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Obadiah

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[en]

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Introduction to Obadiah

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of the Book of Obadiah

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Yahweh will judge the nations (1:15–16)
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What is the Book of Obadiah about?

After the nation of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, the Edomites (from the neighboring land of Edom) captured fleeing Jews. Then they gave these Jews over to Babylon. The Book of Obadiah is about Yahweh judging the Edomites for harming his people. This book would be comforting to the people of Judah who had been captured and forced to live in Babylon.

How should the title of this book be translated?

This book is traditionally titled "The Book of Obadiah" or just "Obadiah." Translators may decide to use a clearer title such as "The Sayings of Obadiah." (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**)

Who wrote the Book of Obadiah?

The prophet Obadiah probably wrote this book. We know nothing more about Obadiah. His name in Hebrew means "Servant of Yahweh."

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

What was Edom's relationship to Israel?

Obadiah referred to Edom as Israel's brother. This is because the Edomites descended from Esau, and the Israelites descended from Jacob. Jacob and Esau were twin brothers. This made Edom's betrayal of Israel much worse. The notes also refer to the Israelites as the people of Judah. Judah was the part of Israel that had survived the earlier destruction by the nation of Assyria and that was later captured by the nation of Babylon when the nation of Edom did not help them.

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

How do I translate the concept of "pride?"

The Book of Obadiah speaks of the pride of Edom. This meant that the Edomites thought that neither their enemies nor Yahweh could defeat them. (See: **proud, pride, prideful (p.115)**)

When Obadiah is addressing Edom, should I use a singular or plural form of "you?"

Since Obadiah addressed the people of Edom figuratively by referring to them as the nation of Edom, he used a singular form in the original language. But if you are using more plain language and want your translation to be clear that it is addressing the people of Edom, you could use a plural form.

Obadiah 1

Obadiah 1:1

The vision of Obadiah

This is the title of the book. Here **vision** is used in the general sense of a message from Yahweh, rather than to indicate how Obadiah received that message. **Vision** here is a metaphor for the way that God gives knowledge to people. Alternate translation: "The message that God gave to Obadiah" or "The prophecy of Obadiah" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

Obadiah

Some English translations call the prophet Abdias, but Obadiah is the form of his name most commonly used in English. Use the form of the name that is used in your source language or a form that is similar that sounds like a name in your language. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**)

thus says my Lord Yahweh

This introduces the rest of the book as a message from God. Use a form here that is natural in your language for introducing what someone says. (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.99)**) (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.99)**)

Yahweh

This is the name of God that he revealed to his people in the Old Testament. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**)

concerning Edom

People are being described here by the name of something closely associated with them, **Edom**, the land that they live in. If this is not clear in your language, you could say clearly that this message is about the people. Alternate translation: "concerning the people of Edom." (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

We have heard

Obadiah is speaking as one person among the many in the nations around Edom who have heard Yahweh's message, including the people of Israel. If your language has an inclusive form for **We**, use that here. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.63)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.63)**)

We have heard

Obadiah is speaking to the people of Judah about the people of Edom. So **We** here is inclusive; others in Judah have also heard or are now hearing the message calling the nations to war against Edom. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.63)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.63)**)

and a messenger has been sent off

If it is more natural in your language, you could use the active form of the verb. Alternate translation: "I, Yahweh, have sent a messenger" (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**)

and a messenger has been sent off

You could specify who sent the messenger. Alternate translation: "and Yahweh has sent a messenger" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 45)**)

Get up! And let us rise up against her for battle

The end of the verse is not spoken by Obadiah himself. Rather, these are the words of Yahweh's messenger. They can be presented as a quotation with an introductory formula such as "saying," or as indirect quotation as in UST. (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.54)**) (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.54)**)

Get up

This phrase is used to tell people to get ready, in this case to attack Edom. Alternate translation: "Get ready" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

And let us rise up against her

This is an idiom that means to violently oppose another person or nation. Alternate translation: "Let us gather our armies against Edom" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

And let us rise up against her

Here, **her** refers to the land of Edom, which, again, stands for the people of Edom. Alternate translation: "Let us rise up against the people of Edom" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

for battle

If it would be helpful in your language, If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **battle**, you can express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "to attack her" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

Obadiah 1:2

Behold, I am making you small

The addressee changes here. This is no longer Yahweh speaking to Judah or the messenger speaking to the other nations. Now Yahweh is speaking directly to the people of Edom. If it would be helpful in your language, you could add a quote introduction here, as in the UST. (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.99)**) (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.99)**)

Behold

This alerts the people of Edom to pay special attention to what follows. Use a natural way of getting someone's attention in your language. Alternate translation: "Look" or "Pay attention to what I am about to tell you"

I am making you small among the nations, you are extremely despised

These two phrases mean similar things and are used together to emphasize that Edom will lose its important status. If it would be more natural in your language, you could combine them as in the UST. (See: **Parallelism (p. 92)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**)

I am making you small among the nations

Something insignificant is spoken of figuratively as if it were small in size and could easily be overlooked. Alternate translation: "insignificant among the nations" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

you are extremely despised

You could state this in the active form. Alternate translation: "the people of other nations will hate you" (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**)

Obadiah 1:3

The pride of your heart has deceived you

Here, **pride** is spoken of figuratively as though it were a person who could deceive someone. If this is not clear, you could say this with plain language. Alternate translation: "Because you are so proud, you have deceived yourselves" (See: **Personification (p.95)**) (See: **Personification (p.95)**)

The pride of your heart has deceived you

Here, **you** is singular, since it refers to the people of Edom as a single nation, but if this is confusing in your language, you can use a plural form of "you" here and throughout this book. (See: **Singular Pronouns that refer to Groups (p.104)**) (See: **Singular Pronouns that refer to Groups (p.104)**)

The pride of your heart

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **pride**, you can express the same idea with an adjective such as "proud." Alternate translation: "Your proud attitude" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

The pride of your heart

Here, **heart** is used figuratively to refer to a person's thoughts and feelings. Alternate translation: "Your proud attitude" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

he who dwells in the clefts of the rock

Here, the pronoun switches from **you** to **he** even though Yahweh is still talking to the people of Edom. If this is confusing in your language, you can continue to use **you**, since this is part of Yahweh's continuing message to the people of Edom. Alternate translation: "you who live in the clefts of the rock" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.65)**) (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.65)**)

in the clefts of the rock

This means a place that is protected because it is surrounded by rocks.

he who says in his heart

This says **he** and **his,** as if Yahweh were talking aloud about Edom rather than to Edom, but it can be translated with **you** as part of Yahweh's continuing words to the people. Alternate translation: "you who say in your heart" or "you who say to yourselves" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.65)**) (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.65)**)

he who says in his heart

Here, the heart is used figuratively to refer to a person's thoughts and feelings. Alternate translation: "he who says to himself" or "you who think" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

Who will bring me down to earth

This rhetorical question expresses how proud the Edomites were and how safe they felt. Alternate translation: "no one can bring me down to the ground" or "I am safe from all attackers" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**) (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**)

Obadiah 1:4

If you make yourself high like the eagle, even if your nest is set between the stars

These two expressions have similar meanings. This is a way of showing that something is important by saying it more than once but in slightly different ways. If this is not clear in your language, use another way of showing that this is important. Alternate translation: "Even if you had wings and could live high up among the eagles, or even up among the stars" (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**)

If you make yourself high like the eagle, even if your nest is set between the stars

The people of Edom think that they are safe because they live up high in the mountains. Yahweh is saying that even if they lived much higher than it is actually possible for humans to live, they would still not be safe. Alternate translation: "and I tell you that even if you had wings and could fly higher than eagles fly, and if you could make your homes among the stars" (See: **Hyperbole (p.75)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.75)**)

your nest is set

If your language does not use passive verb forms, you can use the active form of the verb. Alternate translation: "if you can make your homes" (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**)

from there I will bring you down

Here, **bring you down** means "humble you" or "defeat you." This is a spatial metaphor. Yahweh's response to the Edomites is that there is nowhere they would be safe from his judgment and punishment. Alternate translation: "you would still not be safe there from the attackers that I am sending" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p. 84)**)

a declaration of Yahweh

This phrase reminds the reader that this message, including the entire book, came directly from Yahweh. Use a form of quotation that would make this clear in your language. (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.99)**) (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.99)**)

a declaration of Yahweh

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **declaration**, you can express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "Yahweh declares this to you." (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

Obadiah 1:5

If thieves came to you, and plunderers by night

These two phrases mean the same thing. The repetition is used to emphasize the one idea that they are expressing. If this is not clear in your language, use another way of showing that this is important or you could combine them, as in the UST. (See: **Doublet (p.56)**) (See: **Doublet (p.56)**)

how you are being destroyed

You could use the active form of the verb, and you could specify who is doing the action. Alternate translation: "how the attackers will destroy you" (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**)

how you are being destroyed

Yahweh adds this phrase in the middle of another sentence to express that the punishment of Edom is shocking. Unlike thieves and grape-harvesters, those who attack Edom will leave nothing behind. If it would be helpful in your language, you could move the phrase to the end of the verse and make it its own sentence. Alternate translation: "But attackers will destroy you completely" (See: **Exclamations (p.60)**) (See: **Exclamations (p.60)**)

would they not steal enough for them

This is a rhetorical question. The question form is used to make a point strongly. If you do not use rhetorical questions in this way in your language, you could use a statement here. Alternate translation: "they would only steal what they wanted" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**) (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**)

If grape-cutters came to you, would they not leave behind gleanings

This is a rhetorical question. The question form is used to make a point strongly. If you do not use rhetorical questions in this way in your language, you could use a statement here. Alternate translation: "they would certainly leave some grapes behind" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**) (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**)

Obadiah 1:6

How

Here, **How** introduces an exclamation to express amazement that the pillaging of Edom is so extreme. Use a natural way in your language to express this. Alternate translation: "In an extreme way" or "Completely" (See: **Exclamations (p.60)**) (See: **Exclamations (p.60)**)

How Esau is being ransacked

If it would be helpful in your language, you could use the active form of this verb, and you could say who is doing the action. Alternate translation: "How the attackers will ransack the country of Edom" (See: **Active or Passive (p. 40)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**)

Esau

Here, the name **Esau** refers to the people of Edom. They were the descendants of Esau, who was also known as Edom. All the people of Edom are being portrayed as if they were a single person, their ancestor. If this is confusing in your language, you can refer to the people instead, as in the UST. (See: **Personification (p.95)**) (See: **Personification (p.95)**)

is being ransacked

Here, **ransacked** means that the enemies have searched through the people's things, taken everything valuable, and left everything else in a mess or damaged.

his hidden treasures being searched out

If it would be helpful in your language, you could use the active form of this verb, and you could say who is doing the action. Alternate translation: "They will search out all of his hidden treasures" (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**)

Obadiah 1:7

All the men of your covenant are sending you away as far as the border

If it does not make sense in your language to say that someone would be attacked by someone with whom they have a **covenant**, that is, an ally, then you could add in the missing step of their betrayal, as in the UST. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 45)**)

your covenant

Yahweh is still addressing the people of Edom here, so the word **your** refers to them. (See: **Singular Pronouns that refer to Groups (p.104)**) (See: **Singular Pronouns that refer to Groups (p.104)**)

are sending you away as far as the border

Here, **the border** could mean: (1) It could refer to the border of the country of Edom. Alternate translation: "will force you out of your country" or (2) it could refer to the border of a formerly friendly country. Alternate translation: "will reject you from taking refuge in their country"

All the men of your covenant & The men of your peace & of your bread

All three phrases refer to Edom's allies. Yahweh is showing that what he is saying is important by saying it more than once in similar ways. (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**)

They of your bread will set a trap under you

Hebrew says simply **your bread**. In this poetic style, hearers and readers are expected to understand the meaning and supply the missing words **The men of** from the previous two lines. (See: **Ellipsis (p.58)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.58)**)

There is no understanding in him

This phrase could mean: (1) Yahweh could be saying this as an aside in order to express his evaluation of the people of Edom. If this would be confusing in your language, you could continue the address to Edom in the second person, as in the UST. (2) the former allies could be saying this about Edom. Alternate translation: "Then they will say to you, 'you are not as clever as you thought you were'" (3) It could be referring to the trap just mentioned. Alternate translation: "and there is no perception of it" (4) It could be referring to the shocking situation of Edom being betrayed by its allies. Alternate translation: "There is no understanding of this" (See: **Aside (p.43)**) (See: **Aside (p.43)**)

There is no understanding in him

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **understanding**, you can express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "He does not understand anything" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p. 38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

in him

Here, **him** probably refers to Edom, which represents the people who live there. Alternate translation: "in the people of Edom" (See: **Personification (p.95)**) (See: **Personification (p.95)**)

Obadiah 1:8

Will I not on that day (& destroy wise men from Edom

This is a rhetorical question. Yahweh uses the question form here to emphasize that he will certainly do this. Alternate translation: "On that day … I will certainly destroy the wise men from Edom" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**) (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**)

I & destroy wise men from Edom

The original audience would have known that Edom was famous for its wisdom. So this means that even their famous wisdom cannot save them from Yahweh's destruction. If it would be helpful in your language, you could indicate this information as in the UST. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

and understanding from the mountain of Esau

This is the second part of the rhetorical question. You could also start a new sentence here. Yahweh continues the question form here to emphasize that he will certainly do this. Alternate translation: "and I will certainly destroy their understanding" or "On that day I will certainly remove understanding from the mountain of Esau" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**) (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.101)**)

and understanding from the mountain of Esau

In this poetic style, the reader is expected to use the words **will I not on that day destroy** from the first rhetorical question in order to understand this second one. If that is not clear in your language, you could repeat those words here. Alternate translation: "and will I not on that day destroy understanding from the mountain of Esau?" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mountain of Esau

In this poetic style, the same meaning is expressed twice but in different words in order to emphasize what is being said. Here, **wise men** and **understanding** both refer to people who are wise, and **Edom** and **the mountain of Esau** are both ways of referring to the country of Edom. If this is confusing in your language, you can say this only once, or emphasize the meaning in another way. Alternate translation: "all people who are wise from the country of Edom" (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**)

and understanding

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **understanding**, you can express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "and people who know what to do" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p. 38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

from the mountain of Esau

Yahweh is referring to the whole territory of Edom by using the name of one prominent part of it. The **mountain of Esau** may be the one now called Mount Bozrah. Alternate translation: "from the land of Edom" (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

Esau

This is the name of the man who was the ancestor of the people of Edom. See how you translated this in verse 6. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**)

Obadiah 1:9

And your mighty men will be dismayed, O Teman

Yahweh continues speaking to the people of Edom, but now he addresses them as **Teman**, which was the name of the region around their capital city. This part of Edom is now being used to represent the whole people. Alternate translation: "People of Edom, your strong soldiers will become terrified" (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

O Teman

Teman is the name of a region in the land of Edom. Yahweh is referring to the whole territory of Edom by the name of one part of it. Alternate translation: "O people of Edom" (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**)

so that

There is a cause-and-effect relationship here. Yahweh says in v. 8 that he will destroy the wise men in Edom, and here in v. 9 that the mighty men of Edom will be "dismayed" (that is, they will give up trying to fight). The people of Edom trusted in these two groups to protect them. So as a result of Yahweh destroying these two groups, no others in Edom will escape the invading armies, either. Alternate translation: "with the result that" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.51)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.51)**)

a man will be cut off

Here, **cut off** is a metaphor for being killed. The Edomites are pictured as part of the mountain where they live, and their death as being cut off from the mountain. Alternate translation: "your enemies will destroy all of you" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

a man will be cut off

You could use an active verb form, and you could specify who will do the action. Alternate translation: "your enemies will destroy all of you" (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**)

a man

Here, **a man** is an idiom that means "each person." Alternate translation: "all you people" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

from the mountain of Esau

As in v. 8, Yahweh is referring to the whole territory by the name of this one part of it. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "from the land of Edom" (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

by slaughter

The abstract noun **slaughter** intensifies the idea of being **cut off** or killed. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **slaughter**, you can express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "violently" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

by slaughter

Some Bible translations put this phrase with verse 10, rather than with verse 9. If you choose to do that, verse 9 would end, " ... from the mountain of Esau." Verse 10 would begin, "Because of slaughter, because of violence ... " (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

Obadiah 1:10

your brother

The term **brother** is being used here to refer to members of a related people group. Use the term that is most natural in your language. Alternate translation: "your relatives who are the descendants of Jacob" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

Jacob

Here the name **Jacob** refers to the people of Judah, who were his descendants. All the people are being portrayed as if they were a single person, their ancestor. (See: **Personification (p.95)**) (See: **Personification (p.95)**)

shame will cover you

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **shame**, you can express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "you will be dishonored" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

shame will cover you

To be **covered** with something is an idiom for fully experiencing it. Alternate translation: "you will be completely ashamed" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

and you will be cut off

If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an active form of the verb. Alternate translation: "your enemies will destroy you" (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**)

and you will be cut off

You can specify who will do the action. Alternate translation: "your enemies will destroy you" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

and you will be cut off

As in verse 5, **cut off** is an idiom for being destroyed. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "your enemies will destroy you" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

Obadiah 1:11

you stood opposite

This is a metaphor that pictures the people of Edom as a person who was just standing around and not helping a relative. Alternate translation: "you did not help him." (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

strangers took captive his wealth, and foreigners entered his gates

These two phrases mean similar things. They are used together to emphasize that Judah was in a desperate situation. Invading armies were plundering the cities of Judah. (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**)

his wealth, & his gates

Here, **his** refers to **your brother Jacob** in verse 10, meaning the people of Judah. (See: **Personification (p.95)**) (See: **Personification (p.95)**)

his wealth

In this context, the term translated **wealth** could also mean "army." But since it clearly means "wealth" in verse 13, it seems best to translate it as "wealth" here, as well.

his gates

Here, **gates** stands for "city." The gates, the part of a city through which people would come and go, are being used to represent the whole city. Alternate translation: "all the cities of Judah" (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

and cast lots for Jerusalem

There are two possibilities for what this could mean: (1) This is a figurative way of saying that the **foreigners** had complete control of **Jerusalem**, with Jerusalem pictured as something that everybody wants to have, but it cannot be divided, so they cast lots to see who will get it. Alternate translation: "they even plundered Jerusalem" or (2) The name of the city may be standing for the wealth of the city. Alternate translation: "and they divided the wealth of Jerusalem among themselves" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

you also were like one of them

The people of Edom did not do exactly the same things as the **strangers** and **foreigners** did, but they were like them because they did not help the people of Judah, who were a related people group. If it would be helpful in your language, you could include this information, as in the UST. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

Obadiah 1:12

But & not & And & not & And & not

Yahweh uses a repetitive series of sentences in verses 12–14 to show how badly the people of Edom have treated the people of Judah. This repetitive style of speaking or writing is called a "litany." This is a list of the charges against the people of Edom. Yahweh goes on to say in verses 15 and 16 that he has found them guilty of all of these charges and that he will punish them. Use a form in your language that someone would use to list things that someone has done wrong. (See: **Litany (p.81)**) (See: **Litany (p.81)**)

But you should not have looked

Here, **you should not have looked** implies that the people of Edom were looking on the disaster in Judah with pleasure. To make this clear, you could include this information in the way that you translate. Alternate translation: "you should not have enjoyed looking" or "it was very bad that you enjoyed looking" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

on the day of your brother, on the day of his misfortune

The two phrases **on the day of your brother** and **on the day of his misfortune** work together to mean "on the day of your brother's misfortune." If having the two phrases is confusing, you could combine them into one phrase, as in the UST. (See: **Hendiadys (p.68)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.68)**)

on the day of

Here, **on the day** is an idiom that refers to an undefined period of time that could extend from one to very many days. Alternate translation: "at the time of" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

your brother

As in verse 10, Yahweh describes the people of Judah as a **brother** to the descendants of Esau, because their ancestor, Jacob, was the brother of Esau (Edom). (See: **Personification (p.95)**) (See: **Personification (p.95)**)

over the sons of Judah

Here, the word **sons** does not refer only to men. It refers to all of the descendants of Jacob's son Judah, and more broadly to all of the Israelites from a number of the different tribes of Israel who had come to live in the kingdom of Judah at this time. Alternate translation: "over the Israelites" (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p. 112)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.112)**)

And you should not have made your mouth great

This is an idiom for bragging or mocking. In this context of observing someone else's misfortune, mocking makes better sense. Alternate translation: "You should not have mocked them" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

Obadiah 1:13

in the day of their calamity. & in the day of his calamity. & in the day of his calamity

In this poetic style, the same phrase is used at the end of each line to emphasize how terrible the **calamity** was. If this style does not work in your language to communicate an increased emphasis, then you could combine the three occurrences into one and communicate that this was a very bad thing in another way, as in the UST. (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**)

their calamity. & his calamity. & his calamity

In the first line of this verse, **their** refers to **my people**. In the second and third lines, God's people are once again pictured as their ancestor Jacob, and so the singular pronoun **his** is used (see verse 10). If this change is confusing in your language, you could avoid the personification and refer to the people with plural pronouns in all three lines. (See: **Personification (p.95)**) (See: **Personification (p.95)**)

yes, you

Yahweh is accusing the people of Edom directly, and he adds this exclamation to emphasize this. This exclamation expresses anger, demands their attention, and also may be a warning that they cannot claim to be innocent. If it is confusing to have this in the middle of another sentence, you could make this a separate sentence ending in an exclamation mark, either before or after the current sentence. Alternate translation: "I am talking to you" (See: **Exclamations (p.60)**) (See: **Exclamations (p.60)**)

You should not have looked

In this context, **looked on** is an idiom for "enjoyed looking at." See how you translated this in verse 12. Alternate translation: "you should not have gloated" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

And you women should not have looted his wealth

Here, the word translated as **you** is feminine and plural. In the rest of Obadiah, it is masculine and singular. It may be that God is addressing the women specifically here in case they thought that they were not also guilty. So use a feminine plural form here, or mark this in some other way so that it means "you women." (See: **Forms of You (p. 67)**) (See: **Forms of You (p.67)**)

Obadiah 1:14

the crossroads

A **crossroads** is a place where two roads come together. (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.109)**) (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.109)**)

to cut down

Here, **to cut down** is a metaphor that means "to kill." It is likely a comparison to the way grain is cut down at harvest time. See how you translated this same metaphor in verse 9. (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p. 84)**)

And you should not have delivered up his survivors

If it would be helpful in your language, you could make explicit to whom the Edomites delivered the Judean survivors. Alternate translation: "You should not have captured the survivors and delivered them over to the enemy soldiers" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

Obadiah 1:15

For the day of Yahweh is near upon all the nations. According to what you have done, it will be done to you; your recompense will return on your own head

Bible experts are not certain whether verse 15 goes with verse 14 as the end of the previous section or if it goes with verse 16 as the beginning of the new section. Many Bibles put a section break and a heading before verse 15, such as "God Will Judge the Nations."

For the day of Yahweh is near upon all the nations

Here Yahweh is giving the people of Edom the reason why they should not have done all of the bad things that they did to the Israelites that were listed in verses 11-14, and instead of that, helped them. It is because Yahweh will soon judge all nations for the way that they have treated others. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this explicit, as in the UST. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

the day of Yahweh

The **day of Yahweh** is an expression that refers to a specific time when God punishes people for their sins. Alternate translation: "the time when I, Yahweh, will judge and punish people for their sins" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

is near

In this context, **near** means "close in time." Alternate translation: "will soon happen"

it will be done to you

If you prefer an active verb you can use one here and you can specify who will do this action. Alternate translation: "I will do those same things to you" (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.40)**)

your recompense will return on your own head

This is a metaphor that pictures the Edomites as having sent bad things out to others, and now those things are going to come back and hurt them as they land on their heads. Alternate translation: "those same things will soon happen to you" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

on your own head

The **head** is being used to represent the whole person. Alternate translation: "to you" (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

Obadiah 1:16

For according to how you drank

As at the beginning of verse 15, here also the connecting word **For** indicates that this is a reason why the people of Edom should have helped the Israelites instead of joining in attacking them. Here also Yahweh describes how he will soon judge all nations for the way that they have treated others. There are two possibilities for how you can make this explicit, If it would be helpful in your language. Choosing between these possibilities depends on how you interpret the referent of the word **you**. The word **you** here is masculine plural, the first and only time it occurs in this form in the book. Throughout the book, the nation of Edom was addressed with the masculine singular form. This is also the last occurrence of the second person in the book. (1) Because of these observations, the use of drinking here and throughout the Bible as a metaphor for suffering punishment, and the location of this suffering on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, it seems that here Obadiah stops addressing the people of Edom and returns to addressing the people of Israel. At the beginning of the book, Obadiah included the people of Israel when he said, "We have heard a report from Yahweh." Now, near the end of the book, he addresses them again, giving them assurance that the people of Edom will be punished for what they did to the people of Israel. See the UST. (2) This word **you** could refer to the people of Edom. Alternate translation: "You should have helped the people of Israel, because just as you drank" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

according to how you drank

Throughout the book of Obadiah, the nation of Edom is addressed with a masculine singular form of "you." (The one feminine plural form in verse 13 only addresses the women of Edom). Here, however, **you** is masculine plural. There are two possibilities for who is being addressed here. (1) It refers to the people of Israel. This would explain the shift from singular to plural. Just as Obadiah addressed the people of Israel in the plural in verse 1, so he addresses them in the plural now. This interpretation also fits with the metaphor used here and throughout the Bible that pictures suffering and divine punishment as drinking something that makes a person stagger, fall, and die. The people of Israel suffered and died in Jerusalem when the city was destroyed. This also allows the comparison in this verse to fit with the idea in the previous verse that Edom will suffer in the same way that they made Israel to suffer. See the UST. (2) It refers to the people of Edom. In this case, the comparison is between how the people of Edom literally drank wine in celebration of Jerusalem's destruction with how the nations will metaphorically drink God's punishment. Either that, or the verb must be forced into a future meaning, and the comparison is between how God will punish the people of Edom in Jerusalem and how God will punish all the nations. Alternate translation: "just as I will punish you" (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.97)**) (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.97)**)

you drank

The image of drinking something is often used in the Bible as a metaphor for suffering or for being punished by God. Alternate translation: "you suffered" or "I punished you" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

on the mountain of my holiness

The **mountain of my holiness** refers to Mount Zion and therefore to the city of Jerusalem. So here Jerusalem is being referred to by the name of something closely associated with it, the mountain that the city is built on. Alternate translation: "in my holy city, Jerusalem" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

all the nations shall drink continually

Here the metaphor continues, using **drink** to mean "suffer" or "be punished." Alternate translation: "I will punish all of the nations continually" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

And they will drink, and they will swallow

The words translated **drink** and **swallow** mean very similar things and are used together to intensify the one meaning. If your language does not have two such similar words, you can use one of the words and intensify the meaning in another way. Alternate translation: "They will drink all of it down" (See: **Doublet (p.56)**) (See: **Doublet (p.56)**)

And they will drink, and they will swallow

Here the metaphor continues, using **drink** and **swallow** as images for suffering or being punished. Alternate translation: "I will make them suffer a lot" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

Obadiah 1:17

But in the mountain of Zion there will be an escape

The abstract noun **escape** refers to the people of Israel who will still be alive in Jerusalem after Yahweh has finished punishing the other nations. As 1:16 says, those other nations will disappear completely, but the descendants of Jacob will continue as a people. Alternate translation: "But in Jerusalem some people will remain" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

But in the mountain of Zion

This is a figure of speech that refers to Jerusalem by the name of something closely associated with it, the mountain that the city is built on. Alternate translation: "But in Jerusalem" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

and there will be holiness

If your language does not use abstract nouns, you can translate the word **holiness** by using an adjective. Alternate translation: "and it will be a holy place" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.38)**)

the house of Jacob

Here, **the house of Jacob** is an idiom that means "the descendants of Jacob" and by extension, all of the people of Israel. Alternate translation: "the people of Israel" (See: **Idiom (p.79)**) (See: **Idiom (p.79)**)

their own possessions

Here, **possessions** refers to the land that was supposed to be passed down from generation to generation to each of the Israelite families and clans. If using a plural term is confusing, you could translate it with a singular word. Alternate translation: "the land that belongs to each of them"

Obadiah 1:18

And the house of Jacob will become a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame

These two expressions have similar meanings. Yahweh is showing that what he is saying is important by saying it more than once. Both **house of Jacob** and **house of Joseph** stand for all of the Israelites. Alternate translation: "The Israelites will be like a fire. Yes, they will be like a flame" If saying this twice is confusing, you could combine them into one expression, as in the UST. (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.92)**)

the house of Jacob

Here, the word **house** means all of the people descended from a particular person. All of the descendants of Jacob are being described figuratively as if they were one household living together. Alternate translation: "the Israelites" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

and the house of Joseph

The descendants of Joseph are also being described figuratively as if they were one household. Joseph was the son of Jacob, and his descendants made up a large part of the people of Israel. So Yahweh is using his descendants to represent the whole nation. (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

and the house of Esau & for the house of Esau

The descendants of Esau (Edom) are also being described figuratively as if they were one household. Alternate translation: "the people of Edom" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

a fire, & a flame, & as stubble

In this metaphor, Yahweh is saying that the Israelites will be like fire and flame, that the people of Edom will be like dry grass, and that the Israelites will do to the people of Edom what fire and flame do to dry grass. In other words, just as fire and flame burn up dry grass until it is all gone, the Israelites who survive will conquer all of Edom. If this metaphor is not clear in your language, you could make it a simile, as in the UST. (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

as stubble

The word **stubble** means the dry pieces of plants that are left in the ground after their stalks have been cut. Alternate translation: "like dry grass" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.109)**) (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.109)**)

And they will burn them, and consume them

Burn and **consume** mean almost the same thing. Yahweh uses the words together to intensify the meaning. If you do not have two similar words in your language or if it would be confusing to say this twice, you could combine them into one phrase and intensify the meaning in another way. Alternate translation: "and they will burn them until they are all burned up" or "and they will burn them up completely" (See: **Doublet (p.56)**) (See: **Doublet (p.56)**)

for

Here, **For** indicates that what follows is the reason for what came before. Yahweh is reminding the reader that these things will certainly happen, because this message comes from him. If it would be helpful in your language,

you could say this explicitly, as in the UST. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

for Yahweh has spoken

Yahweh is speaking of himself in the third person here. If that is confusing in your language, you could change it to first person, as in the UST. (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.65)**) (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.65)**)

Obadiah 1:19

And & will possess

This verse as a whole describes people who live in different parts of Israel conquering the territories next to them. Alternate translation: "will conquer"

the Negev

The **Negev** is the name of the southern region of Judea that is dry, rocky, and barren. It is being used to represent the people who live there. The people are being described by the name of something closely associated with them, the land that they live in. Alternate translation: "The Israelites who live in the Negev" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

the mountain of Esau

This was one of the mountains in Edom. See how you translated this in verses 8 and 9. Yahweh is referring to the whole territory of Edom by using the name of one prominent part of it. Alternate translation: "the country of Edom" (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

and the Shephelah

The **Shephelah** is the name of the western foothills in the land of Israel. That location is being used figuratively to represent the people who live there. The people are being described by the name of something closely associated with them, the land that they live in. Alternate translation: "the Israelites who live in the western foothills." (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

and the Shephelah, the Philistines

Here, the reader is expected to supply the verb **will possess** from the previous clause. Alternate translation: "and the Israelites who live in the Shephelah will possess the land of the Philistines" (See: **Ellipsis (p.58)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p. 58)**)

the Philistines

The **Philistines** were people who occupied the territory to the west of Israel. Here, the people are used to represent that territory, also known as the region of Phoenicia. Alternate translation: "the region of the Philistines" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

And they will possess

Alternate translation: "The people of Israel will possess"

the field of Ephraim and the field of Samaria

Here, **field** refers to a large, open area, and represents the whole territory that belonged to the tribe of **Ephraim** and that surrounded the city of **Samaria**. Alternate translation: "all of the territory that had belonged to the people of Ephraim and all of the area around Samaria" (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

and Benjamin

Here, **Benjamin** represents the people of the tribe of Benjamin. All the people are being portrayed as if they were a single person, their ancestor. See the UST. (See: **Personification (p.95)**) (See: **Personification (p.95)**)

and Benjamin, Gilead

Here, the reader is expected to supply the verb **will possess** from the previous clause. Alternate translation: "and the people of the tribe of Benjamin will possess the land of Gilead" (See: **Ellipsis (p.58)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.58)**)

Gilead

Gilead is a region east of the land of Israel, across the Jordan River. It is being used to represent the areas to the east. See the UST. (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

Obadiah 1:20

And the exile of this army

Here, **exile** is a collective singular noun that includes all of the people who were exiled. Alternate translation: "All of the large group of people who were captured and taken away from their homes" (See: **Collective Nouns (p.48)**) (See: **Collective Nouns (p.48)**)

army

Here, the word translated as **army** can also mean "a large number of people." In this context, the large number of people are also described as capturing territory, so they will be acting as an army. If you have a term that can mean both of these things, use it here. If not, then choose the term that fits best.

of the sons of Israel

Here, there are two possibilities for the meaning of **the sons of Israel**: (1) In this context, **Israel** is identified as occupying territory in the north and is in contrast with **Jerusalem**, so it seems that **the sons of Israel** is referring to people who are from the northern kingdom of Israel. Alternate translation: "from northern Israel" (2) It could refer to all of the descendants of Israel. Alternate translation: "of the people of Israel" (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.84)**)

who are Canaanites

The land of Canaan is where the people of Israel lived before they were exiled. So the people are being called by the name of the place where they lived, and where they will live again. Alternate translation: "who lived in the land of Canaan" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

as far as Zarephath

Zarephath was a Phoenician city north of Israel on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea between Tyre and Sidon. Alternate translation: "as far north as Zarephath" (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**)

as far as Zarephath

The reader is expected to supply the verb "will possess" or "will capture" from the previous sentence. Alternate translation: "will capture the territory as far north as Zarephath" (See: **Ellipsis (p.58)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.58)**)

and the exile of Jerusalem

Here, **exile** is a collective singular noun that includes all of the people who were captured and taken away from their homes in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "The people who were captured and taken away from their homes in Jerusalem" (See: **Collective Nouns (p.48)**) (See: **Collective Nouns (p.48)**)

are in Sepharad

Sepharad is the name of a place whose location is unknown to modern scholars. Some experts suggest that it refers to the city of Sardis in the region of Lydia. This would be in Asia Minor, northwest of Israel, in what is now the

country of Turkey. Alternate translation: "currently live in Sepharad" (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**)

they will possess

In order to conquer the **cities of the Negev**, these exiles first will return from the distant lands where they are living. If it would be helpful in your language, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "they will come back and conquer" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.45)**)

the Negev

The **Negev** is the name of the southern region of Judea that is dry, rocky, and barren. See how you translated this in verse 19 Alternate translation: "the southern Judean wilderness" (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.71)**)

Obadiah 1:21

And saviors will go up to the mountain of Zion to judge the mountain of Esau

Even though **the mountain of Zion** is a figurative name for Jerusalem, it would be good to keep the imagery of this high place in Jerusalem where God's temple was, if possible. This would also allow the comparison with **the mountain of Esau**. Edom had boasted that it was up high and that no one could bring it down. But with this figurative imagery, Yahweh is saying that he will bring it down and place his own people up high instead. you could also choose to express this meaning in plain language if that is how you have been translating the book and if **the mountain of Zion** would be misunderstood. Alternate translation: "Israel's saviors will go up to Jerusalem and will rule over Edom, who thought that they were so high, from up there" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p. 90)**)

saviors

Here, **saviors** refers to Israelite military leaders whom God will use to defeat the nation of Edom. Alternate translation: "the leaders who have saved Israel"

to the mountain of Zion

Yahweh is referring to Jerusalem figuratively by the name of something closely associated with it, the mountain that the city is built on. See how you translated this in verses 16 and 17. Alternate translation: "to Jerusalem" (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.90)**)

the mountain of Esau

This phrase refers to the mountainous territory where Esau, the brother of Jacob and the ancestor of the Edomites, went and settled. So it means "the hill country that came to belong to Esau and his descendants." See how you translated this in verses 8, 9, and 19. Alternate translation: "the land of Edom" (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.107)**)

and the kingdom will belong to Yahweh

This phrase emphasizes that Yahweh will personally rule over the kingdom of Israel as they rule over Edom. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will be the king over all"

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Version 36

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:
>
> *Parts of Speech* *(UTA PDF)*
> *Sentence Structure* *(UTA PDF)*

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**.

"

Referenced in:

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:
>
> *Sentence Structure (UTA PDF)*
>
> *Verbs (UTA PDF)*

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: "

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:1; Obadiah 1:2; Obadiah 1:4; Obadiah 1:5; Obadiah 1:6; Obadiah 1:9; Obadiah 1:10; Obadiah 1:15

Aside

Description

An aside is a figure of speech in which someone who is speaking to a person or group pauses to speak confidentially to himself or someone else about those to whom he had been speaking. The speaker does this to indicate in a strong way his thoughts or feelings about that person or group.

This page answers the question: *What is the figure of speech called an "aside"?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use asides, and readers could be confused by them. They may wonder why the speaker suddenly starts talking to himself or someone else about the people he is speaking with.

Examples From the Bible

> All the men of your covenant are sending you away as far as the border.
> The men of your peace are deceiving you and are prevailing against you.
> They of your bread will set a trap under you.
> **There is no understanding in him.** (Obadiah 1:7 ULT)

In the first three lines, Yahweh is telling the people of Edom what will happen to them because they did not help the people of Judah. In the fourth line, Yahweh says something about Edom to himself.

> And I purified them from everything foreign. And I caused the service watches to stand: for the priests and for the Levites, a man in his work; and for the offering of pieces of wood at the appointed times; and for the firstfruits. **Remember me, my God, for good.** (Nehemiah 13:30-31 ULT)

Nehemiah is speaking to the readers of his account and describing some of the many things he did to restore true worship in Judah after the people returned from exile. But he suddenly turns aside and addresses God, asking God to bless him for what he, Nehemiah, has done for those people.

Translation Strategies

(1) If an aside would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. But if this way of speaking would be confusing, let the speaker continue speaking to the people who are listening to him, but make clear that he is now expressing his thoughts and feelings about them.

(2) If a person speaks a prayer to God as an aside, you can put the prayer in quotation marks to indicate that.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1)

> All the men of your covenant are sending you away as far as the border.
> The men of your peace are deceiving you and are prevailing against you.
> They of your bread will set a trap under you.
> **There is no understanding in him.** (Obadiah 1:7 ULT)

All the men of your covenant are sending you away as far as the border.
The men of your peace are deceiving you and are prevailing against you.

They of your bread will set a trap under you.
You do not understand any of this.

(2)

> And I purified them from everything foreign. And I caused the service watches to stand: for the
> priests and for the Levites, a man in his work; 31 and for the offering of pieces of wood at the
> appointed times; and for the firstfruits. **Remember me, my God, for good.** (Nehemiah
> 13:30-31 ULT)

And I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I made assignments for the priests and for the Levites, a man to his own work. And the wood offering at the stated time, and the firstfruits. **"Remember me, my God, for good."**

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:7

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:
>
> *Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit* *(UTA PDF)*

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:1; Obadiah 1:7; Obadiah 1:8; Obadiah 1:10; Obadiah 1:11; Obadiah 1:12; Obadiah 1:14; Obadiah 1:15; Obadiah 1:16; Obadiah 1:18; Obadiah 1:20

Collective Nouns

Description

This page answers the question: *What are collective nouns and how can I translate them?*

A collective noun is a singular noun that refers to a group of something. Examples: a **family, clan,** or **tribe** is a group of people who are related to each other; a **flock** is a group of birds or sheep; a **fleet** is a group of ships; and an **army** is a group of soldiers.

Many collective nouns are used exclusively as a singular replacement for a group as in the examples above. Frequently in the Bible the name of an ancestor is used, through a process of metonymy, as a collective noun referencing the group of his descendants. In the Bible, sometimes the singular noun will take a singular verb form, other times it will take a plural verb form. This may depend on how the author is thinking about the group, or whether the action is being done as a group or as individuals.

Reason This is a Translation Issue

There are several issues that require care when translating collective nouns. Further care is needed because the language you are translating into may not use collective nouns in the same way as the language you are translating from. Issues include:

The source language may have a collective noun for a group that the target language does not and vice-versa. You may have to translate a collective noun with a plural noun in your language, or you may need to translate a plural noun with a collective noun in your language.
Subject-verb agreement. Different languages or dialects may have different rules about using singular or plural verbs with collective nouns.
Examples (from Wikipedia):

- a singular noun with a singular verb: The team *is* in the dressing room.
- a singular noun with a plural verb which is correct in British, but not American, English: The team *are* fighting among themselves. The team *have* finished the project.

Pronoun agreement. Similar to the previous, care needs to be taken to use the correct pronoun plurality and possibly gender or noun class to agree with the number/gender/class of the noun used. See the biblical examples below.
Clarity of referent. Especially if there is a mismatch in your translation between the verb and noun or pronoun concerning any of the factors above, readers may be confused about who or what is being referenced.

Examples from the Bible

> And Joab and all the **army** which was with him arrived (2 Samuel 3:23a ULT)

The word in bold is written in singular form in both Hebrew and English, but it refers to a group of warriors that fight together.

> and though the **flock** is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls. (Habakkuk 3:17b ULT)

The word in bold is singular and refers to a group of sheep.

> And he went out again beside the sea, and all the **crowd** was coming to him, and he was teaching **them**. (Mark 2:13 ULT)

Note in this example that the noun is singular but the pronoun is plural. This may or may not be allowed or natural in your language.

> Do not let **your heart** be troubled. **You** believe in God; believe also in me. (John 14:1 ULT)

In this verse, the words translated "your" and "you" are plural, referring to many people. The word "heart" is singular in form, but it refers to all of their hearts as a group.

> And he shall take the **hair** of the head of his separation. And he shall put **it** on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. (Num 6:18b ULT)

The word **hair** is singular, but it refers to many hairs, not just one.

> And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **Israel** go." (Exodus 5:2 ULT)

Here, "Israel" is singular, but means "the Israelites" by metonymy.

Translation Strategies

If your language has a collective (singular) noun that refers to the same group as referenced by the collective noun in the source text, then translate the word using that term. If not, here are some strategies to consider:

(1) Translate the collective noun with a plural noun.
(2) Add a plural word to the collective noun so that you can use a plural verb and pronouns.
(3) Use a phrase to describe the group that the collective noun references. A useful strategy here can be to use a general collective noun that refers to a group of people or things.
(4) If your language uses a collective noun for something that is a plural noun in the source language, you can translate the plural noun as a collective noun and, if necessary, change the form of the verb and any pronouns so that they agree with the singular noun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate the collective noun with a plural noun.

> And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **Israel** go." (Exodus 5:2 ULT)

And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **the Israelites** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **the Israelites** go."

> And he shall take the **hair** of the head of his separation. And he shall put **it** on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. (Num 6:18b ULT)

And he shall take the **hairs** of the head of his separation. And he shall put **them** on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.

(2) Add a plural word to the collective noun so that you can use a plural verb and pronouns.

> And Joab and all the **army** which was with him arrived (2 Samuel 3:23a ULT)

And Joab and all the **army men who were** with him arrived

> And he went out again beside the sea, and all the **crowd** was coming to him, and he was teaching **them**. (Mark 2:13 ULT)

And he went out again beside the sea, and all the **people of the crowd were** coming to him, and he was teaching **them**.

(3) Use a phrase to describe the group that the collective noun references. A useful strategy here can be to use a general collective noun that refers to a group of people or things.

> and though the **flock** is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls. (Habakkuk 3:17b ULT)

and though the **group of sheep** is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls.

> And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **Israel** go." (Exodus 5:2 ULT)

And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **the people of Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **the people of Israel** go."

(4) If your language uses a collective noun for something that is a plural noun in the source language, you can translate the plural noun as a collective noun and, if necessary, change the form of the verb and any pronouns so that they agree with the singular noun.

> Now this John had his clothing from the **hairs** of a camel and a leather belt around his waist (Matthew 3:4a ULT)

Now this John had his clothing from the **hair** of a camel and a leather belt around his waist

> You shall not make for yourself a carved figure nor any likeness that {is} in **the heavens** above, or that {is} in the earth beneath, or that {is} in **the waters** under the earth. (Deuteronomy 5:8 ULT)

You shall not make for yourself a carved figure nor any likeness that is in **heaven** above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in **the water** under the earth.

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:20

Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship

Logical Relationships

Some connectors establish logical relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

> This page answers the question: *How can I translate a goal (purpose) relationship?*

Goal (or Purpose) Relationship

Description

A Goal Relationship is a logical relationship in which the second event is the purpose or goal of the first event. In order for something to be a goal relationship, someone must do the first event with the intention that it will cause the second event.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In Scripture, the goal or purpose may be stated either first or second. But in some languages, the goal or purpose must always occur in the same position (either first or second) in order for that logical relationship to be understood. You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between the two parts and communicate those accurately in your language. This may require changing the order of the two events. It may also require specific words to indicate that one is the goal or purpose of the other. Words commonly used to indicate a goal relationship in English are "in order to," "in order that" or "so that." It is important that the translator recognize the words that signal a goal relationship and translate that relationship in a natural way.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> She became angry and falsely accused Joseph **so that he was arrested and sent to prison**. (Story 8 Frame 5 OBS)

The goal or purpose of the woman's false accusation was to get Joseph arrested and sent to prison.

> Meanwhile Gideon, his son, was threshing out wheat at the winepress **in order to hide from the presence of Midian**. (Judges 6:11b ULT)

Here the prepositional phrase begins with "in order to."

> Now if I have found favor in your eyes, show me your ways **so that I may know you and continue to find favor in your eyes**. Remember that this nation is your people. (Exodus 33:13 ULT)

Moses wants God to show him God's ways for the goal or purpose of Moses knowing God and continuing to find favor with God.

> Even be sure to pull some out from the bundles for her and leave it **for her to glean**, and do not rebuke her! (Ruth 2:16 ULT)

The goal or purpose of Boaz instructing the men to pull out the grain from their bundles and leave it was for Ruth to gather (glean) it.

> The shepherds said to each other, "Let us indeed go over as far as Bethlehem, **and let us see this thing that has happened**, which the Lord has made known to us." (Luke 2:15 ULT)

The purpose of going to Bethlehem was to see the thing that had happened. Here the purpose is not marked and might be misunderstood.

> "... if you want **to enter into life**, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:17b ULT)

The goal of keeping the commandments is to enter into life.

> Do not turn from it to the right or to the left **so that you may be wise** in everything in which you walk. (Joshua 1:7c ULT)

The purpose of not turning away from the instructions that Moses gave to the Israelites was so that they would be wise.

> But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **and take over his inheritance**.' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:38-39 ULT)

The purpose of the vine growers killing the heir was so they could take his inheritance. They state both events as a plan, joining them only with "and." Then the word "so" marks the reporting of the first event, but the second event (the goal or purpose) is not stated.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses Goal or Purpose relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

(1) If the construction of the Goal statement is unclear, change it to one that is more clear.

(2) If the order of the statements makes the Goal statement unclear or confusing for the reader, then change the order.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the construction of the goal statement is unclear, change it to one that is more clear.

> "Even be sure to pull some out from the bundles for her and leave it **for her to glean**, and do not rebuke her!" (Ruth 2:16 ULT)

>> "Even be sure to pull some out from the bundles for her and leave it **so that she can glean it**, and do not rebuke her!"

> The shepherds said to each other, "Let us indeed go over as far as Bethlehem, **and let us see this thing that has happened**, which the Lord has made known to us." (Luke 2:15 ULT)

>> The shepherds said to each other, "Let us indeed go over as far as Bethlehem **so that we can see this thing that has happened**, which the Lord has made known to us."

(2) If the order of the statements makes the goal statement unclear or confusing for the reader, then change the order.

> "... if you want **to enter into life**, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:17bULT)

>> "... keep the commandments if you want **to enter into life**." or: "... keep the commandments **so that you can enter into life**."

> But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **and take over his inheritance**.' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:38-39 ULT)

(1) and (2)

> But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **and take over his inheritance**.' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:38-39 ULT)

> > But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **so that we can take over his inheritance**.' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him **so that they could take over his inheritance**.

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:9

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: "".

> This page answers the question: *What are direct and indirect quotations?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Pronouns (UTA PDF)*
>
> *Verbs (UTA PDF)*
>
> *Quotations and Quote Margins (UTA PDF)*

- John said, "**I** do not know at what time **I** will arrive."

An indirect quotation occurs when a speaker reports what someone else said, but in this case, the speaker is reporting it from his own point of view instead and not from the original person's point of view. This kind of quotation usually contains changes in pronouns, and it often includes changes in time, in word choices, and in length. In the example below, the narrator refers to John as "he" in the quotation and uses the word "would" to replace the future tense, indicated by "will."

- John said that **he** did not know at what time **he** would arrive.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In some languages, reported speech can be expressed by either direct or indirect quotations. In other languages, it is more natural to use one than the other. There may be a certain meaning implied by using one rather than the other. So for each quotation, translators need to decide whether it is best to translate it as a direct quotation or as an indirect quotation.

Examples From the Bible

The verses in the examples below contain both direct and indirect quotations. In the explanation below the verse, we have marked in bold the words that are quoted.

> And he commanded him to tell no one, but, "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." (Luke 5:14 ULT)

- Indirect quote: He commanded him **to tell no one**,
- Direct quote: but told him, "**Go, show yourself to the priest ...**"

> And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you." (Luke 17:20-21 ULT)

- Indirect quote: Being asked by the Pharisees **when the kingdom of God was coming,**
- Direct quote: he answered them and said, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look. here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you.**"
- Direct quotes: Neither will they say, '**Look, here it is!**' or, '**There it is!**'

Translation Strategies

If the kind of quote used in the source text would work well in your language, consider using it. If the kind of quote used in that context is not natural for your language, follow these strategies.

(1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.

(2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.

> And he commanded him to tell no one, but, "**Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.**" (Luke 5:14 ULT)
>
>> He commanded him to tell no one, but **to go and show himself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for his cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them**.

(2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

> And he commanded him **to tell no one,** but, "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." (Luke 5:14 ULT)
>
>> He commanded him, "**Tell no one**. But go and show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_quotations.

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *Quotes within Quotes (UTA PDF)*

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:1

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:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*

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!"

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:5; Obadiah 1:16; Obadiah 1:18

Ellipsis

Description

An ellipsis[^1] 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:

> This page answers the question: *What is ellipsis ?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Figures of Speech* (UTA PDF)
> *Sentence Structure* (UTA PDF)

> 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.

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:

> > 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 **sinners in the assembly** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)
>
> > So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, and **sinners 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.

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:7; Obadiah 1:19; Obadiah 1:20

Exclamations

Description

Exclamations are words or sentences that show strong feeling such as surprise, joy, fear, or anger. In the ULT and UST, they usually have an exclamation mark (!) at the end. The mark shows that it is an exclamation. The situation and the meaning of what the people said helps us understand what feelings they were expressing. In the example below from Matthew 8, the speakers were terribly afraid. In the example from Matthew 9, the speakers were amazed, because something happened that they had never seen before.

> This page answers the question: *What are ways of translating exclamations?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Sentence Types (UTA PDF)*

> Save us, Lord; we are about to die! (Matthew 8:25b ULT)

> When the demon had been driven out, the mute man spoke. The crowds were astonished and said, "This has never been seen before in Israel!" (Matthew 9:33 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages have different ways of showing that a sentence communicates strong emotion.

Examples From the Bible

Some exclamations have a word that shows feeling. The sentences below have "Oh" and "Ah." The word "oh" here shows the speaker's amazement.

> **Oh**, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! (Romans 11:33 ULT)

The word "Alas" below shows that Gideon was very frightened.

> When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, Gideon lamented, "**Alas**, O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" (Judges 6:22 ULT)

> Some exclamations start with a question word such as "how" or "why," even though they are not questions. The sentence below shows that the speaker is amazed at how unsearchable God's judgments are.

> **How** unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond discovering! (Romans 11:33b ULT)

Some exclamations in the Bible do not have a main verb. The exclamation below shows that the speaker is disgusted with the person he is speaking to.

> You worthless person! (Matthew 5:22b ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) If an exclamation in your language needs a verb, add one. Often a good verb is "is" or "are."

(2) Use an exclamation word from your language that shows the strong feeling.

(3) Translate the exclamation word with a sentence that shows the feeling.

(4) Use a word that emphasizes the part of the sentence that brings about the strong feeling.

(5) If the strong feeling is not clear in the target language, then tell how the person felt.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If an exclamation in your language needs a verb, add one. Often a good verb is "is" or "are."

> You worthless person! (Matthew 5:22b ULT)
>
>> "You **are** such a worthless person!"

> Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! (Romans 11:33b ULT)
>
>> "Oh, the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God **are** so deep!"

(2) Use an exclamation word from your language that shows the strong feeling. In the first suggested translation below, the word "wow" shows that they were astonished. In the second suggested translation, the expression "Oh no" shows that something terrible or frightening has happened.

> They were extremely astonished, saying, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak." (Mark 7:37 ULT)
>
>> "They were extremely astonished, saying, '**Wow**! He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'"

> Alas, oh my Lord Yahweh! For because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face! (Judges 6:22b ULT)
>
>> "**Oh no**, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!"

(3) Translate the exclamation word with a sentence that shows the feeling.

> "**Alas,** O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" (Judges 6:22 ULT)
>
>> "Lord Yahweh, **what will happen to me**? For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!"
>> "**Help**, Lord Yahweh! For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!"

(4) Use a word that emphasizes the part of the sentence that brings about the strong feeling.

> How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond discovering! (Romans 11:33b ULT)
>
>> "His judgments are **so** unsearchable and his ways are **far** beyond discovering!"

(5) If the strong feeling is not clear in the target language, then tell how the person felt.

> When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, Gideon lamented, "**Alas,** O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" (Judges 6:22 ULT)
>
>> Gideon understood that this was the angel of Yahweh. **He was terrified** and said, "**Alas**, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!"

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:5; Obadiah 1:6; Obadiah 1:13
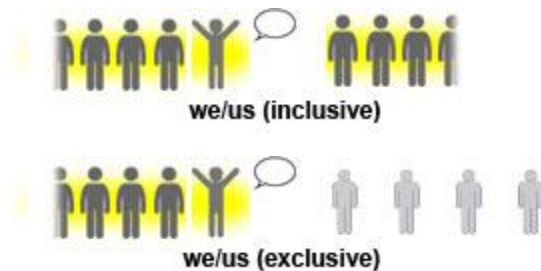
Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

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

> 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 (UTA PDF)*

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.

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.

we/us (inclusive)

we/us (exclusive)

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: "

When Masculine Words Include Women *(UTA PDF)*

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:1

First, Second or Third Person

Normally a speaker refers to himself as "I" and the person he is speaking to as "you." Sometimes in the Bible a speaker refers to himself or to the person he is speaking to with terms other than "I" or "you."

Description

> 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:
>
> *Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit (UTA PDF)*
> *Pronouns (UTA PDF)*

- 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.

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 (UTA PDF)*

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:
>
> *Forms of 'You' — Singular (UTA PDF)*
> *Forms of 'You' — Dual/Plural (UTA PDF)*

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

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:13

Hendiadys

Description

In a hendiadys, a speaker uses two words that mean different things and that are connected with "and." These two words work together to express a single idea. 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:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*
> *Parts of Speech (UTA PDF)*

> ... 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**.

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:12

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* *(UTA PDF)*

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 *(UTA PDF)*

"

Referenced in: Introduction to Obadiah; Obadiah 1:1; Obadiah 1:8; Obadiah 1:9; Obadiah 1:20

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.

> 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:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*

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.

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.

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:4

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:

> 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:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*

- 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.")

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**

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:1; Obadiah 1:9; Obadiah 1:10; Obadiah 1:12; Obadiah 1:13; Obadiah 1:15; Obadiah 1:17

Litany

Description

A litany is a figure of speech in which the various components of a thing are listed in a series of very similar statements. The speaker does this to indicate that what he is saying should be understood as comprehensive and without exceptions.

> This page answers the question: *What is the figure of speech called litany?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use litanies, and readers could be confused by them. They may wonder why the speaker seems to be saying the same thing over and over again.

Examples From the Bible

> Though they dig into Sheol, there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to heaven, there I will bring them down. Though they hide on the top of Carmel, there I will search and take them. Though they are hidden from my sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I give orders to the serpent, and it will bite them. Though they go into captivity, driven by their enemies before them, there will I give orders to the sword, and it will kill them. (Amos 9:2-4 ULT)

In this passage Yahweh is telling the people of Israel that when he punishes them, none of them will escape.

> But you should not have looked on the day of your brother, on the day of his misfortune. And you should not have rejoiced over the sons of Judah in the day of their perishing. And you should not have made your mouth great in a day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of their calamity. Yes, you! You should not have looked on his evil in the day of his calamity. And you women should not have looted his wealth in the day of his calamity. And you should not have stood at the crossroads to cut down his fugitives. And you should not have delivered up his survivors in a day of distress. (Obadiah 1:12–14)

In this passage Yahweh is telling the people of Edom that they should have helped the people of Judah when they were conquered by the Babylonians.

Translation Strategies

If the litany is understood as it is in the ULT, then translate the litany as it is. If it is not understood, then try one or more of the following strategies.

(1) Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany.

(2) You can put each sentence of the litany on a separate line. Also, if each sentence in the litany has two parts, you can format the litany so that the equivalent parts of each sentence line up. Use this or any other type of formatting that will show that each sentence is reinforcing the same meaning.

(3) You can eliminate words like "and," "but," and "or" at the beginning of sentences so that it will be clearer that the component parts of the litany are all being listed in a row.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) combined with (3):

Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany;

You can eliminate words like "and," "but," and "or" at the beginning of sentences so that it will be clearer that the component parts of the litany are all being listed in a row.

> You did nothing to help the Israelites when strangers carried away their wealth. They conquered all the cities of Judah, and they even plundered Jerusalem. And you were just as bad as those foreigners, because you did nothing to help:

You should not have looked on the day of your brother, on the day of his misfortune. You should not have rejoiced over the sons of Judah in the day of their perishing. You should not have made your mouth great in a day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of their calamity. Yes, you! You should not have looked on his evil in the day of his calamity. You women should not have looted his wealth in the day of his calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut down his fugitives. You should not have delivered up his survivors in a day of distress. (Obadiah 1:11-14)

In the above example, verse 11 provides the summary and meaning for the litany that follows in verses 12-14.

(1) combined with (2):

Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany;

You can put each sentence of the litany on a separate line. Also, if each sentence in the litany has two parts, you can format the litany so that the equivalent parts of each sentence line up. Use this or any other type of formatting that will show that each sentence is reinforcing the same meaning.

> Not one of them will get away, not one of them will escape:

Though they dig into Sheol,   there my hand will take them.

Though they climb up to heaven,   there I will bring them down.

Though they hide on the top of Carmel,   there I will search and take them.

Though they are hidden from my sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I give orders to the
serpent, and it will bite them.

Though they go into captivity, driven by their enemies before them, there will I give orders to
the   sword, and it will kill them.
(Amos 9:1b–4 ULT)

In the above example, the sentence before the litany explains its overall meaning. That sentence can be placed as an introduction. The second half of each sentence can be formatted in a descending staircase pattern as above, or

lined up evenly like the first half of each sentence, or in another way. Use whatever format best shows that these sentences are all communicating the same truth, that it is not possible to escape from God.

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:12

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:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*
> *Simile (UTA PDF)*

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.

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:1; Obadiah 1:2; Obadiah 1:3; Obadiah 1:4; Obadiah 1:9; Obadiah 1:11; Obadiah 1:14; Obadiah 1:15; Obadiah 1:16; Obadiah 1:18; Obadiah 1:20

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:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*

> ... 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.

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:1; Obadiah 1:10; Obadiah 1:16; Obadiah 1:17; Obadiah 1:18; Obadiah 1:19; Obadiah 1:20; Obadiah 1:21

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.

> This page answers the question: *What is parallelism?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*

- 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."

> 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 *(UTA PDF)*

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:2; Obadiah 1:4; Obadiah 1:7; Obadiah 1:8; Obadiah 1:11; Obadiah 1:13; Obadiah 1:18

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:

> This page answers the question: *What is personification?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*

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.

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 (UTA PDF)

Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns (UTA PDF)

"

Referenced in:

Pronouns — When to Use Them

Description

When we talk or write, we use pronouns to refer to people or things without always having to repeat the noun or name. Usually, the first time we refer to someone in a story, we use a descriptive phrase or a name. The next time we might refer to that person with a simple noun or by name. After that we might refer to him simply with a pronoun as long as we think that our listeners will be able to understand easily to whom the pronoun refers.

> This page answers the question: *How do I decide whether or not to use a pronoun?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Pronouns (UTA PDF)*
> *Sentence Structure (UTA PDF)*

> Now there was **a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a Jewish leader**. **This man** came to Jesus at night. Jesus replied and said to **him** … (John 3:1, 2a, 3a ULT)

In John 3, Nicodemus is first referred to with noun phrases and his name. Then he is referred to with the noun phrase "this man." Then he is referred to with the pronoun "him."

Each language has its rules and exceptions to this usual way of referring to people and things.

- In some languages, the first time something is referred to in a paragraph or chapter, it is referred to with a noun rather than a pronoun.
- The main character is the person whom a story is about. In some languages, after a main character is introduced in a story, he is usually referred to with a pronoun. Some languages have special pronouns that refer only to the main character.
- In some languages, marking on the verb helps people know who the subject is. (See Verbs.) In some of these languages, listeners rely on this marking to help them understand who the subject is. Speakers will use a pronoun, noun phrase, or proper name only when they want either to emphasize or to clarify who the subject is.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- If translators use a pronoun at the wrong time for their language, readers might not know about whom the writer is talking.
- If translators too frequently refer to a main character by name, listeners of some languages might not realize that the person is a main character, or they might think that there is a new character with the same name.
- If translators use pronouns, nouns, or names at the wrong time, people might think that there is some special emphasis on the person or thing to which it refers.

Examples From the Bible

The example below occurs at the beginning of a chapter. In some languages it might not be clear to whom the pronouns refer.

> Then Jesus entered into the synagogue again, and there was a man who had a withered hand. Some people watched **him** closely to see if **he** would heal **him** on the Sabbath so that they might accuse **him**. (Mark 3:1-2 ULT)

In the example below, two men are named in the first sentence. It might not be clear whom "he" in the second sentence refers to.

> Now after some days had passed, **King Agrippa** and Bernice came down to Caesarea to pay their respects to **Festus**. After **he** had been there for many days, Festus presented to the king the things concerning Paul. (Acts 25:13-14)

Jesus is the main character of the book of Matthew, but in the verses below he is referred to four times by name. This may lead speakers of some languages to think that Jesus is not the main character. Or it might lead them to think that there is more than one person named Jesus in this story. Or it might lead them to think that there is some kind of emphasis on him, even though there is no emphasis.

> At that time **Jesus** went on the Sabbath day through the grainfields. **His** disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw that, they said to **Jesus**, "See, your disciples do what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." But **Jesus** said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was hungry, and the men who were with him?" Then **Jesus** left from there and went into their synagogue. (Matthew 12:1-3,9 ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) If it would not be clear to your readers to whom or to what a pronoun refers, use a name or a noun.

(2) If repeating a noun or name would lead people to think that a main character is not a main character, or that the writer is talking about more than one person with that name, or that there is some kind of emphasis on someone when there is no emphasis, use a pronoun instead.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If it would not be clear to your readers to whom or to what a pronoun refers, use a name or a noun.

> Again **he** walked into the synagogue, and a man with a withered hand was there. Some Pharisees watched **him** to see if **he** would heal the man on the Sabbath. (Mark 3:1-2)

>> Again **Jesus** walked into the synagogue, and a man with a withered hand was there. Some Pharisees watched **Jesus** to see if **he** would heal the man on the Sabbath.

(2) If repeating a noun or name would lead people to think that a main character is not a main character, or that the writer is talking about more than one person with that name, or that there is some kind of emphasis on someone when there is no emphasis, use a pronoun instead.

> At that time **Jesus** went on the Sabbath day through the grainfields. **His** disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw that, they said to **Jesus**, "See, your disciples do what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." But **Jesus** said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was hungry, and the men who were with him?" Then **Jesus** left from there and went into their synagogue. (Matthew 12:1-3,9 ULT)

This may be translated as:

>> At that time **Jesus** went on the Sabbath day through the grainfields. **His** disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw that, they said to **him**, "See, your disciples do what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." But **he** said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was hungry, and the men who were with him?" Then **he** left from there and went into their synagogue.

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:16

Quotations and Quote Margins

Description

This page answers the question: *What are quote margins and where should I put them?*

When saying that someone said something, we often tell who spoke, whom they spoke to, and what they said. The information about who spoke and whom they spoke to is called the quote margin. What the person said is the quotation. (This is also called a quote.) In some languages the quote margin may come first, last, or even in between two parts of the quotation.

The quote margins are bolded below.

> • **She said**, "The food is ready. Come and eat."
> • "The food is ready. Come and eat," **she said**.
> • "The food is ready," **she said.** "Come and eat."

Also in some languages, the quote margin may have more than one verb meaning "said."

> But his mother **answered** and **said**, "No. Rather, he will be called John." (Luke 1:60 ULT)

When writing that someone said something, some languages put the quote (what was said) in quotation marks called inverted commas (" "). Some languages use other symbols around the quotation, such as these angle quote marks (« »), or something else.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

> • Translators need to put the quote margin where it is most clear and natural in their language.
> • Translators need to decide whether they want the quote margin to have one or two verbs meaning "said."
> • Translators need to decide which marks to use around the quotation.

Examples From the Bible

Quote margin before the quote

> **Then Zechariah said to the angel**, "How will I know this? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in her days." (Luke 1:18 ULT)

> Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and **they said to him**, "Teacher, what should we do?" (Luke 3:12 ULT)

> So **he said to them**, "Collect nothing more than what you have been ordered." (Luke 3:13 ULT)

Quote margin after the quote

> Yahweh relented concerning this. "It will not happen," **he said**. (Amos 7:3 ULT)

Quote margin between two parts of the quote

> "I will hide my face from them," **he said,** "and I will see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful." (Deuteronomy 32:20 ULT)

> For look, days are coming—**this is Yahweh's declaration**—when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah. (Jeremiah 30:3a ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) Decide where to put the quote margin.

(2) Decide whether to use one or two words meaning "said."

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Decide where to put the quote margin.

> **He said**, "Therefore, those among you who are leaders should go down with us. If there is something wrong with the man, let them accuse him." (Acts 25:5 ULT)

>> "Therefore, those who can should go there with us," **he said**. "If there is something wrong with the man, you should accuse him."

>> "Therefore, those who can should go there with us. If there is something wrong with the man, you should accuse him," **he said**.

>> "Therefore, those who can," **he said**, "should go there with us. If there is something wrong with the man, you should accuse him."

(2) Decide whether to use one or two words meaning "said."

> But his mother **answered and said**, "No. Rather, he will be called John." (Luke 1:60 ULT)

>> But his mother **replied**, "No. Rather, he will be called John."

>> But his mother **said**, "No. Rather, he will be called John."

>> But his mother **answered** like this. "No. Rather, he will be called John," she **said**.

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *Direct and Indirect Quotations* *(UTA PDF)*

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:1; Obadiah 1:2; Obadiah 1:4

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:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*
> *Sentence Types (UTA PDF)*

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 orignal 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

"

Referenced in:

Singular Pronouns that refer to Groups

Description

The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. These languages have a singular form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to just one person, and a plural form for when the word "you" refers to more than one person. However, sometimes speakers in the Bible used the singular form of "you" even though they were speaking to a group of people. This is not obvious when you read the Bible in English because English does not have different forms that indicate where "you" is singular and where "you" is plural. But you may see this if you read a Bible in a language that does have distinct forms.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate singular pronouns that refer to groups of people?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

Forms of You (UTA PDF)

Forms of 'You' — Singular (UTA PDF)

Pronouns (UTA PDF)

Also, speakers and writers of the Old Testament often referred to groups of people with the singular pronoun "he," rather than with the plural pronoun "they."

Finally, Old Testament speakers and writers sometimes referred to actions that they performed as part of a group by saying 'I' did it when, really, the whole group was involved.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- For many languages, a translator who reads a Bible with a general form of "you" will need to know whether the speaker was speaking to one person or to more than one.
- In some languages, it might be confusing if a speaker uses a singular pronoun when speaking to or about more than one person.

Examples From the Bible

> 1 Now take heed that **you** do not do **your** acts of righteousness before people to be seen by them, otherwise **you** will not have a reward with **your** Father who is in heaven. 2 So when **you** give alms, do not sound a trumpet before **yourself** as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may have the praise of people. Truly I say to **you**, they have received their reward. (Matthew 6:1-2 ULT)

Jesus said this to a crowd. He used "you" plural in verse 1, and "you" singular in the first sentence of verse 2. Then, in the last sentence, he used the plural again.

> God spoke all these words: "I am Yahweh, **your** God, who brought **you** out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **You** must have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:1-3 ULT)

God said this to all the people of Israel. He had taken them all out of Egypt and he wanted them all to obey him, but he used the singular form of you here when speaking to them.

> This is what Yahweh says,
> "For three sins of Edom,
> even for four,
> I will not turn away punishment,
> because **he** pursued **his** brother with the sword
> and cast off all pity.
> **His** anger raged continually,
> and **his** wrath lasted forever." (Amos 1:11 ULT)

Yahweh said these things about the nation of Edom, not about only one person.

> And I arose in the night, myself and a few men with me. And I was going up by the wadi at night, and I was looking intently at the wall. And I turned back, and I entered by the gate of the valley, and I returned. (Nehemiah 2:12a,15 ULT)

Nehemiah makes clear that he brought other people with him on his inspection tour of the wall of Jerusalem. But as he describes the tour, he just says "I" did this and that.

Translation Strategies

If the singular form of the pronoun would be natural when referring to a group of people, consider using it.

(1) If using the singular form of the pronoun when referring to a group of people would not be natural in your language, use the plural form of the pronoun.

- Whether you can use use the singular form of the pronoun may depend on who the speaker is and who the people are that he is talking about or talking to.
- It may also depend on what the speaker is saying.

Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If using the singular form of the pronoun when referring to a group of people would not be natural in your language, use the plural form of the pronoun.

> This is what Yahweh says,
> "For three sins of Edom,
> even for four,
> I will not turn away punishment,
> because **he** pursued **his** brother with the sword
> and cast off all pity.
> **His** anger raged continually,
> and **his** wrath lasted forever." (Amos 1:11 ULT)

>> This is what Yahweh says,
>> "For three sins of Edom,
>> even for four,
>> I will not turn away punishment,
>> because **they** pursued **their brothers** with the sword
>> and cast off all pity.
>> **Their** anger raged continually,
>> and **their** wrath lasted forever."

> And I arose in the night, myself and a few men with me. And **I** was going up by the wadi at night, and **I** was looking intently at the wall. And **I** turned back, and **I** entered by the gate of the valley, and **I** returned. (Nehemiah 2:12a,15 ULT)

>> And I arose in the night, myself and a few men with me. ... And **we** were going up by the wadi at night and **we** were looking intently at the wall. And **we** turned back and **we** entered by the gate of the valley, and **we** returned.

> "

Next we recommend you learn about:

Forms of 'You' — Dual/Plural [(UTA PDF)](#)

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:3; Obadiah 1:7

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 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)
>
> > I looked on all the deeds that **I** had accomplished

"

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:8; Obadiah 1:9; Obadiah 1:11; Obadiah 1:15; Obadiah 1:18; Obadiah 1:19; Obadiah 1:21

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:
>
> *Sentence Structure (UTA PDF)*

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 (UTA PDF)
How to Translate Names (UTA PDF)

Referenced in: Obadiah 1:14; Obadiah 1:18

When Masculine Words Include Women

In the Bible, sometimes the words "men," "brothers," and "sons" refer only to men. At other times, those words include both men and women. In those places where the writer meant both men and women, you (the translator) need to translate it in a way that does not limit the meaning to men.

> This page answers the question: *How do I translate "brother" or "he" when it could refer to anyone, male or female?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Pronouns (UTA PDF)*
> *Generic Noun Phrases (UTA PDF)*

Description

In some languages a word that normally refers to men can also be used in a more general way to refer to both men and women. For example, the Bible sometimes says "brothers" when it refers to both brothers and sisters.

Also in some languages, the masculine pronouns "he" and "him" can be used in a more general way for any person if it is not important whether the person is a man or a woman. In the example below, the pronoun is "his," but it is not limited to males.

> A wise son makes **his** father rejoice
> but a foolish son brings grief to **his** mother. (Proverbs 10:1 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- In some cultures words like "man," "brother," and "son" can only be used to refer to men. If those words are used in a translation in a more general way, people will think that what is being said does not apply to women.
- In some cultures, the masculine pronouns "he" and "him" can only refer to men. If a masculine pronoun is used, people will think that what is said does not apply to women.

Translation Principles

When a statement applies to both men and women, translate it in such a way that people will be able to understand that it applies to both.

Examples From the Bible

> Now we want you to know, **brothers**, the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia. (2 Corinthians 8:1 ULT)

This verse is addressing the believers in Corinth, not only men, but **men and women**.

> Then said Jesus to his disciples, "If anyone wants to follow me, **he** must deny **himself**, take up **his** cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24 ULT)

Jesus was not speaking only of men, but of **men and women**.

Caution: Sometimes masculine words are used specifically to refer to men. Do not use words that would lead people to think that they include women. The words below are specifically about men.

> Moses said, 'If **someone** dies, not having children, **his brother** must marry **his** wife and have children for **his brother**.' (Matthew 22:24 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If people would understand that that masculine words like "man," "brother," and "he" can include women, then consider using them. Otherwise, here are some ways for translating those words when they include women.

(1) Use a noun that can be used for both men and women.

(2) Use a word that refers to men and a word that refers to women.

(3) Use pronouns that can be used for both men and women.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use nouns that can be used for both men and women.

> The wise **man** dies just like the fool dies. (Ecclesiastes 2:16b ULT)
>
>> "The wise **person** dies just like the fool dies."
>> "Wise **people** die just like fools die."

(2) Use a word that refers to men and a word that refers to women.

> For we do not want you to be uninformed, **brothers**, about the troubles that happened to us in Asia. (2 Corinthians 1:8) — Paul was writing this letter to both men and women.
>
>> "For we do not want you to be uninformed, **brothers and sisters**, about the troubles that happened to us in Asia."

(3) Use pronouns that can be used for both men and women.

> "If anyone wants to follow me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24 ULT)

English speakers can change the masculine singular pronouns, "he," "himself," and "his" to plural pronouns that do not mark gender, "they," "themselves," and "their" in order to show that it applies to all people, not just men.
>

>> "If **people** want to follow me, **they** must deny **themselves**, take up **their** cross, and follow me."

"

Referenced in:

unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 40

proud, pride, prideful

Definition:

The terms "proud" and "prideful" refer to a person thinking too highly of himself, and especially, thinking that he is better than other people.

- A proud person often does not admit his own faults. He is not humble.
- Pride can lead to disobeying God in other ways.
- The terms "proud" and "pride" can also be used in a positive sense, such as being "proud of" what someone else has achieved and being "proud of" your children. The expression "take pride in your work" means to find joy in doing your work well.
- Someone can be proud of what he has done without being prideful about it. Some languages have different words for these two different meanings of "pride."
- The term "prideful" is always negative, with the meaning of being "arrogant" or "conceited" or "self-important."

Translation Suggestions:

- The noun "pride" could be translated as "arrogance" or "conceit" or "self-importance."
- In other contexts, "pride" could be translated as "joy" or "satisfaction" or "pleasure."
- To be "proud of" could also be translated as "happy with" or "satisfied with" or "joyful about (the accomplishments of)."
- The phrase "take pride in your work" could be translated as "find satisfaction in doing your work well."
- The expression "take pride in Yahweh" could also be translated as "be delighted about all the wonderful things Yahweh has done" or "be happy about how amazing Yahweh is."

(See also: arrogant, humble, joy)

Bible References:

- 1 Timothy 3:6-7
- 2 Corinthians 1:12
- Galatians 6:3-5
- Isaiah 13:19
- Luke 1:51

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **4:2** They were very **proud**, and they did not care about what God said.
- **34:10** Then Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, God heard the tax collector's prayer and declared him to be righteous. But he did not like the prayer of the religious leader. God will humble everyone who is **proud**, and he will lift up whoever humbles himself."

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1341, H1343, H1344, H1346, H1347, H1348, H1349, H1361, H1362, H1363, H1364, H1396, H1466, H1467, H1984, H2086, H2087, H3093, H3238, H3513, H4062, H1431, H4791, H5965, H7295, H7312, H7342, H7311, H7830, H8597, G13910, G13920, G27440, G27450, G27460, G31730, G51870, G52290, G52430, G52440, G53080, G53090, G54260

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