.”
- The phrase “resulting in justification” could be translated as “so that God justified many people” or “which resulted in God causing people to be righteous.”
- The phrase “for our justification” could be translated as “in order that we could be made righteous by God.”

(See also: forgive, guilt, [judge](#), [righteous](#), [righteous](#))

Bible References:

- Genesis 44:16
- 1 Chronicles 18:14
- Isaiah 4:3-4
- Jeremiah 22:3
- Ezekiel 18:16-17
- Micah 3:8
- Matthew 5:43-45
- Matthew 11:19
- Matthew 23:23-24
- Luke 18:3
- Luke 18:8
- Luke 18:13-14
- Luke 21:20-22
- Luke 23:41
- Acts 13:38-39
- Acts 28:4
- Romans 4:1-3
- Galatians 3:6-9
- Galatians 3:11
- Galatians 5:3-4
- Titus 3:6-7
- Hebrews 6:10
- James 2:24
- Revelation 15:3-4

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **17:9** David ruled with **justice** and faithfulness for many years, and God blessed him.
- **18:13** Some of these kings (of Judah) were good men who ruled **justly** and worshiped God.
- **19:16** They (the prophets) all told the people to stop worshiping idols and to start showing **justice** and mercy to others.
- **50:17** Jesus will rule his kingdom with peace and **justice**, and he will be with his people forever.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H2555, H3477, H4941, H5765, H5766, H5767, H6662, H6663, H6664, H6666, H8003, H8264, H8636, G00910, G00930, G00940, G13420, G13440, G13450, G13460, G13470, G17380

(Go back to: [Isaiah 2 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

last day, latter days

Definition:

The term “last days” or “latter days” refers generally to the time period at the end of the current age.

- This time period will have an unknown duration.
- The “last days” are a time of judgment upon those who have turned away from God.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “last days” can also be translated as “final days” or “end times.”
- In some contexts, this could be translated as “end of the world” or “when this world ends.”

(See also: day of the Lord, [judge](#), turn, world)

Bible References:

- 2 Peter 3:3-4
- Daniel 10:14-15
- Hebrews 1:2
- Isaiah 2:2
- James 5:3
- Jeremiah 23:19-20
- John 11:24-26
- Micah 4:1

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0319, H3117, G20780, G22500

(Go back to: [Isaiah 2 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

mercy, merciful

Definition:

The terms “mercy” and “merciful” refer to helping people who are in need, especially when they are in a lowly or humbled condition.

- The term “mercy” can also include the meaning of not punishing people for something they have done wrong.
- A powerful person such as a king is described as “merciful” when he treats people kindly instead of harming them.
- Being merciful also means to forgive someone who has done something wrong against us.
- We show mercy when we help people who are in great need.
- God is merciful to us, and he wants us to be merciful to others.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, “mercy” could be translated as “kindness” or “compassion” or “pity.”
- The term “merciful” could be translated as “showing pity” or “being kind to” or “forgiving.”
- To “show mercy to” or “have mercy on” could be translated as “treat kindly” or “be compassionate toward.”

(See also: compassion, forgive)

Bible References:

- 1 Peter 1:3-5
- 1 Timothy 1:13
- Daniel 9:17
- Exodus 34:6
- Genesis 19:16
- Hebrews 10:28-29
- James 2:13
- Luke 6:35-36
- Matthew 9:27
- Philippians 2:25-27
- Psalms 41:4-6
- Romans 12:1

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **19:16** They (the prophets) all told the people to stop worshiping idols and to start showing justice and **mercy** to others.
- **19:17** He (Jeremiah) sank down into the mud that was in the bottom of the well, but then the king had **mercy** on him and ordered his servants to pull Jeremiah out of the well before he died.
- **20:12** The Persian Empire was strong but **merciful** to the people it conquered.
- **27:11** Then Jesus asked the law expert, “What do you think? Which one of the three men was a neighbor to the man who was robbed and beaten?” He replied, “The one who was **merciful** to him.”
- **32:11** But Jesus said to him, “No, I want you to go home and tell your friends and family about everything that God has done for you and how he has had **mercy** on you.”
- **34:9** “But the tax collector stood far away from the religious ruler, did not even look up to heaven. Instead, he pounded on his chest and prayed, ‘God, please be **merciful** to me because I am a sinner.’”

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2551, H2603, H2604, H2616, H2617, H2623, H3722, H3727, H4627, H4819, H5503, H5504, H5505, H5506, H6014, H7349, H7355, H7356, H7359, G16530, G16550, G16560, G24330, G24360, G36280, G36290, G37410, G46980

(Go back to: [Introduction to Isaiah](#))

people of God

Definition:

The concept of the “people of God” in the Bible refers to people with whom God has established a covenant relationship.

- In the Old Testament, the phrase “people of God” refers to the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel was chosen by God and set apart from the other nations of the world in order to serve and obey him.
- In the New Testament, the phrase “people of God” refers to the “Church,” meaning everyone who believes in Jesus. This includes both Jews and Gentiles. In the New Testament, sometimes this group of people is called the “sons of God” or “children of God.”
- When God uses the phrase “my people,” he is referring to people who have a covenant relationship with him. God’s people are chosen by him, and he wants them to live in a way that is pleasing to him.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “people of God” could be translated as “God’s people” or “the people who worship God” or “people who serve God” or “people who belong to God.”
- When God says “my people” other ways to translate it could include “the people I have chosen” or “the people who worship me” or “the people who belong to me.”
- Similarly, “your people” could be translated as “the people who belong to you” or “the people you chose to belong to you.”
- Also “his people” could be translated as “the people who belong to him” or “the people God chose to belong to himself.”

(See also: [Israel](#), people group)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 11:2
- Acts 7:34
- Acts 7:51-53
- Acts 10:36-38
- Daniel 9:24-25
- Isaiah 2:5-6
- Jeremiah 6:20-22
- Joel 3:16-17
- Micah 6:3-5
- Revelation 13:7-8

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0430, H5971, G23160, G29920

(Go back to: [Isaiah 17 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

promise, promised

Definition:

When used as a verb, the term “promise” refers to the action of a person saying that he will do something in such way that he obligates himself to fulfill what he has said. When used as a noun, the term “promise” refers to the thing that a person obligates himself to do.

- The Bible records many promises that God has made for his people.
- Promises are an important part of formal agreements such as covenants.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “promise” could be translated as “commitment” or “assurance” or “guarantee.”
- To “promise to do something” could be translated as “assure someone that you will do something” or “commit to doing something.”

(See also: [covenant](#), oath, vow)

Bible References:

- Galatians 3:15-16
- Genesis 25:31-34
- Hebrews 11:9
- James 1:12
- Numbers 30:2

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.”[⚡]
- **3:16** God then made the first rainbow as a sign of his **promise**. Every time the rainbow appeared in the sky, God would remember what he **promised** and so would his people.
- **4:8** God spoke to Abram and **promised** again that he would have a son and as many descendants as the stars in the sky. Abram believed God’s **promise**.
- **5:4** “Your wife, Sarai, will have a son—he will be the son of **promise**.”
- **8:15** The covenant **promises** that God gave to Abraham were passed on to Isaac, then to Jacob, and then to Jacob’s twelve sons and their families.
- **17:14** Though David had been unfaithful to God, God was still faithful to his **promises**.
- **50:1** Jesus **promised** he would return at the end of the world. Though he has not yet come back, he will keep his **promise**.

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0559, H0562, H1696, H8569, G18430, G18600, G18610, G18620, G36700, G42790

(Go back to: [Isaiah 54 General 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

[illegible]

remnant

Definition:

The term “remnant” literally refers to people or things that are “remaining” or “left over” from a larger amount or group.

- Often a “remnant” refers to people who survive a life-threatening situation or who remain faithful to God while undergoing persecution.
- Isaiah referred to a group of Jews as being a remnant who would survive attacks from outsiders and live to return to the Promised Land in Canaan.
- Paul talks about there being a “remnant” of people who were chosen by God to receive his grace.
- The term “remnant” also implies that there were other people who did not remain or were not left over.

Translation Suggestions:

- A phrase such as “the remnant of this people” could be translated as “the rest of these people” or “the people who are left.”
- The “whole remnant of people” could be translated by “all the rest of the people” or “the remaining people.”

Bible References:

- Acts 15:17
- Amos 9:12
- Ezekiel 6:8-10
- Genesis 45:7
- Isaiah 11:11
- Micah 4:6-8

Word Data:

- Strong's: H3498, H3499, H5629, H6413, H7604, H7605, H7611, H8281, H8300, G26400, G30050, G30620

(Go back to: [Isaiah 4 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

repent, repentance

Definition:

The terms “repent” and “repentance” refer to turning away from sin and turning back to God.

- To “repent” literally means to “change one’s mind.”
- In the Bible, “repent” usually means to turn away from a sinful, human way of thinking and acting, and to turn to God’s way of thinking and acting.
- When people truly repent of their sins, God forgives them and helps them start obeying him.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “repent” can be translated with a word or phrase that means “turn back (to God)” or “turn away from sin and toward God” or “turn toward God, away from sin.”
- Often the term “repentance” can be translated using the verb “repent.” For example, “God has given repentance to Israel” could be translated as “God has enabled Israel to repent.”
- Other ways to translate “repentance” could include “turning away from sin” or “turning to God and away from sin.”

(See also: forgive, [sin](#), turn)

Bible References:

- Acts 3:19-20
- Luke 3:3
- Luke 3:8
- Luke 5:32
- Luke 24:47
- Mark 1:14-15
- Matthew 3:3
- Matthew 3:11
- Matthew 4:17
- Romans 2:4

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **16:2** After many years of disobeying God and being oppressed by their enemies, the Israelites **repented** and asked God to rescue them.
- **17:13** David **repented** of his sin and God forgave him.
- **19:18** They (prophets) warned people that God would destroy them if they did not **repent**.
- **24:2** Many people came out to the wilderness to listen to John. He preached to them, saying, “**Repent**, for the kingdom of God is near!”
- **42:8** “It was also written in the scriptures that my disciples will proclaim that everyone should repent in order to **receive** forgiveness for their sins.”
- **44:5** “So now, **repent** and turn to God so that your sins will be washed away.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H5150, H5162, H5164, G02780, G33380, G33400, G33410

(Go back to: [Isaiah 6 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

restore, restoration

Definition:

The terms “restore” and “restoration” refer to causing something to return to its original place or condition.

- When a diseased body part is restored, this means it has been “healed.”
- A broken relationship that is restored has been “reconciled.” God restores sinful people and brings them back to himself.
- If people have been restored to their home country, they have been “brought back” or “returned” to that country.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, ways to translate “restore” could include “renew” or “repay” or “return” or “heal” or “bring back.”
- Other expressions for this term could be “make new” or “make like new again.”
- When property is “restored,” it has been “repaired” or “replaced” or “given back” to its owner.
- Depending on the context, “restoration” could be translated as “renewal” or “healing” or “reconciliation.”

Bible References:

- 2 Kings 5:10
- Acts 3:21
- Acts 15:15-18
- Isaiah 49:5-6
- Jeremiah 15:19-21
- Lamentations 5:22
- Leviticus 6:5-7
- Luke 19:8
- Matthew 12:13
- Psalm 80:1-3

Word Data:

- Strong's: H7725, H7999, H8421, G06000, G26750

(Go back to: [Isaiah 11 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [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: [Isaiah 53 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

Satan, devil, evil one

Facts:

Although the devil is a spirit being that God created, he rebelled against God and became God's enemy. The devil is also called "Satan" and "the evil one."

- The devil hates God and all that God created because he wants to take the place of God and be worshiped as God.
- Satan tempts people to rebel against God.
- God sent his Son, Jesus, to rescue people from Satan's control.
- The name "Satan" means "adversary" or "enemy."
- The word "devil" means "accuser."

Translation Suggestions:

- The word "devil" could also be translated as "the accuser" or "the evil one" or "the king of evil spirits" or "the chief evil spirit."
- "Satan" could be translated as "Opponent" or "Adversary" or some other name that shows that he is the devil.
- These terms should be translated differently from demon and evil spirit.
- Consider how these terms are translated in a local or national language.

(See: [How to Translate Unknowns](#))

(Translation suggestions: [How to Translate Names](#))

(See also: demon, [evil](#), kingdom of God, tempt)

Bible References:

- 1 John 3:8
- 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20
- 1 Timothy 5:15
- Acts 13:10
- Job 1:8
- Mark 8:33
- Zechariah 3:1

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **21:1** The snake who deceived Eve was **Satan**. The promise meant that the Messiah who would come would defeat **Satan** completely.
- **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."
- **25:8** Jesus did not give in to **Satan's** temptations, so **Satan** left him.
- **33:6** So Jesus explained, "The seed is the word of God. The path is a person who hears God's word, but does not understand it, and the **devil** takes the word from him."
- **38:7** After Judas took the bread, **Satan** entered into him.
- **48:4** God promised that one of Eve's descendants would crush **Satan's** head, and **Satan** would wound his heel. This meant that **Satan** would kill the Messiah, but God would raise him to life again, and then the Messiah will crush the power of **Satan** forever.
- **49:15** God has taken you out of **Satan's** kingdom of darkness and put you into God's kingdom of light.

- **50:9** "The weeds represent the people who belong to the **evil one**. The enemy who planted the weeds represents the **devil**."
- **50:10** "When the world ends, the angels will gather together all the people who belong to the **devil** and throw them into a raging fire, where they will cry and grind their teeth in terrible suffering."
- **50:15** When Jesus returns, he will completely destroy **Satan** and his kingdom. He will throw **Satan** into hell where he will burn forever, along with everyone who chose to follow him rather than to obey God.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H7700, H7854, H8163, G11390, G11400, G11410, G11420, G12280, G41900, G45660, G45670

(Go back to: [Isaiah 14 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

save, saved, safe, salvation

Definition:

The term “save” refers to keeping someone from experiencing something bad or harmful. To “be safe” means to be protected from harm or danger.

- In a physical sense, people can be saved or rescued from harm, danger, or death.
- In a spiritual sense, if a person has been “saved,” then God, through Jesus’ death on the cross, has forgiven him and rescued him from being punished in hell for his sin.
- People can save or rescue people from danger, but only God can save people from being punished eternally for their sins.

The term “salvation” refers to being saved or rescued from evil and danger.

- In the Bible, “salvation” usually refers to the spiritual and eternal deliverance granted by God to those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.
- The Bible also talks about God saving or delivering his people from their physical enemies.

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate “save” could include “deliver” or “keep from harm” or “take out of harm’s way” or “keep from dying.”
- In the expression “whoever would save his life,” the term “save” could also be translated as “preserve” or “protect.”
- The term “safe” could be translated as “protected from danger” or “in a place where nothing can harm.”
- The term “salvation” could also be translated using words related to “save” or “rescue,” as in “God’s saving people (from being punished for their sins)” or “God’s rescuing his people (from their enemies).”
- “God is my salvation” could be translated as “God is the one who saves me.”
- “You will draw water from the wells of salvation” could be translated as “You will be refreshed as with water because God is rescuing you.”

(See also: cross, [deliver](#), punish, [sin](#), Savior)

Bible References:

- Genesis 49:18
- Genesis 47:25-26
- Psalms 80:3
- Jeremiah 16:19-21
- Micah 6:3-5
- Luke 2:30
- Luke 8:36-37
- Acts 4:12
- Acts 28:28
- Acts 2:21
- Romans 1:16
- Romans 10:10
- Ephesians 6:17
- Philippians 1:28
- 1 Timothy 1:15-17
- Revelation 19:1-2

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **9:8** Moses tried to **save** his fellow Israelite.
- **11:2** God provided a way to **save** the firstborn son of anyone who believed in him.
- **12:5** Moses told the Israelites, "Stop being afraid! God will fight for you today and **save** you."
- **12:13** The Israelites sang many songs to celebrate their new freedom and to praise God because he **saved** them from the Egyptian army.
- **16:17** This pattern repeated many times: the Israelites would sin, God would punish them, they would repent, and God would send a deliverer to **save** them.
- **44:8** "You crucified Jesus, but God raised him to life again! You rejected him, but there is no other way to be **saved** except through the power of Jesus!"
- **47:11** The jailer trembled as he came to Paul and Silas and asked, "What must I do to be **saved**?" Paul answered, "Believe in Jesus, the Master, and you and your family will be **saved**."
- **49:12** Good works cannot **save** you.
- **49:13** God will **save** everyone who believes in Jesus and receives him as their Master. But he will not **save** anyone who does not believe in him.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0983, H2421, H2502, H3444, H3467, H3468, H4190, H4422, H4931, H5338, H6308, H6403, H7682, H7951, H7965, H8104, H8199, H8668, G08030, G08040, G08060, G12950, G15080, G49820, G49910, G49920, G51980

(Go back to: [Isaiah 49 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

sign, proof, reminder

Definition:

The term “sign” usually refers an object, event, or action that communicates a special meaning.

- In the Bible, signs are sometimes given in connection to a promise or covenant that God has made:
 - The book of Genesis describes the rainbow God created in the sky as a sign (or reminder) to himself that he has promised he will never again destroy all life with a worldwide flood.
 - In the book of Genesis, God commanded the Israelites to circumcise their sons as a sign (or indicator) of the fact that he had made his covenant with them.
- Signs can reveal or point to something:
 - The book of Luke describes that an angel gave shepherds a sign that would help them know which baby in Bethlehem was the newborn Messiah.
 - Judas kissed Jesus as a sign to the religious leaders that Jesus was the one they should arrest.
- Signs can prove that something is true:
 - The book of Exodus describes the plagues that destroyed Egypt as signs that showed who Yahweh was and proved that he was greater than Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods.
 - The book of Acts describes the miracles performed by the prophets and apostles as signs that proved they were speaking God’s message.
 - The book of John describes the miracles that Jesus performed as signs that proved he was truly the Messiah.

Translation Suggestions:

- The frequent expression “signs and wonders” could be translated as “proofs and miracles” or “miraculous works that prove God’s power” or “amazing miracles that show how great God is.”
- Depending on its context, “sign” could also be translated as “signal” or “symbol” or “mark” or “evidence” or “proof” or “gesture.”
- To “make signs with the hands” could also be translated as “motion with the hands” or “gesture with the hands” or “make gestures.”
- In some languages, there may be one word for a “sign” that proves something and a different word for a “sign” that is a miracle.

(See also: miracle, apostle, [Christ](#), [covenant](#), circumcise)

Bible References:

- Acts 2:18-19
- Exodus 4:8-9
- Exodus 31:12-15
- Genesis 1:14
- Genesis 9:12
- John 2:18
- Luke 2:12
- Mark 8:12
- Psalms 89:5-6

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0226, H0852, H2368, H2858, H4150, H4159, H4864, H5251, H5824, H6161, H6725, H6734, H7560, G03640, G08800, G12130, G12290, G17180, G17300, G17320, G17700, G39020, G41020, G45910, G45920, G49530, G49730, G52800

([Go back to: Isaiah 37 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: [Introduction to Isaiah](#); [Isaiah 1 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

spirit, wind, breath

Definition:

The term “spirit” refers to the non-physical part of a person which cannot be seen. In biblical times, the concept of a person's spirit was closely related to the concept of a person's breath. The term can also refer to wind, that is, the movement of air in the natural world.

- The term “spirit” can refer to a being that does not have a physical body, such as an evil spirit.
- In general, the term “spiritual” describes things in the non-physical world.
- The term “spirit of” can also mean “having the characteristics of,” such as in “spirit of wisdom” or “in the spirit of Elijah.” Sometimes the Bible applies this term in the context of a person's attitude or emotional state, such as “spirit of fear” and “spirit of jealousy.”
- Jesus said that God is a spirit.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, some ways to translate “spirit” might include “non-physical being” or “inside part” or “inner being.”
- In some contexts, the term “spirit” could be translated as “evil spirit” or “evil spirit being.”
- Sometimes the term “spirit” is used to express the feelings of a person, as in “my spirit was grieved in my inmost being.” This could also be translated as “I felt grieved in my spirit” or “I felt deeply grieved.”
- The phrase “spirit of” could be translated as “character of” or “influence of” or “attitude of” or “thinking (that is) characterized by.”
- Depending on the context, “spiritual” could be translated as “non-physical” or “from the Holy Spirit” or “God's” or “part of the non-physical world.”
- The phrase “spiritual maturity” could be translated as “godly behavior that shows obedience to the Holy Spirit.”
- The term “spiritual gift” could be translated as “special ability that the Holy Spirit gives.”
- Sometimes this term can be translated as “wind” when referring to the simple movement of air or “breath” when referring to air movement caused by living beings.

(See also: soul, Holy Spirit, demon, breath)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 5:5
- 1 John 4:3
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23
- Acts 5:9
- Colossians 1:9
- Ephesians 4:23
- Genesis 7:21-22
- Genesis 8:1
- Isaiah 4:4
- Mark 1:23-26
- Matthew 26:41
- Philippians 1:27

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **13:3** Three days later, after the people had prepared themselves **spiritually**, God came down on top of Mount Sinai with thunder, lightning, smoke, and a loud trumpet blast.
- **40:7** Then Jesus cried out, "It is finished! Father, I give my **spirit** into your hands." Then he bowed his head and gave up his **spirit**.
- **45:5** As Stephen was dying, he cried out, "Jesus, receive my **spirit**."
- **48:7** All the people groups are blessed through him, because everyone who believes in Jesus is saved from sin, and becomes a **spiritual** descendant of Abraham.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0178, H1172, H5397, H7307, H7308, G41510, G41520, G41530, G53260, G54270

(Go back to: [Isaiah 5 General Notes](#))

temple, house, house of God

Facts:

The temple was a building surrounded by walled courtyards where the Israelites came to pray and to offer sacrifices to God. It was located on Mount Moriah in the city of Jerusalem.

- Often the term “temple” referred to the whole temple complex, including the courtyards that surrounded the main building. Sometimes it referred only to the building.
- The temple building had two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.
- God referred to the temple as his dwelling place.
- King Solomon built the Temple during his reign. It was supposed to be the permanent place of worship in Jerusalem.
- In the New Testament, the term “temple of the Holy Spirit” is used to refer to believers in Jesus as a group, because the Holy Spirit lives in them.

Translation Suggestions:

- Usually when the text says that people were “in the temple,” it is referring to the courtyards outside the building. This could be translated as “in the temple courtyards” or “in the temple complex.”
- Where it refers specifically to the building itself, some translations translate “temple” as “temple building,” to make it the reference clear.
- Ways to translate “temple” could include, “God’s holy house” or “sacred worship place.”
- Often in the Bible, the temple is referred to as “the house of Yahweh” or “the house of God.”

(See also: sacrifice, Solomon, Babylon, Holy Spirit, tabernacle, courtyard, Zion, house)

Bible References:

- Acts 3:2
- Acts 3:8
- Ezekiel 45:18-20
- Luke 19:46
- Nehemiah 10:28
- Psalm 79:1-3

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **17:6** David wanted to build a **temple** where all the Israelites could worship God and offer him sacrifices.
- **18:2** In Jerusalem, Solomon built the **Temple** for which his father David had planned and gathered materials. Instead of at the Tent of Meeting, people now worshiped God and offered sacrifices to him at the **Temple**. God came and was present in the **Temple**, and he lived there with his people.
- **20:7** They (Babylonians) captured the city of Jerusalem, destroyed the **Temple**, and took away all the treasures.
- **20:13** When the people arrived in Jerusalem, they rebuilt the **Temple** and the wall around the city of the city and the **Temple**.
- **25:4** Then Satan took Jesus to the highest point on the **Temple** and said, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘God will command his angels to carry you so your foot does not hit a stone.’”
- **40:7** When he died, there was an earthquake and the large curtain that separated the people from the presence of God in the **Temple** was torn in two, from the top to the bottom.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1004, H1964, H1965, G14930, G24110, G34850

(Go back to: [Isaiah 44 General Notes](#))

trust, trusted, trustworthy, trustworthiness

Definition:

To “trust” something or someone is to believe that the thing or person is true or dependable. That belief is also called “trust.” A “trustworthy” person is one you can trust to do and say what is right and true, and therefore one who has the quality of “trustworthiness.”

- Trust is closely related to faith. If we trust someone, we have faith in that person to do what they promised to do.
- Having trust in someone also means depending on that person.
- To “trust in” Jesus means to believe that he is God, to believe that he died on the cross to pay for our sins, and to rely on him to save us.
- A “trustworthy saying” refers to something that is said that can be counted on to be true.

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate “trust” could include “believe” or “have faith” or “have confidence” or “depend on.”
- The phrase “put your trust in” is very similar in meaning to “trust in.”
- The term “trustworthy” could be translated as “dependable” or “reliable” or “can always be trusted.”

(See also: believe, confidence, [faith](#), [faithful](#), true)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 9:22-24
- 1 Timothy 4:9
- Hosea 10:12-13
- Isaiah 31:1-2
- Nehemiah 13:13
- Psalm 31:5
- Titus 3:8

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.
- **14:15** Joshua was a good leader because he **trusted** and obeyed God.
- **17:2** David was a humble and righteous man who **trusted** and obeyed God.
- **34:6** Then Jesus told a story about people who **trusted** in their own good deeds and despised other people.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0539, H0982, H1556, H2620, H2622, H3176, H4009, H4268, H7365, G16790, G38720, G39820, G40060, G41000, G42760

(Go back to: [Isaiah 8 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

woe

Definition:

The term “woe” refers to a feeling of great distress. It also gives a warning that someone will experience severe trouble.

- The expression “woe to” is followed by a warning to people that they will experience suffering as punishment for their sins.
- In several places in the Bible, the word “woe” is repeated, to emphasize an especially terrible judgment.
- A person who says “woe is me” or “woe to me” is expressing sorrow about severe suffering.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the term “woe” could also be translated as “great sorrow” or “sadness” or “calamity” or “disaster.”
- Other ways to translate the expression “Woe to (name of city)” could include, “How terrible it will be for (name of city)” or “The people in (that city) will be severely punished” or “Those people will suffer greatly.”
- The expression, “Woe is me!” or “Woe to me!” could be translated as “How sad I am!” or “I am so sad!” or “How terrible this is for me!”
- The expression “Woe to you” could also be translated as “You will suffer terribly” or “You will experience terrible troubles.”

Bible References:

- Ezekiel 13:17-18
- Habakkuk 2:12
- Isaiah 31:1-2
- Jeremiah 45:1-3
- Jude 1:9-11
- Luke 6:24
- Luke 17:1-2
- Matthew 23:23

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0188, H0190, H0337, H0480, H1929, H1945, H1958, G37590

(Go back to: [Isaiah 1 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

wrath, fury

Definition:

Wrath is an intense anger that is sometimes long-lasting. The Bible describes both people and God as experiencing intense anger. When speaking about God's "wrath," make sure the word or phrase used to translate this term does not refer to a sinful fit of rage (which might be true of a human person).

- In the Bible, "wrath" often refers to God's righteous judgment of sin and punishment of people who rebel against him.
- The "wrath of God" can also refer to his judgment and punishment for sin.
- God's wrath is the righteous penalty for those who do not repent of their sin.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, other ways this term could be translated include "intense anger" or "righteous judgment" or "anger."
- God's wrath is just and holy. When talking about God's wrath, make sure the word or phrase used to translate this term does not refer to a sinful human rage.

(See also: [judge](#), [sin](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10
- 1 Timothy 2:8-10
- Luke 3:7
- Luke 21:23
- Matthew 3:7
- Revelation 14:10
- Romans 1:18
- Romans 5:9

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0639, H2197, H2528, H2534, H2740, H3707, H3708, H5678, H7107, H7109, H7110, H7265, H7267, G23720, G37090, G39490, G39500

(Go back to: [Isaiah 63 General Notes](#))

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