# unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

## Haggai

## Version 76

[en]

# Copyrights and Licensing

**unfoldingWord® Translation Notes**
**Date:** 2023-10-18
**Version:** 76
**Published by:** unfoldingWord

**unfoldingWord® Literal Text**
**Date:** 2023-10-18
**Version:** 76
**Published by:** unfoldingWord

**unfoldingWord® Simplified Text**
**Date:** 2023-10-18
**Version:** 76
**Published by:** unfoldingWord

**unfoldingWord® Hebrew Bible**
**Date:** 2022-10-11
**Version:** 2.1.30
**Published by:** unfoldingWord

**unfoldingWord® Greek New Testament**
**Date:** 2023-09-26
**Version:** 0.34
**Published by:** unfoldingWord

**unfoldingWord® Translation Academy**
**Date:** 2023-10-18
**Version:** 76
**Published by:** unfoldingWord®

**unfoldingWord® Translation Words**
**Date:** 2023-10-18
**Version:** 76
**Published by:** unfoldingWord

**unfoldingWord® Translation Words Links**
**Date:** 2023-10-18
**Version:** 76
**Published by:** unfoldingWord

On the derivative work, you must indicate what changes you have made and attribute the work as follows: "The original work by unfoldingWord is available from unfoldingword.org/utn". You must also make your derivative work available under the same license (CC BY-SA).

If you would like to notify unfoldingWord regarding your translation of this work, please contact us at unfoldingword.org/contact/.

# Table of Contents

# unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

## Haggai

## Introduction to Haggai

## Part 1: General Introduction

### What is the book of Haggai about?

In 539 B.C., the Persian emperor Cyrus conquered the Babylonian empire. He permitted peoples whom the Babylonians had exiled to return to their homelands. So the next year, a group of Israelites from the former kingdom of Judah returned home from exile. Within two years, they began to repair Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem. But after they had only laid the foundation, their enemies forced them to stop. However, around 520 B.C. a new king, Darius, became emperor of Persia, and he was likely to allow the Judeans to finish rebuilding the temple. Nevertheless, they neglected that work and built luxurious homes for themselves instead. In response, Yahweh prevented their crops from growing well, and the people became hungry and poor. Yahweh then sent the prophet Haggai to explain to them that he had done this because they had neglected his temple. Through Haggai, Yahweh promised that if they would rebuild his temple, he would bless them once again with abundant crops. Yahweh also promised their governor, Zerubbabel, that he would make him an honored leader among the nations of the world. The people responded to Haggai's prophesies by obeying Yahweh and rebuilding his temple, and Yahweh blessed them once again.

### Outline of Haggai

The book of Haggai consists of four oracles that Yahweh gave him to deliver to the Judeans who had returned from exile. Each oracle is dated on a particular day of a specific month in the second year of the reign of Darius as emperor of Persia.

  • First oracle (1:1–15a): The people must finish the temple so that Yahweh will bless them again
  • Second oracle (1:15b–2:9): The rebuilt temple will be more glorious than the first temple
  • Third oracle (2:10–19): Yahweh has withheld crops, but now he will bless the people
  • Fourth oracle (2:20–23): Yahweh will defeat the nations and establish Zerubbabel as his honored ruler

### Who was the prophet Haggai?

The book of Haggai does not tell us very much about the prophet whose oracles it records. Haggai is mentioned briefly in one other book of the Bible. Ezra 5:1 tells us that Haggai "prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and in Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel who was over them." Ezra 6:14 adds that "the elders of the Jews were building and prospering by the prophesying of Haggai the prophet" and that "they built and completed" the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem. But we know nothing beyond this. Still, we can recognize that Haggai must have been a man of faith, courage, and conviction to challenge the Judeans in their comfortable complacency and inspire them to renew the work of rebuilding the temple.

### How should the title of this book be translated?

This book traditionally has been titled "Haggai" or "The Book of Haggai." Translators may also decide to give it a title such as "The Prophecies of Haggai" or "The Sayings of Haggai"

## Part 2: Important Translation Issues

### Hebrew months

The book of Haggai dates each of its four oracles by the day of a Hebrew month. In your translation, you could convert these Hebrew days and months into approximate dates on the calendar that your culture uses. Notes will give equivalents on Western calendars for those who wish to do this. However, the Jews used a lunar calendar, so if you use a solar calendar, the date will be different every year and the translation will often not be accurate. So it may be preferable to state the number of the day and the name of the month of the Hebrew calendar in the text of your translation and say in a footnote approximately what time of year that is on your calendar.

### Quote marks

The oracles of Haggai are direct first-level quotations from Yahweh. They contain second-level and third-level quotations. If you decide to present those as direct quotations, you can indicate their beginnings and endings with second-level and third-level quotation marks or with whatever other punctuation or convention your language may use. You may also be able to use special formatting to set off these quotations. Alternatively, if your language would not put direct quotations inside a direct quotation, you could represent the second-level and third-level quotations as indirect quotations. Notes suggest how you could do this in various places.

### "The declaration of Yahweh"

Haggai frequently uses the formula "the declaration of Yahweh" to identify his oracles as words that Yahweh has given him to speak. If your language would not use an abstract noun such as "declaration," you could express the same idea in another way. You might say, for example, "this is what Yahweh declares."

### "House" meaning "temple"

Throughout the book of Haggai, various speakers use the word "house" to mean "temple." They are speaking of the temple as if it would be a house in which God lived, since God's presence would be there. If it would be helpful to your readers, in your translation you could state the meaning plainly and say "temple" rather than "house" in each of these instances.

### Singular and plural "you"

Throughout the book, the words "you," "yourselves," and "your" and the implied "you" in imperatives are all plural because Yahweh is addressing the returned exiles as a group. The only exception is in the last verse, where "you" is singular because Yahweh is speaking to Zerubbabel alone. So if your language marks a distinction between singular and plural "you," use plural forms throughout your translation except in the last verse, where the singular form is appropriate.

### The date formula of the second oracle

In 1:1 and 2:10, the first and third oracles in the book are dated with a day, month, and year. It may therefore be that the reference to a year in 1:19, "in the second year of Darius the king," is actually part of the dating of the second oracle, which follows immediately afterwards in the text, although after a chapter and verse division. Some versions begin a new sentence with that phrase in order to put the information about the "second year" with the information in 2:1 about the "seventh month" and the "twenty-first day." Some versions also put a section heading before "In the second year" to suggest that a new oracle is starting with that phrase. Other versions place the chapter and verse division before "In the second year of Darius the king, which makes that phrase part of 2:1. (The chapter and verse divisions in the Bible were added many centuries after the Bible was written, as an aid to

locating passages within the Bible. Subsequently, some translators and publishers have made various adjustments to the placement of chapter and verse divisions.) In your translation, present the material in the way that you feel will be most helpful to your readers. (See: **Information Structure (p.95)**.)

# Haggai 1

## Haggai 1 General Notes

## Structure and Formatting

This chapter contains the first oracle that Haggai delivered from Yahweh to the Judeans who had returned from exile.

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in verses 4, 6, and 8–11.\r

## Haggai 1:1

### In the second year of Darius the king

The **second year of Darius the king** implicitly means the second year of the reign of Darius as king. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers, here and in 1:15 and 2:10. Alternate translation: "In the second year of the reign of King Darius" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

### In the second year & in the sixth month, on the first day of the month

If your language does not use ordinal numbers, in your translation you could use cardinal numbers or equivalent expressions. Alternate translation: "In year two of … on day one of month six" (See: **Ordinal Numbers (p.111)**)

### in the sixth month, on the first day of the month

The **sixth** month of the Hebrew calendar includes August and September on Western calendars. See the General Introduction to Haggai for a discussion of how you might express this date in your translation. (See: **Hebrew Months (p.80)**)

### the word of Yahweh was by the hand of Haggai the prophet

Here one part of the prophet Haggai, his **hand**, represents all of him in bringing the **word of Yahweh** to the returned exiles. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your culture or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "Haggai the prophet brought the word of Yahweh" (See: **Synecdoche (p.129)**)

### the word of Yahweh

The term **word** represents a message that Yahweh conveyed by using words. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "a message from Yahweh" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

## Haggai 1:2

### Thus says Yahweh of Armies, saying: 'This people, they say, "The time has not come to rebuild the house of Yahweh

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: "Yahweh of hosts is concerned that these people are saying that the time has not come to rebuild the house of Yahweh" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### Yahweh of Armies

The phrase **Yahweh of Armies** is a title for God that indicates his great power. It describes him as the commander of heavenly armies. If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, it may have a particular way of translating this phrase, and you may wish to use that in your translation. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to express the meaning of this phrase in some other way, here and throughout the book. Alternate translation: "Yahweh the Almighty" (See: **How to Translate Names (p.86)**)

### This people

The phrase **This people** refers to the people of Judah who had returned from exile in Babylon. You could indicate that in your translation if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "These returned Judean exiles" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

### the house of Yahweh

As the General Introduction to Haggai discusses, here and often throughout the book of Haggai, the word **house** means "temple." The people are speaking of the temple as if it would be a house in which God lived, since God's presence would be there. Alternate translation: "the temple of Yahweh" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

## Haggai 1:3

### Then the word of Yahweh came by the hand of Haggai the prophet

See how you translated this in 1:1. Alternate translation: "Then Haggai the prophet brought this message from Yahweh" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

## Haggai 1:4

### Is it} a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house {is} desolate

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If you would not use the question form for that purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: "Now is not a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house is desolate!" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.123)**)

### for you yourselves & in your & houses

As the General Introduction to Haggai discusses, here and throughout the book except for in the last verse, the words **you**, **yourselves**, and **your** are plural because Yahweh is addressing the returned exiles, so use the plural form in your translation if your language marks that distinction. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.76)**)

### paneled

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. The term **paneled** could describe: (1) houses whose walls are covered with panels of costly wood. Alternate translation: "in houses whose walls you have paneled with costly wood" (2) houses that have roofs. Alternate translation: "in your houses that have roofs" (See: **Active or Passive (p.55)**)

## Haggai 1:5

### So now, thus says Yahweh of Armies: 'Set your heart upon your ways

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: "So now Yahweh of Armies is telling you to set your heart upon your ways" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### Set your heart upon your ways

Here, the **heart** figuratively represents the thoughts. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "Focus your thoughts on your ways" or "Consider your ways carefully" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

### your heart

Since Yahweh is speaking to many people, it may be more natural in your language to use the plural form of **heart**. Alternate translation: "your hearts" (See: **Collective Nouns (p.64)**)

### your ways

Yahweh is speaking of how the returned exiles have been living as if that were a series of **ways** or paths that they were walking along. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "how you have been living" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

## Haggai 1:6

### but not to satiety

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **satiety**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: "but not enough to satisfy your hunger" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.53)**)

### but not {enough} to become drunk

In this culture, as in many cultures today, the water was not safe to drink, so people drank wine made from grapes. This wine contained a low level of alcohol. Yahweh is emphasizing that the people do not have enough to drink to satisfy their thirst. If they did, they would also experience a slight stimulating sensation. Yahweh is not suggesting that drunkenness is a good thing. It may be helpful to clarify the intended meaning of this statement. Alternate translation: "but you cannot drink enough to satisfy your thirst" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

### One wears clothes, but he does not warm himself

Since to this point Yahweh has been speaking to the Judeans in the second person, it may be natural in your language to translate this sentence in the second person as well. Alternate translation: "You wear clothes, but you are not able to warm yourselves" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.74)**)

### And the wage earner earns wages into a punctured bag

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "And the wage earner earns wages, only to put them into a punctured bag" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### And the wage earner earns wages into a punctured bag

Yahweh is speaking as if the returned exiles were literally putting their **wages** in a **punctured bag**. The image suggests that when they have expenses, they do not have money available to meet them. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "And the money you earn seems to disappear quickly" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

### a punctured bag

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "a bag that someone has punctured" or "a bag that has a hole in it" (See: **Active or Passive (p.55)**)

## Haggai 1:7

### Thus says Yahweh of Armies: 'Set your heart upon your ways

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: "Yahweh of Armies is telling you to set your heart upon your ways" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### Set your heart upon your ways

See how you translated this in 1:5. Alternate translation: "Focus your thoughts on how you have been living" or "Consider carefully how you have been living" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

## Haggai 1:8

## Go up {to} the mountain and bring timber and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified,' says Yahweh

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: "Yes, Yahweh is telling you to go up to the mountain and bring timber and build the house, and he will take pleasure in it and he will be glorified" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### to} the mountain

Yahweh is not referring to a specific **mountain**. He means the various mountains around the city of Jerusalem, where his temple was located. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: "to the mountains" (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.78)**)

### and I will be glorified

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. See the discussion in the General Notes to this chapter of the concept of God being **glorified**. Alternate translation: "and this will glorify me" or "and in this way you will honor me" (See: **Active or Passive (p.55)**)

## Haggai 1:9

**You looked for much, but behold, little! And you brought {it} home, but I blew upon it! Because of what?'—the declaration of Yahweh of Armies. Because of my house, that it {is} desolate, but you are running, a man to his house**

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: "You looked for much, but behold, little! And you brought it home, but he blew upon it! And Yahweh of Armies wants you to know why this happened. It is because of his house, that it is desolate, but you are running, a man to his house" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### but behold

Yahweh is using the term **behold** to focus his listeners' attention on what he is about to say. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

### but behold, little

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "but you found only a little" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### but I blew upon it

Yahweh is speaking as if he had literally blown on the crops that the Judeans brought home. The image is of the wind blowing hard and carrying off grain. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "but it was as if the wind carried it away" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

### Because of what?'—& Because of my house

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If you would not use the question form for that purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or an exclamation. Alternate translation: "There is an important reason for this! ... It is because of my house" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.123)**)

### the declaration of Yahweh of Armies

As the General Introduction to Haggai discusses, if your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **declaration**, you could express the same idea in another way, here and in the other occurrences of this phrase throughout the book. Alternate translation: "this is what Yahweh of Armies declares" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.53)**)

### but you are running, a man to his house

Although the term **man** is masculine, Yahweh is using the word in a generic sense that includes both men and women. In this context, it means "each one of you." If it would be helpful to your readers, you could use language in your translation that indicates this. Alternate translation: "each one of you is running to his or her own house" (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.134)**)

## but you are running, a man to his house

Yahweh is speaking as if the Judeans were literally **running** back to their homes whenever they had the opportunity to return to them. He means that they are eager to improve their own homes, even though they do not care about the temple. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "while you are eager to improve your own homes" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

## **Haggai 1:10**

### **the heavens & refrain from dew and the earth withholds its produce**

Yahweh is speaking as if the **heavens** and the **earth** were living things that could actively withhold **dew** and **produce** from the Judeans. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "there is no dew from the heavens above you and there is no produce from the earth" (See: **Personification (p.113)**)

### **the heavens above you refrain from dew**

Yahweh is speaking as if **dew** fell from the **heavens**, that is, from the sky. He means implicitly that not only has rain not been falling from the sky, dew has not even been forming on the ground overnight. You could indicate that in your translation if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "not only has it not been raining, dew has not even been forming," (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

**Haggai 1:11**

**upon the land and upon the mountains and upon the grain and upon the new wine and upon the oil and upon what the ground produces and upon the man and upon the beast and upon all the labor of {your} hands**

In this verse, Yahweh uses a series of repetitive phrases to show that the effects of the **desolation** he has **called for** are comprehensive. A series of phrases like this is called a litany. If your readers would not be familiar with this form, to help them appreciate it, you could put each of the phrases on a separate line in your translation, for example: "And I have called for desolation upon the land and upon the mountains and upon the grain and upon the new wine …" (See: **Litany (p.97)**)

**And I have called for desolation upon the land and upon the mountains and upon the grain and upon the new wine and upon the oil and upon what the ground produces and upon the man and upon the beast and upon all the labor of {your} hands**

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **desolation**, you could express the same idea in another way. The word "desolation" is the noun form of the word whose adjective form "desolate" Yahweh uses in verses 4 and 9. Yahweh is saying that the land of Judah is experiencing desolation because the people have left his temple desolate. So if you would not use the abstract noun "desolation" in your language, an adjective such as "desolate" may be suitable here. Alternate translation: "And I have called for the land and the mountains and the grain and the new wine and the oil and what the ground produces and the man and the beast and all the labor of your hands to become desolate" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.53)**)

**And I have called for**

If you have been translating this chapter so that there are not quotations within a quotation, for consistency you would say here, "And he has called for." (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

**and upon the grain and upon the new wine and upon the oil**

Here, **grain**, **new wine**, and **oil** represent wheat and barley, grapes, and olives, of which they are the products. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "and upon the wheat and barley and upon the grapes and upon the olives" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

**and upon the man and upon the beast**

Yahweh is not referring to a specific **man** or to a specific **beast**. He means people and animals in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using plural forms. Alternate translation: "and upon people and upon animals" (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.78)**)

**your} hands**

Yahweh is using one part of the Judeans, their **hands**, to mean all of them in the act of working. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "everything that you do" (See: **Synecdoche (p.129)**)

## Haggai 1:12

### Then & listened to the voice of Yahweh their God and to the words of Haggai the prophet

Here the word **listened** implicitly means "obeyed." If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "Then … obeyed the voice of Yahweh their God and the words of Haggai the prophet" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

### Then & listened to the voice of Yahweh their God and to the words of Haggai the prophet

Here the term **voice** represents what Yahweh said by using his voice and the term **words** represents what Haggai said by using words. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "Then … obeyed what Yahweh their God and Haggai the prophet had said" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

### to the voice of Yahweh their God and to the words of Haggai the prophet

Here a single idea is expressed through two phrases connected with **and**. The second phrase tells by what means the action of the first phrase was accomplished. If it would be more natural in your language, you could convey this meaning with an equivalent expression that does not use "and." Alternate translation: "what Yahweh their God had said through Haggai the prophet" (See: **Hendiadys (p.83)**)

### and the people feared the face of Yahweh

Here one part of Yahweh, his **face**, represents all of him. Alternate translation: "and the people feared Yahweh" or "and the people respected Yahweh" (See: **Synecdoche (p.129)**)

## Haggai 1:13

### I {am} with you!'—the declaration of Yahweh

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: "Yahweh declares that he is with you!" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.74)**)

## Haggai 1:14

**And Yahweh awakened the spirit of the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all of the remnant of the people**

Here one part of Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people, their **spirit** in each case, represents all of them. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "And Yahweh awakened the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all of the remnant of the people" (See: **Synecdoche (p.129)**)

**And Yahweh awakened the spirit of the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all of the remnant of the people**

Here Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people are described as if they had literally been asleep and Yahweh woke them up. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "And Yahweh motivated the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all of the remnant of the people" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

## Haggai 1:15

### on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month

The **sixth month** of the Hebrew calendar includes August and September on Western calendars. See how you decided to translate the similar reference to a day, month, and year in 1:1. (See: **Hebrew Months (p.80)**)

### on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year

If your language does not use ordinal numbers, you could use cardinal numbers here. Alternate translation: "on day 24 of month six. In year two" (See: **Ordinal Numbers (p.111)**)

# Haggai 2

## Haggai 2 General Notes

## Structure and Formatting

This chapter contains the second (2:1–9), third (2:10–19), and fourth (2:20–23) oracles that Haggai delivered from Yahweh to the Judeans who had returned from exile.

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in verses 6–7 and 21–22.

## Translation Issues in this Chapter

## The teaching example of uncleanness (verses 12–14)

In the third oracle, Yahweh has Haggai speak with the priests in front of the people in order to teach the people by using an example. Haggai has the priests confirm that a person in a state of holiness does not communicate that holy state to foods that he touches. Haggai then has the priests confirm that a person in a state of uncleanness does communicate that unclean state to foods that he touches. Haggai then tells the people that Yahweh considers them to be unclean, meaning not in a proper state to take part in worship, because they have not obeyed him and rebuilt the temple. They have communicated that unclean state to the foods that they have offered in sacrifice, and so those sacrifices are not acceptable to Yahweh. Stated plainly, the message of this example is that the sacrifices the people are offering on the altar do not make up for their disobedience in not rebuilding the temple. Rather, their disobedience in not rebuilding the temple is making their sacrifices unacceptable. Notes to verses 11–14 will suggest ways in which you can indicate this meaning in your translation.

## Haggai 2:1

### in the seventh, on the twenty-first of the month

Here some words are omitted that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### in the seventh, on the twenty-first of the month

If your language does not use ordinal numbers, you could use cardinal numbers here. Alternate translation: "on day 21 of month seven" (See: **Ordinal Numbers (p.111)**)

### in the seventh, on the twenty-first of the month

The **twenty-first** day of the **seventh** month on the Hebrew calendar is near the middle of October on Western calendars. See how you decided to translate the similar reference to a day and month in 1:1. (See: **Hebrew Months (p.80)**)

### the word of Yahweh was by the hand of Haggai the prophet

See how you translated this same statement in 1:1. Alternate translation: "Haggai the prophet brought a message from Yahweh" (See: **Synecdoche (p.129)**)

## Haggai 2:2

### the people, saying

You may decide to translate the rest of this oracle, through verse 9, so that there is not a direct quotation within a quotation. If so, you can translate this so that it does not introduce a direct quotation. Alternate translation, with no comma following: "the people and ask them" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

## Haggai 2:3

### Who is the one left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How are you seeing it now? Compared with that, {is it} not like nothing in your eyes

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain direct quotations within a quotation, you can translate this verse as an indirect quotation, continuing the sentence that begins in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "who is left among them who saw this house in its former glory. Ask them how they are seeing it now and whether, compared with it, it is not like nothing in their eyes" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### Who is the one left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How are you seeing it now? Compared with that, {is it} not like nothing in your eyes

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If you would not use the question form for that purpose in your language, you could translate these questions as statements or as exclamations. Alternate translation: "Some of you saw this temple in its former glory. I know that you are not pleased with the way it looks now. Compared with the way it looked before, it seems like nothing in your eyes." (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.123)**)

### the one left among you who saw this house

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "the one among you who still remembers what this temple looked like" (See: **Active or Passive (p.55)**)

### who saw this house in its former glory

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **glory**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: "who saw how glorious this temple formerly was" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.53)**)

### Compared with that

The pronoun **that** refers to the former glory of the temple. It may be helpful to clarify this for your readers. Alternate translation: "Compared with its former glory" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.123)**)

### Compared with that, {is it} not like nothing in your eyes

Yahweh is using the term **eyes** by association to mean sight. Sight, in turn, represents attention, perspective, and judgment. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "Compared with that, do you not regard it as nothing" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

## Haggai 2:4

**But now, be strong, Zerubbabel!'—the declaration of Yahweh—'and be strong, Joshua son of Jehozadak, you high priest, and be strong, all people of the land!'—the declaration of Yahweh—'and work, for I {am} with you!'—the declaration of Yahweh of Armies**

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain direct quotations within a quotation, you can translate the second-level quotations in this verse as indirect quotations. Alternate translation: "But tell Zerubbabel that I, Yahweh, declare that he should now be strong, and that I, Yahweh, declare to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the people of the land that they should be strong, and that I, Yahweh of Armies, declare that they should work, for I am with them" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

## all people of the land

Yahweh is using this expression to refer to the Judeans who have returned from exile. The phrase means the same thing as the term "remnant" in 1:12 and 1:14. However, the phrase "the people of the land" often has a different meaning elsewhere in the Bible. In other passages, it refers to the Canaanites who were living in the region before the Israelites arrived. So it may be helpful to your readers to state the plainly what "the people of the land" means here. Alternate translation: "all you Judeans who have returned from exile" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

## Haggai 2:5

### The word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, and my Spirit remains in your midst. Do not fear

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain quotations within a quotation, you can translate this verse as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "Tell them that this is the word that I covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt, and my Spirit remains in their midst, so they should not fear" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### The word that I covenanted with you

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "This is the word that I covenanted with you" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### The word that I covenanted with you

Yahweh is using the term **word** to mean what he said to the Israelites by using words when he made a covenant with them. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "This is the covenant promise that I made to you" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

### The word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt

By **The word that I covenanted with you**, Yahweh is referring to what he has just said, "I am with you." Yahweh made this promise to the Israelites when they **came out of Egypt**. See, for example, Exodus 29:45–46, "And I will live among the sons of Israel and will be their God. And they will know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt to live among them." You could indicate this in your translation if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "This is the covenant promise that I made to you when you came out of Egypt, that I would be with you" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

### and my Spirit remains in your midst

With this statement, Yahweh is asserting that he is indeed fulfilling his covenant promise to be with the Israelites. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly. Alternate translation: "and indeed I am present in your midst through my Spirit, just as I promised" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

## Haggai 2:6

### For thus says Yahweh of Armies: 'Yet once, it {will be} a little {while}, and I {will be} shaking the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain quotations within a quotation, you can translate the second-level quotation in this verse as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "For I, Yahweh of Armies, say that yet once, it will be a little while, and I will be shaking the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### Yet once, it {will be} a little {while}, and I {will be} shaking

These phrases **Yet once** and **it will be a little while** may mean similar things. The first phrase may mean "after only one more period of time." The second phrase says basically the same thing but adds the information that this will be a brief period of time. Yahweh may be using the two phrases together for emphasis. If it would be clearer for your readers, you could express the emphasis with a single phrase. Alternate translation: "I can assure you that after only a short time, I will be shaking" (See: **Doublet (p.69)**)

### and I {will be} shaking

Yahweh is speaking as if he would literally be **shaking** all of creation. The image is that of a great earthquake. (People in this culture considered the sky to be a solid object above the earth, so Yahweh could shake that as well as the earth with a great quake.) It becomes clear in the next verse that Yahweh is actually using all of creation to represent "all nations" in their relationship to his chosen people. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "and I will bring about such changes in the attitude of the nations toward you that it will be as if I am shaking" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

### the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land

Yahweh is using the two main components of creation, the **heavens** (the sky) and the **earth**, to mean all of creation. He is then using the two main components of creation below the sky, the **sea** and the **dry land**, to mean the entire world in which humans live. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: "everything that I have created" (See: **Merism (p.99)**)

# Haggai 2:7

## And I will shake all of the nations, and they will come {with} the treasure of all of the nations, and I will fill this house {with} glory,' says Yahweh of Armies

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain quotations within a quotation, you can translate the second-level quotation in this verse as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "I, Yahweh of Armies, say that I will shake all of the nations, and they will come with the treasure of all of the nations, and I will fill this house with glory" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

## And I will shake all of the nations

Yahweh is speaking as if he were literally going to **shake** the **nations** with an earthquake. It is clear from the context that this represents Yahweh changing the attitude of the nations. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "And I will change the attitude of all the nations toward you" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

## and I will fill this house {with} glory

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **glory**, you could express the same idea in another way. In this context, the word **glory** could mean: (1) the **treasure** that the **nations** will bring to the temple as an offering to Yahweh. The next verse suggests that this may be the meaning. Alternate translation: "and I will fill this temple with glorious treasure" (2) the reputation that the temple would have. Alternate translation: "and I will give this temple a glorious reputation" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.53)**)

# Haggai 2:8

## The silver is mine, and the gold is mine'—the declaration of Yahweh of Armies

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain quotations within a quotation, you can translate the second-level quotation in this verse as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "I, Yahweh of Armies, declare that the silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

## The silver is mine, and the gold is mine

The implication of this statement seems to be that Yahweh can promise that the nations will bring their treasure to the rebuilt temple because all of that treasure actually belongs to him. You could indicate that in your translation if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "I can promise you this because the silver and gold that the nations will bring to the temple actually belongs to me" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

## Haggai 2:9

### The latter glory of this house {will be} greater than the former,' says Yahweh of Armies, 'and in this place I will give peace'—the declaration of Yahweh of Armies

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain quotations within a quotation, you can translate the second-level quotations in this verse as indirect quotations. Alternate translation: "I, Yahweh of Armies, say that the latter glory of this house {will be} greater than the former, and I, Yahweh of Armies, declare that in this place I will give peace" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### The latter glory of this house {will be} greater than the former

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "The latter glory of this temple {will be} greater than the former glory of this temple" or "The latter glory of this temple {will be} greater than its former glory" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### The latter glory of this house {will be} greater than the former

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **glory**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: "This temple will become more glorious now than it was before" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.53)**)

### house

Here, as in many other instances throughout the book, Yahweh is speaking of his temple as if it were a **house** in which he lived. If you decided to translate the word **house** as "temple," look back over your translation to make sure that you have done this consistently. Alternate translation: "temple" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

### and in this place I will give peace

By **this place**, Yahweh most likely means Judea and especially Jerusalem. The enemies of the Judeans destroyed the previous temple, but Yahweh is promising here that he will now cause the nations to be at **peace** with them so that enemy armies do not destroy the rebuilt temple. You could indicate that in your translation if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "and here in Jerusalem I will give peace" or "and I will not allow your enemies to come here to Jerusalem and destroy this temple again" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

## Haggai 2:10

### On the twenty-fourth of the ninth

Here some words are omitted that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### On the twenty-fourth of the ninth, in the second year of Darius

If your language does not use ordinal numbers, you could use cardinal numbers here. Alternate translation: "on day 24 of month nine in year two of Darius" (See: **Ordinal Numbers (p.111)**)

### On the twenty-fourth of the ninth

The **twenty-fourth day** of the **ninth month** on the Hebrew calendar is near the middle of December on Western calendars. See how you decided to translate the similar reference to a day and month in 1:1. (See: **Hebrew Months (p.80)**)

### the word of Yahweh was to Haggai the prophet, saying

See how you translated the similar statement in 1:1. Alternate translation: "Haggai the prophet received a message from Yahweh, who told him" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

## Haggai 2:11

### Thus says Yahweh of Armies: 'Now ask the priests {about} the law, saying

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: "Yahweh of Armies says to ask the priests about the law. Ask them" (See: **Quote Markings (p. 117)**)

## Haggai 2:12

### If a man carries holy flesh in the fold of his garment and he touches with his fold upon bread or upon stew or upon wine or upon oil or upon any food, does it become holy

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain direct quotations within a quotation, you can translate this verse as an indirect quotation, continuing the sentence that begins in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "whether bread or stew or wine or oil or any other food becomes holy if a man carries holy flesh in the fold of his garment and he touches with his fold upon it" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### If a man carries holy flesh in the fold of his garment and he touches with his fold upon bread or upon stew or upon wine or upon oil or upon any food, does it become holy

Yahweh is using a hypothetical situation in order to teach. Alternate translation: "Suppose a man carries holy flesh in the fold of his garment. And suppose that man touches bread or stew or wine or oil or any other food with that fold. Would that make the food holy?" (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.90)**)

### holy flesh

The expression **holy flesh** refers implicitly to meat that has been offered to Yahweh as a sacrifice. Only priests could eat such meat. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly in your translation. Alternate translation: "meat that is set apart for the priests to eat because it has been offered to Yahweh as a sacrifice" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

### No

The priests mean implicitly that while touching **holy flesh** makes a person "holy" (and therefore conveys certain privileges but also makes the person subject to certain restrictions, see Leviticus 6:27), that person does not communicate this holy state to objects that he touches. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly in your translation. Alternate translation: "No, a person who becomes holy by touching meat sacrificed to Yahweh does not communicate that holy state to objects that he touches'" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

## Haggai 2:13

### the unclean by a person

Haggai implicitly means a **person** who has died, and he is speaking specifically of that dead person's body. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "the unclean by contact with a dead body" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

### the unclean by a person

Haggai is using the adjective **unclean** as a noun to mean a certain kind of person. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this word with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: "a person who has become unclean by touching a dead body" (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.109)**)

### the unclean by a person

Haggai and the priests share the knowledge that if an Israelite touches a dead body, something that is ritually unclean, then that Israelite becomes ritually unclean himself for a certain period of time (see Numbers 19:13). Such a person is not allowed to take part in public worship. It may be helpful to state this explicitly in your translation. Alternate translation: "someone who has become ritually impure by contact with a dead body" or "someone who is unable to join in public worship because he has touched a dead body" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

### any of these, will it be unclean

The pronoun **these** refers to the foods that Haggai described in the previous verse, and the pronoun **it** refers to one of those foods that an unclean person might touch. It may be helpful to clarify this for your readers. Alternate translation: "any of these foods, will the food that he touched become unclean" or "any of these foods, would that make the food that he touched unclean" (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.115)**)

### It will be unclean

This is the counterpart to the priests' answer in the previous verse. It may be helpful to indicate the implications of this answer explicitly in your translation. Alternate translation: "While a holy person does not communicate a holy state to objects that he touches, an unclean person does communicate an unclean state to objects that he touches, so any food that an unclean person touches does become unclean" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

## Haggai 2:14

## Thus {is} this people and thus {is} this nation to my face!'—the declaration of Yahweh—'and thus {is} every work of their hands, and what they offer there, it {is} unclean

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain quotations within a quotation, you can translate the second-level quotation in this verse as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "Yahweh of Armies declares that this people and this nation are thus to his face, and that every work of their hands is thus, and that what they offer there is unclean" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

## Thus {is} this people and thus {is} this nation

The word **Thus** refers implicitly to a state of uncleanness. It may be helpful to indicate this in your translation. Alternate translation: "This people is unclean and this nation is unclean" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

## Thus {is} this people and thus {is} this nation

In this context, the terms **people** and **nation** both refer to the Judeans who have returned from exile. Yahweh is using the two terms together for emphasis. If it would be clearer for your readers, you could express the emphasis with a single phrase. Alternate translation: "These Judeans who have returned from exile are unclean" (See: **Doublet (p.69)**)

## to my face

Here Yahweh is using the term **face** to mean his presence, by association with the way people can see the face of someone who is present. Presence, in turn, represents Yahweh's judgment by association with the way that he would assess anything that came to his attention in front of him. Alternate translation: "in my judgment" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

## to my face

Yahweh means implicitly that the Judeans are unclean because they have not obeyed him and rebuilt his temple. You could indicate that in your translation if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "in my judgment because they have not obeyed me and rebuilt my temple" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

## and thus {is} every work of their hands

Yahweh is using one part of the Judeans, their **hands**, to mean all of them in the act of working. The reference is specifically to their **work** of growing crops and raising animals. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "and thus is all of the food that they produce" or "and all of the food that they produce is therefore unclean as well" (See: **Synecdoche (p.129)**)

## and what they offer there, it {is} unclean

By **there**, Haggai implicitly means an altar that the returned exiles had set up at the temple site. This is described in Ezra 3:1–6. You can say that in your translation if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "and

so what they offer on the altar that they have set up at the temple site is also unclean" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

## Haggai 2:15

### do set your hearts

See how you translated this expression in 1:5. Alternate translation: "consider carefully what has been happening" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

### from before until this day

The word **before** refers back in time to the whole period after the Judeans returned from exile. Alternate translation: "from the time you returned from exile until now" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

### from before the placing of stone upon stone in the temple of Yahweh

Yahweh is using one part of the building process to represent the entire process of rebuilding the temple. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "before you began to rebuild the temple of Yahweh" (See: **Synecdoche (p.129)**)

### in the temple of Yahweh

Yahweh is speaking about himself in the third person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this in the first person. Alternate translation: "in my temple" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.74)**)

## Haggai 2:16

### From their being

The pronoun **their** likely refers to the days that Haggai described in the previous verse, beginning with "this day" (the day on which he is speaking) and including all of the days since the return from exile before the Judeans began rebuilding the temple. Alternate translation: "During those days" or "During that whole time period" (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.115)**)

### one came to a heap of twenty but there were ten

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "when a person came to a heap of grain that he expected to contain twenty measures, he found that it contained only ten measures" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### one came to a heap of twenty but there were ten

By **twenty**, Yahweh most likely means twenty ephahs. An ephah was equivalent to about 22 liters. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could express the quantity in modern measurements. Alternatively, to help your readers recognize that the biblical writings come from a long time ago when people used different measures, you could express the amount using the ancient measurement, the ephah, and explain the equivalent in modern measurements in a footnote. Alternate translation: "when a person came to a heap of grain that he expected to contain twenty ephahs, he found that it contained only ten ephahs" or "when a person came to a heap that he expected to contain over 400 kilograms of grain, he found that it contained only about 200 kilograms" (See: **Biblical Volume (p.61)**)

### one came to a vat to draw out fifty {from} the press but there were twenty

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "when a person came to a wine vat from which he expected he could draw fifty press-measures, he found that it contained only twenty press-measures" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### fifty {from} the press

The expression **from the press** probably describes a certain quantity of wine, a "press-measure," the amount that a winepress would produce from a single pressing of a full load of grapes. However, it is no longer clear exactly what this quantity was. In your translation, you could use a liquid measure that your readers would recognize that would approximate this quantity, or you could use a general expression. Alternate translation: "fifty gallons" or "fifty measures of wine" (See: **Biblical Volume (p.61)**)

## Haggai 2:17

### I struck you with blight and with mildew and with hail, all of the work of your hands, but it was not you to me'—the declaration of Yahweh

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain quotations within a quotation, you can translate the second-level quotation in this verse as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "Yahweh declares that he struck you with blight and with mildew and with hail, all of the work of your hands, but it was not you to him" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### all of the work of your hands

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "I struck all of the work of your hands" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### all of the work of your hands

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:14. Alternate translation: "all of the food that you were producing" (See: **Synecdoche (p.129)**)

### but it was not you to me

Yahweh is using this expression to mean that the Judeans did not obey him and rebuild the temple. Instead, they continued to disobey, as if they had nothing to do with Yahweh. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "but you still did not return to me" or "but it was as if you wanted to have nothing to do with me" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

## Haggai 2:18

### set your hearts

See how you translated the similar phrase in 1:5. Alternate translation: "consider carefully what has been happening" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

### from before until this day, from the day that the temple of Yahweh was founded until this twenty-fourth day of the ninth

As in 2:15, the word **before** refers back in time to the whole period after the Judeans returned from exile. The **twenty-fourth day of the ninth month** means that date in the second year of Darius, as 2:10 indicates. Alternate translation: "from the time you returned from exile until this day, that is, from the day that the temple of Yahweh was founded until this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month in the second year of Darius" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.58)**)

### until this twenty-fourth day of the ninth

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### until this twenty-fourth day of the ninth

If your language does not use ordinal numbers, you could use cardinal numbers here. See what you did in 2:10. Alternate translation: "from day 24 of month nine" (See: **Ordinal Numbers (p.111)**)

### the temple of Yahweh was founded

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "you laid the foundation of the temple of Yahweh" (See: **Active or Passive (p.55)**)

### the temple of Yahweh

Yahweh is speaking about himself in the third person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this in the first person. Alternate translation: "my temple" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.74)**)

### Set your hearts

See how you translated this phrase in 1:5. Alternate translation: "Consider carefully" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

## Haggai 2:19

### Is} the seed yet in the storehouse

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If you would not use the question form for that purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: "The seed is not yet in the storehouse!" or "There is no seed in the storehouse!" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.123)**)

### From this day I will bless {you

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain quotations within a quotation, you can translate the second-level quotation in this verse as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "From this day he will bless you'" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### From this day

Yahweh is drawing a strong contrast. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate this in your translation by using a word that introduces a strong contrast. Alternate translation: "Nevertheless, from this day" (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.67)**)

## Haggai 2:20

### And the word of Yahweh was to Haggai a second time

See how you translated the similar phrase in 2:10. Alternate translation: "And Haggai received another message from Yahweh" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

### a second time

If your language does not use ordinal numbers, you can use a cardinal number here or an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "again" (See: **Ordinal Numbers (p.111)**)

### on the twenty-fourth of the month

Here some of the words are omitted that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month" (See: **Ellipsis (p.71)**)

### on the twenty-fourth of the month

If your language does not use ordinal numbers, you can use a cardinal number here or an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "on day 24 of month nine" or "on day 24 of the same month" (See: **Ordinal Numbers (p.111)**)

### on the twenty-fourth of the month

See how you translated the name of the Hebrew month in 2:10. (See: **Hebrew Months (p.80)**)

## Haggai 2:21

### Speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, saying, I {am} shaking the heavens and the earth

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: "Speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and tell him that I am shaking the heavens and the earth" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

### I {am} shaking the heavens and the earth

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:6. Alternate translation: "I am bringing about such changes in the situation of the nations around you that it is as if I am shaking" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

### the heavens and the earth

Yahweh is using the two main components of creation, the **heavens** (that is, the sky) and the **earth**, to represent all of creation. See how you translated the similar expression in 2:6. Alternate translation: "everything that I have created" (See: **Merism (p.99)**)

## Haggai 2:22

### the throne of kingdoms

Yahweh is not referring to a specific **throne**. He means the thrones of all of the **kingdoms** in the world. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: "the thrones of kingdoms" (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.78)**)

### the throne of kingdoms

Yahweh is referring to the ruling authority of **kingdoms** by association with the royal **throne** on which the rulers of those kingdoms sit. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or express the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "the ruling authority of kingdoms" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

### And I will overthrow the chariot and its rider, and the horses and their riders will fall

Yahweh is using two components of an army, its chariot teams (the chariots and their riders) and its cavalry troops (the horses and their riders), to mean the entire army. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: "I will destroy the entire armies of the kingdoms that oppose you" (See: **Merism (p.99)**)

### the chariot and its rider

Yahweh is not referring to a specific **chariot** and **rider**. He means all of the chariots and riders in the armies of the kingdoms opposed to the Judeans. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: "the chariots and their riders" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

### and & will fall

Here the word **fall** means "die" by association with the way someone who dies will fall to the ground. Be sure that it is clear in your translation that these **horses** and **riders** will not fall down accidentally. Alternate translation: "and … will die" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

### a man by the sword of his brother

See how you translated the similar use of the phrase "a man" in 1:9. Alternate translation: "each one of them by the sword of his brother" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

### a man by the sword of his brother

Here, **the sword** represents a violent death. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "each one when his brother kills him" (See: **Metonymy (p.107)**)

## his brother

Yahweh is speaking of a fellow soldier as if he were literally the **brother** of another soldier whom he killed. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "his fellow solider" (See: **Metaphor (p.101)**)

# Haggai 2:23

## On that day'—the declaration of Yahweh of Armies—'I will take you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant'—the declaration of Yahweh— 'and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you'—the declaration of Yahweh of Armies

If you have decided to translate this oracle so that it does not contain quotations within a quotation, you can translate the second-level quotations in this verse as indirect quotations. Alternate translation: "I, Yahweh of Armies, declare that on that day I will take him, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant, and I, Yahweh of Armies, declare that I will make him like a signet ring, for I have chosen him" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.120)**)

## On that day

Yahweh is using the term **day** to refer to a specific time. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "At that time" or "After I have done that" (See: **Idiom (p.93)**)

## I will take you, & and I will make you & I have chosen you

The word **you** is singular here because it refers to Zerubbabel, so use the singular form in your translation if your language marks that distinction. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.76)**)

## like a signet ring

A **signet ring** was a special ring that a ruler could use to imprint an official seal on a document. This ring bore the ruler's name or some symbol representing him. The ruler would roll up an important document and put wax on it, then press the ring into the wax to create an official seal. If the document had this mark on its seal, people would know that what was written in the document was written with the king's authority and had to be obeyed. You could describe this as "like a ring that a ruler uses to create official seals" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.131)**)

## like a signet ring

The point of this comparison is that **Zerubbabel** would be an instrument of Yahweh's authority, just as a ruler uses a **signet ring** as an instrument of his authority. All the nations would have to obey Zerubbabel's commands because Zerubbabel would be commanding them with authority that Yahweh had entrusted to him. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: "an instrument of my authority, like a signet ring" (See: **Simile (p.126)**)

# unfoldingWord® Translation Academy

**Version 76**

# 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:** Haggai 1:6; Haggai 1:9; Haggai 1:11; Haggai 2:3; Haggai 2:7; Haggai 2:9

# 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.

**Referenced in:** Haggai 1:4; Haggai 1:6; Haggai 1:8; Haggai 2:3; Haggai 2:18

# 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)*

"

# Biblical Volume

## Description

The following terms are the most common units of volume used in the Bible to state how much a certain container could hold. The containers and measurements are given for both liquids (such as wine) and dry solids (such as grain). The metric values are not exactly equal to the biblical measures. The biblical measures probably differed in exact amount from time to time and place to place. The equivalents below are an attempt to give an average measurement.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate the measures of volume that are in the Bible?*

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

*[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-decimal]]*

| Type | Original Measure | Liters |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dry | omer | 2 liters |
| Dry | ephah | 22 liters |
| Dry | homer | 220 liters |
| Dry | cor | 220 liters |
| Dry | seah | 7.7 liters |
| Dry | lethek | 114.8 liters |
| Liquid | metrete | 40 liters |
| Liquid | bath | 22 liters |
| Liquid | hin | 3.7 liters |
| Liquid | kab | 1.23 liters |
| Liquid | log | 0.31 liters |

## Translation Principles

- The people in the Bible did not use modern measures such as meters, liters, and kilograms. Using the original measures can help readers know that the Bible really was written long ago in a time when people used those measures.
- Using modern measures can help readers understand the text more easily.
- Whatever measures you use, it would be good, if possible, to tell about the other kinds of measures in the text or a footnote.
- If you do not use the biblical measures, try not to give the readers the idea that the measurements are exact. For example, if you translate one hin as "3.7 liters," readers might think that the measurement is exactly 3.7 liters, not 3.6 or 3.8. It would be better to use a more approximate measure such as "three and a half liters" or "four liters."
- When God tells people how much of something to use, and when people use those amounts in obedience to him, do not say "about" in the translation. Otherwise it will give the impression that God did not care exactly how much they used.

# When the unit of measure is stated

## Translation Strategies

(1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)
(2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.
(3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.
(4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note.
(5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note.

## Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Isaiah 5:10 below.

> For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only one bath, and one homer of seed will yield only an ephah. (Isaiah 5:10 ULT)

(1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only one **bat**, and one **homer** of seed will yield only an **efa**."

(2) Use the measurements given in the UST. Usually they are metric measurements. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **22 liters** and **220 liters** of seed will yield only **22 liters**."

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **22**, and **ten baskets** of seed will yield only **one basket**."

(3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **six gallons**, and **six and a half bushels** of seed will yield only **20 quarts**."

(4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note. The following shows both measurements in the text.

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **one bath (six gallons)**, and **one homer (six and a half bushels)** of seed will yield only **an ephah (20 quarts)**."

(5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note. The following shows the ULT measurements in footnotes.

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only 22 liters[1], and 220 liters[2] of seed will yield only 22 liters[3]."

The footnotes would look like:

[1] one bath [2] one homer [3] one ephah

# When the unit of measure is implied

Sometimes the Hebrew does not specify a particular unit of volume but only uses a number. In these cases, many English versions, including the ULT and UST, add the word "measure."

> When you came to a heap of **20 measures** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50 measures** of wine, there were only 20. (Haggai 2:16 ULT)

## Translation Strategies

(1) Translate literally by using the number without a unit.
(2) Use a generic word like "measure" or "quantity" or "amount."
(3) Use the name of an appropriate container, such as "basket" for grain or "jar" for wine.
(4) Use a unit of measure that you are already using in your translation.

## Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Haggai 2:16 below.

> When you came to a heap of **20 measures** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **fifty measures** of wine, there were only **20**. (Haggai 2:16 ULT)

(1) Translate literally by using the number without a unit.

> When you came to a heap of **20** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50** of wine, there were only **20**.

(2) Use a generic word like "measure" or "quantity" or "amount."

> When you came to a heap of **20 amounts** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **fifty amounts** of wine, there were only **20**.

(3) Use the name of an appropriate container, such as "basket" for grain or "jar" for wine.

> When you came to a heap of **20 baskets** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50 jars** of wine, there were only **20**.

(4) Use a unit of measure that you are already using in your translation.

> When you came to a heap for **20 liters** of grain, there were only **ten liters**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50 liters** of wine, there were only **20 liters**.

"

---

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Fractions (UTA PDF)*

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

---

**Referenced in:** Haggai 2:16

# Collective Nouns

## Description

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:** Haggai 1:5

# Connect — Contrast 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 contrast relationship?*

## Contrast Relationship

### Description

A contrast relationship is a logical relationship in which one event or item is in contrast or opposition to another.

### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In Scripture, many events did not happen as the people involved intended or expected them to happen. Sometimes people acted in ways that were not expected, whether good or bad. Often it was God at work, changing the events. These events were often pivotal. It is important that translators understand and communicate these contrasts. In English, contrast relationships are often indicated by the words "but," "although," "even though," "though," "yet," or "however."

### Examples From OBS and the Bible

> You tried to do evil when you sold me as a slave, **but** God used the evil for good! (Story 8 Frame 12 OBS)

Joseph's brothers' evil plan to sell Joseph is contrasted with God's good plan to save many people. The word "but" marks the contrast.

> For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? **Yet** I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:27 ULT)

Jesus contrasts the proud way that human leaders behave with the humble way that he behaves. The contrast is marked by the word "yet."

> The hill country will also be yours. **Though** it is a forest, you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders, for you will drive out the Canaanites, even **though** they have chariots of iron, and even **though** they are strong. (Joshua 17:18 ULT)

It was unexpected that the Israelites, who had been slaves in Egypt, would be able to conquer and lay claim to the promised land.

### Translation Strategies

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

(1) If the contrast relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a connecting word or phrase that is more specific or more clear.
(2) If it is more clear in your language to mark the other clause of the contrast relationship, then use a connecting word on the other clause.
(3) If your language shows a contrast relationship in a different way, then use that way.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the contrast relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a connecting word or phrase that is more specific or more clear.

> For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **Yet** I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:27 ULT)

>> For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **Unlike that person**, I am among you as one who serves.

(2) If it is more clear in your language to mark the other clause of the contrast relationship, then use a connecting word on the other clause.

> The hill country will also be yours. **Though** it is a forest, you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders, for you will drive out the Canaanites, even **though** they have chariots of iron, and even **though** they are strong. (Joshua 17:18 ULT)

>> The hill country will also be yours. It is a forest, **but** you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders. They have chariots of iron, and they are strong, **but** you will drive out the Canaanites.

(3) If your language shows a contrast relationship in a different way, then use that way.

> {David} found favor in the sight of God, and he asked if he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. **However**, Solomon built the house for him. **But** the Most High does not live in houses made with hands. (Acts 7:46-48a ULT)

>> [David] found favor in the sight of God, and he asked if he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. **But** it was, Solomon, **not David**, who built the house for God. **Even though Solomon built him a house**, the Most High does not live in houses made with hands.

"

**Referenced in:** Haggai 2:19

# 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:** Haggai 2:6; Haggai 2:14

# 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.

English has a punctuation symbol which is also called an ellipsis. It is a series of three dots (...) used to indicate an intentional omission of a word, phrase, sentence or more from text without altering its original meaning. This translationAcademy article is not about the punctuation mark, but about the concept of omission of words that normally should be in the sentence.

"

**Referenced in:** Haggai 1:6; Haggai 1:9; Haggai 2:1; Haggai 2:5; Haggai 2:9; Haggai 2:10; Haggai 2:12; Haggai 2:16; Haggai 2:17; Haggai 2:18; Haggai 2:20

# 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.

<div style="border:1px solid #000;">

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Forms of You (UTA PDF)*

</div>
"

**Referenced in:** Haggai 1:6; Haggai 1:13; Haggai 2:15; Haggai 2:18

# Forms of 'You' — Singular

## Description

Some 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. Translators who speak one of these languages will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language. Other languages, such as English, have only one form, which people use regardless of how many people it refers to.

> This page answers the question: *How do I know if the word 'you' is singular?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Parts of Speech (UTA PDF)*
> *Forms of You (UTA PDF)*
> *Pronouns (UTA PDF)*

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. These languages all have both a singular form of "you" and a plural form of "you." When we read the Bible in those languages, the pronouns and verb forms show us whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one. When we read the Bible in a language that does not have different forms of you, we need to look at the context to see how many people the speaker was speaking to.

### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators who speak a language that has distinct singular and plural forms of "you" will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language.
- Many languages also have different forms of the verb depending on whether the subject is singular or plural. So even if there is no pronoun meaning "you," translators of these languages will need to know if the speaker was referring to one person or more than one.

Often the context will make it clear whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one. If you look at the other pronouns in the sentence, they will help you know the number of people the speaker was speaking to. Sometimes Greek and Hebrew speakers used the singular form of "you" even though they were speaking to a group of people. (See Forms of 'You' — Singular to a Crowd.)

## Examples From the Bible

> But he said, "All these things **I** have kept from my youth." But when he heard this, Jesus said to him, "One thing is still lacking to **you**. All things, as much as **you** have, **sell** all and **distribute** to the poor, and **you** will have treasure in heaven—and **come**, **follow** me." (Luke 18:21-22 ULT)

The ruler was speaking about just himself when he said "I." This shows us that when Jesus said "you" he was referring only to the ruler and he used the singular form. So languages that have singular and plural forms of "you" need the singular form here, as well as for the verbs "sell," distribute," "come," and "follow."

> The angel said to him, "**Dress yourself** and **put on your** sandals." So he did that. He said to him, "**Put on your** outer garment and **follow** me." (Acts 12:8 ULT)

The angel used singular forms here and the context makes it clear that he was speaking to one person and that only one person did what the the angel commanded. So languages that have singular and plural forms of "you" would need the singular form here for "yourself" and "your." Also, if verbs have different forms for singular and plural subjects, then the verbs "dress," "put on," and "follow" need the form that indicates a singular subject.

> All the ones {who are} with me greet **you**. **Greet** the ones loving us in faith. Grace {be} with all of **you**. (Titus 3:15 ULT)

Paul wrote this letter to one person, Titus, so most of the time the word "you" in this letter is singular and refers only to Titus. In this verse, the first "you" is singular, so the greeting is for Titus, as well as the instruction to greet the others there. The second "you," however, is plural, so the blessing is for Titus and for all of the believers there in Crete.

> "Having gone, **search** carefully for the young child, and after **you** have found him, **report** to me so that I also, having come, might worship him." (Matthew 2:8 ULT)

Since Herod is speaking to all of the learned men, the word "you" and the commands "search" and "report" are plural.

## Strategies for finding out how many people "you" refers to

(1) Look at the notes to see if they tell whether "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
(2) Look at the UST to see if it says anything that would show you whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
(3) If you have a Bible that is written in a language that distinguishes "you" singular from "you" plural, see which form of "you" that Bible has in that sentence.
(4) Look at the context to see how many people the speaker was talking to and who responded.

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

**Referenced in:** Haggai 1:4; Haggai 2:23

# Generic Noun Phrases

## Description

Generic noun phrases refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things. This happens frequently in proverbs, because proverbs tell about things that are true about people in general.

This page answers the question: *What are generic noun phrases and how can I translate them?*

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

*Parts of Speech* *(UTA PDF)*

> Can **a man** walk on hot coals without scorching his feet? So is **the man who goes in to his neighbor's wife**; **the one who touches her** will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 6:28-29 ULT)

The phrases in bold above do not refer to a specific man. They refer to any man who does these things.

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of showing that noun phrases refer to something in general. You (the translator) should refer to these general ideas in ways that are natural in your language.

## Examples From the Bible

> The **righteous person** is kept away from trouble and it comes upon **the wicked** instead. (Proverbs 11:8 ULT)

The bold phrases above do not refer to a specific person but to anyone who does what is right or anyone who is wicked.

> People curse **the man who refuses to sell grain**. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

This does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who refuses to sell grain.

> Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)

The phrase "a good man" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who is good. The phrase "a man who makes evil plans" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who makes evil plans.

## Translation Strategies

If your language can use the same wording as in the ULT to refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things, consider using the same wording. If not, here are some strategies you might use.

(1) Use the word "the" in the noun phrase.
(2) Use the word "a" in the noun phrase.
(3) Use the word "any," as in "any person" or "anyone."
(4) Use the plural form, as in "people."
(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the word "the" in the noun phrase.

> Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)
>
> > "Yahweh gives favor to **the good man**, but he condemns **the man who makes evil plans**." (Proverbs 12:2)

(2) Use the word "a" in the noun phrase.

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
> > "People curse **a man** who refuses to sell grain."

(3) Use the word "any," as in "any person" or "anyone."

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
> > "People curse **any man** who refuses to sell grain."

(4) Use the plural form, as in "people" (or in this sentence, "men").

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
> > "People curse **men** who refuse to sell grain"

(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
> > "People curse **whoever** refuses to sell grain."

---
Next we recommend you learn about:

*When Masculine Words Include Women (UTA PDF)*

---

"

**Referenced in:** Haggai 1:8; Haggai 1:11; Haggai 2:22

# Hebrew Months

## Description

The Hebrew calendar used in the Bible has twelve months. Unlike the western calendar, its first month begins in the spring of the northern hemisphere. Sometimes a month is called by its name (Aviv, Ziv, Sivan), and sometimes it is called by its order in the Hebrew calendar year (first month, second month, third month).

## Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may be surprised to read of months that they have never heard of, and they may wonder how those months correspond to the months that they use.
- Readers may not realize that phrases such as "the first month" or "the second month" refer to the first or second month of the Hebrew calendar, not some other calendar.
- Readers may not know when the first month of the Hebrew calendar begins.
- The Bible may tell about something happening in a certain month, but readers will not be able to fully understand what is said about it if they do not know what season of the year that was.

## List of Hebrew Months

This is a list of the Hebrew months with information about them that may be helpful in the translation.

**Aviv** — (This month was called **Nisan** after the Babylonian exile.) This is the first month of the Hebrew calendar. It marks when God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt. It is at the beginning of the spring season when the late rains come and people begin to harvest their crops. It is during the last part of March and the first part of April on western calendars. The Passover celebration started on Aviv 10; the Festival of Unleavened Bread was right after that, and the Festival of Harvest was a few weeks after that.

**Ziv** — This is the second month of the Hebrew calendar. This is during the harvest season. It is during the last part of April and the first part of May on Western calendars.

**Sivan** — This is the third month of the Hebrew calendar. It is at the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the dry season. It is during the last part of May and the first part of June on Western calendars. The Feast of Weeks is celebrated on Sivan 6.

**Tammuz** — This is the fourth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is during the dry season. It is during the last part of June and the first part of July on Western calendars.

**Ab** — This is the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is during the dry season. It is during the last part of July and the first part of August on Western calendars.

**Elul** — This is the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is at the end of the dry season and the beginning of the rainy season. It is during the last part of August and the first part of September on Western calendars.

**Ethanim** — This is the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. This is during the early rain season which would soften the land for sowing. It is during the last part of September and the first part of October on Western calendars. The Feast of Ingathering and the Day of Atonement are celebrated in this month.

**Bul** — This is the eighth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is during the rainy season when people plough their fields and sow seed. It is during the last part of October and the first part of November on Western calendars.

**Kislev** — This is the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar. This is at the end of the sowing season and the beginning of the cold season. It is during the last part of November and the first part of December on Western calendars.

**Tebeth** — This is the tenth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is during the cold season when there may be rain and snow. It is during the last part of December and the first part of January on Western calendars.

**Shebat** — This is the eleventh month of the Hebrew calendar. This is the coldest month of the year, and it has heavy rainfall. It is during the last part of January and the first part of February on Western calendars.

**Adar** — This is the twelfth and last month of the Hebrew calendar. This is during the cold season. It is during the last part of February and the first part of March on western calendars. The feast called Purim is celebrated in Adar.

## Examples From the Bible

> Today you are going out, in **the month of Aviv**. (Exodus 13:4 ULT)
>
> You must eat unleavened bread from evening of the fourteenth day **in the first month of the year**, until evening of the twenty-first day of the month. (Exodus 12:18 ULT)

## Translation Strategies

You may need to make some information about the months explicit. (See Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information.)

(1) Tell the number of the Hebrew month.
(2) Use the names for months that people know.
(3) State clearly what season the month occurred in.
(4) Refer to the time in terms of the season rather than in terms of the Hebrew name of the month. (If possible, use a footnote to show the Hebrew month and day.)

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The examples below use these two verses.

> At that time, you will appear before me in **the month of Aviv**, which is fixed for this purpose. It was in this month that you came out from Egypt. (Exodus 23:15b ULT)
>
> It will always be a statute for you that in **the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month,** you must humble yourselves and do no work. (Leviticus 16:29a ULT)

(1) Tell the number of the Hebrew month.

> > At that time, you will appear before me in **the first month of the year**, which is fixed for this purpose. It was in this month that you came out from Egypt.

(2) Use the months that people know.

> > At that time, you will appear before me in **the month of March**, which is fixed for this purpose. It was in this month that you came out from Egypt.
> >
> > It will always be a statute for you that **on the day I choose in late September** you must humble yourselves and do no work.

(3) State clearly what season the month occurs in.

> > It will always be a statute for you that **in the autumn, on the tenth day of the seventh month,** you must humble yourselves and do no work.

(4) Refer to the time in terms of the season rather than in terms of the month.

> It will always be a statute for you that in **the day I choose in early autumn**[1] you must humble yourselves and do no work.

The footnote would look like:

> [1] The Hebrew says, "the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month."

"

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *Ordinal Numbers (UTA PDF)*

# 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**.

---

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Doublet*

---

**Referenced in:** Haggai 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:** Haggai 1:2

# Hypothetical Situations

Consider these phrases: "If the sun stopped shining …" "What if the sun stopped shining …" "Suppose the sun stopped shining …" and "If only the sun had not stopped shining." We use such expressions to set up hypothetical situations, imagining what might have happened or what could happen in the future but probably will not. We also use them to express regret or wishes. Hypothetical expressions occur often in the Bible. You (the translator) need to translate them in a way that people will know that the event did not actually happen and so that they will understand why the event was imagined.

> This page answers the question: *What is a hypothetical situation?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Writing Styles* *(UTA PDF)*

## Description

Hypothetical situations are situations that are not real. They can be in the past, present, or future. Hypothetical situations in the past and present have not happened, are not happening now, and ones in the future are not expected to happen.

People sometimes tell about conditions and what would happen if those conditions were met, but they know that these things have not happened or probably will not happen. (The conditions comprise a phrase that starts with "if.")

- If he had lived to be 100 years old, he would have seen his grandson's grandson. (But he did not.)
- If he lived to be 100 years old, he would still be alive today. (But he is not.)
- If he lives to be 100 years old, he will see his grandson's grandson. (But he probably will not.)

People sometimes express wishes about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- I wish he had come.
- I wish he were here.
- I wish he would come.

People sometimes express regrets about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- If only he had come.
- If only he were here.
- If only he would come.

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators need to recognize the different kinds of hypothetical situations in the Bible and understand that they are unreal.
- Translators need to know their own language's ways of talking about different kinds of hypothetical situations.

## Examples From the Bible

### Hypothetical Situations in the Past

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

Here in Matthew 11:21, Jesus said that **if** the people living in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon had been able to see the miracles that he performed, they would have repented long ago. The people of Tyre and Sidon did not actually see his miracles, and they did not repent. He said this to rebuke the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida who had seen his miracles and yet did not repent.

> Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, **if you had been here, my brother would not have died**." (John 11:21 ULT)

Martha said this to express her wish that Jesus would have come sooner so that her brother would not have died. But Jesus did not come sooner and her brother did die.

## Hypothetical Situations in the Present

> And no man puts new wine into old wineskins. **But if he did do that, the new wine would burst the wineskins, and it would be spilled out, and the wineskins would be destroyed**. (Luke 5:37 ULT)

Jesus told about what would happen if a person were to put new wine into old wineskins. But no one would do that. He used this imaginary situation as an example to show that there are times when it is unwise to mix new things with old things. He did this so that people could understand why his disciples were not fasting as people traditionally did.

> Jesus said to them, "What man would there be among you, who, **if he had just one sheep, and if this sheep fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath, would not grasp hold of it and lift it out**?" (Matthew 12:11 ULT)

Jesus asked the religious leaders what they would do on the Sabbath if one of their sheep fell into a hole. He was not saying that their sheep would fall into a hole. He used this imaginary situation to show them that they were wrong to judge him for healing people on the Sabbath.

## Hypothetical Situation in the Future

> **Unless those days are shortened, no flesh would be saved**. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:22 ULT)

Jesus was talking about a future time when very bad things would happen. He told what would happen if those days of trouble were to last a long time. He did this to show how bad those days will be—so bad that if they lasted a long time, no one would be saved. But then he clarified that God will shorten those days of trouble so that the elect (those he has chosen) will be saved.

## Expressing Emotion About a Hypothetical Situation

People sometimes talk about hypothetical situations in order to express regrets and wishes. Regrets are about the past and wishes are about the present and future.

> The Israelites said to them, "**If only we had died by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt when we were sitting by the pots of meat and were eating bread to the full.** For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill our whole community with hunger." (Exodus 16:3 ULT)

Here the Israelites were afraid that they would have to suffer and die of hunger in the wilderness, and so they wished that they had stayed in Egypt and died there with full stomachs. They were complaining, expressing regret that this had not happened.

> I know what you have done, and that you are neither cold nor hot. **I wish that you were either cold or hot!** (Revelation 3:15 ULT)

Jesus wished that the people were either hot or cold, but they are neither. He was rebuking them, expressing anger at this.

## Translation Strategies

Find out how people speaking your language show:

   • that something could have happened, but did not.
   • that something could be true now, but is not.
   • that something could happen in the future, but will not unless something changes.
   • that they wish for something, but it does not happen.
   • that they regret that something did not happen.

Use your language's ways of showing these kinds of things.

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

"

**Referenced in:** Haggai 2:12

# 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:** Haggai 1:3; Haggai 1:5; Haggai 1:7; Haggai 1:12; Haggai 2:4; Haggai 2:9; Haggai 2:10; Haggai 2:12; Haggai 2:15; Haggai 2:17; Haggai 2:18; Haggai 2:20; Haggai 2:22; Haggai 2:23

# Information Structure

## Description

Different languages arrange the parts of the sentence in different ways. In English, a sentence normally has the subject first, then the verb, then the object, then other modifiers, like this: Peter painted his house yesterday.

Many other languages normally put these things in a different order such as: Painted yesterday Peter his house.

> This page answers the question: *How do languages arrange the parts of a sentence?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Sentence Structure (UTA PDF)*

Although all languages have a normal order for parts of a sentence, this order can change depending on what information the speaker or writer considers to be the most important.

Suppose that someone is answering the question, "What did Peter paint yesterday?" The person asking the question already knows all of the information in our sentence above except for the object, "his house." Therefore, that becomes the most important part of the information, and a person answering in English might say "His house is what Peter painted (yesterday)."

This puts the most important information first, which is normal for English. Many Other Languages would normally put the most important information last. In the flow of a text, the most important information is usually what the writer considers to be new information for the reader. In some languages the new information comes first, and in others it comes last.

## Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Different languages arrange the parts of a sentence in different ways. If you (the translator) copy the order of the parts of a sentence from the source, it may not make sense in your language.
- Different languages put important or new information in different places in the sentence. If you keep the important or new information in the same place that it had in the source language, it may be confusing or give the wrong message in your language.

## Examples From the Bible

> They all ate until they were satisfied. (Mark 6:42 ULT)

The parts of this sentence were in a different order in the original Greek source language. They were like this: And they ate all and they were satisfied.

In English, this means that the people ate everything. But the next verse says that they took up twelve baskets full of leftover pieces of food. In order for this to not be so confusing, the translators of the ULT put the parts of the sentence in the right order for English.

> And the day began to end, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so that, going into the surrounding villages and countryside, they may find lodging and food, because we are here in an desolate place." (Luke 9:12 ULT)

In this verse, what the disciples say to Jesus puts the important information first, that he should send the crowd away. In languages that put the important information last, people would understand that the reason that they gave, being in an isolated place, is the most important part of their message to Jesus. They might then think that the disciples are afraid of the spirits in that place, and that sending the people to buy food is a way to protect them from the spirits. That is the wrong message.

> Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers treated the false prophets in the same way. (Luke 6:26 ULT)

In this verse, the most important part of the information is first, that "woe" is coming on the people for what they are doing. The reason that supports that warning comes last. This could be confusing for people who expect the important information to come last.

## Translation Strategies

(1) Study how your language arranges the parts of a sentence, and use that order in your translation.
(2) Study where your language puts the new or important information, and rearrange the order of information so that it follows the way it is done in your language.

## Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Study how your language arranges the parts of a sentence, and use that order in your translation.

This is the verse in the original Greek order:

> And he went out from there and came to the hometown his, and they followed him the disciples his. (Mark 6:1)

The ULT has put this into the normal order for English:

> Now Jesus went out from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. (Mark 6:1 ULT)

(2) Study where your language puts the new or important information and rearrange the order of information so that it follows the way it is done in your language.

> And the day began to end, and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away so that, going into the surrounding villages and countryside, they may find lodging and food, because we are here in a desolate place." (Luke 9:12 ULT)

If your language puts the important information last, you can change the order of the verse.

> > Now the day was about to come to an end, and the twelve came to him and said, "Because we are here in an desolate place, send the crowd away that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and food."

> Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets. (Luke 6:26 ULT)

If your language puts the important information last, you can change the order of the verse.

> > When all men speak well of you, which is just as people's ancestors treated the false prophets, then woe to you!

"

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Word Order (UTA PDF)*
*Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (UTA PDF)*

**Referenced in:** Introduction to Haggai

# 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:** Haggai 1:11

# Merism

## Definition

Merism is a figure of speech in which a person refers to something by speaking of two extreme parts of it. By referring to the extreme parts, the speaker intends to include also everything in between those parts.

> This page answers the question: *What does the word merism mean and how can I translate phrases that have it?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Figures of Speech* (UTA PDF)

> "I am **the alpha and the omega**," says the Lord God, "the one who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8 ULT)

> I am **the alpha and the omega**, **the first and the last**, **the beginning and the end**. (Revelation 22:13, ULT)

**Alpha and omega** are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This is a merism that includes everything from the beginning to the end. It means eternal.

> … I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth** …, (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

**Heaven and earth** is a merism that includes everything that exists.

## Reason This is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not use merism. The readers of those languages may think that the phrase only applies to the items mentioned. They may not realize that it refers to those two things and everything in between.

## Examples From the Bible

> **From the rising of the sun to its setting**, Yahweh's name should be praised. (Psalm 113:3 ULT)

This bolded phrase is a merism because it speaks of the east and the west and everywhere in between. It means "everywhere."

> He will bless those who honor him, both **young and old**. (Psalm 115:13)

The bolded phrase is merism because it speaks of old people and young people and everyone in between. It means "everyone."

## Translation Strategies

If the merism would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

(1) Identify what the merism refers to without mentioning the parts.
(2) Identify what the merism refers to and include the parts.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Identify what the merism refers to without mentioning the parts.

> I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth**. (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

> > I praise you, Father, Lord of **everything**.

> **From the rising of the sun to its setting**, Yahweh's name should be praised. (Psalm 113:3 ULT)

> > **In all places**, people should praise Yahweh's name.

(2) Identify what the merism refers to and include the parts.

> I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth**. (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

> > I praise you, Father, Lord of **everything, including both what is in heaven and what is on earth**.

> He will bless those who honor him, both **young and old**. (Psalm 115:13 ULT)

> > He will bless **all those** who honor him, regardless of whether they are **young or old**.

"

**Referenced in:** Haggai 2:6; Haggai 2:21; Haggai 2:22

# 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:** Haggai 1:2; Haggai 1:5; Haggai 1:6; Haggai 1:9; Haggai 1:14; Haggai 2:6; Haggai 2:7; Haggai 2:9; Haggai 2:21; Haggai 2:22

# 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:** Haggai 1:1; Haggai 1:11; Haggai 1:12; Haggai 2:3; Haggai 2:5; Haggai 2:14; Haggai 2:22

# Nominal Adjectives

## Description

In some languages an adjective can be used to refer to a class of things that the adjective describes. When it does, it acts like a noun. For example, the word "rich" is an adjective. Here are two sentences that show that "rich" is an adjective.

> This page answers the question: *How do I translate adjectives that act like nouns?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Parts of Speech (UTA PDF)*

> **The rich man** had huge numbers of flocks and herds. (2 Samuel 12:2 ULT)

The adjective "rich" comes before the word "man" and describes "man."

> **He will not be rich**; his wealth will not last. (Job 15:29a ULT)

The adjective "rich" comes after the verb "be" and describes "He."

Here is a sentence that shows that "rich" can also function as a noun.

> **The rich** must not give more than the half shekel, and **the poor** must not give less. (Exodus 30:15b ULT)

In Exodus 30:15, the word "rich" acts as a noun in the phrase "the rich," and it refers to rich people. The word "poor" also acts as a noun and refers to poor people.

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Many times in the Bible adjectives are used as nouns to describe a group of people.
- Some languages do not use adjectives in this way.
- Readers of these languages may think that the text is talking about one particular person when it is really talking about the group of people whom the adjective describes.

## Examples From the Bible

> The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)

"The righteous" here are people who are righteous, not one particular righteous person.

> Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)

"The meek" here are all people who are meek, not one particular meek person.

## Translation Strategies

If your language uses adjectives as nouns to refer to a class of people, consider using the adjectives in this way. If it would sound strange, or if the meaning would be unclear or wrong, here is another option:

(1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)

> The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **righteous people**.

Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)

> Blessed are **people who are meek**.

"

**Referenced in:** Haggai 2:13

# Ordinal Numbers

## Description

Ordinal numbers are used in the Bible mainly to tell the position of something in a list.

> And God has indeed appointed some in the church, **first** apostles, **second** prophets, **third** teachers, then miracles. (1 Corinthians 12:28a ULT)

This is a list of workers that God gave to the church in their order.

## Ordinal Numbers in English

Most ordinal numbers in English simply have "-th" added to the end.

| Numeral | Number | Ordinal Number |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 4 | four | fourth |
| 10 | ten | tenth |
| 100 | one hundred | one hundredth |
| 1,000 | one thousand | one thousandth |

Some ordinal numbers in English do not follow that pattern.

| Numeral | Number | Ordinal Number |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | one | first |
| 2 | two | second |
| 3 | three | third |
| 5 | five | fifth |
| 12 | twelve | twelfth |

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not have special numbers for showing the order of items in a list. There are different ways to deal with this.

## Examples From the Bible

> The **first** lot went to Jehoiarib, the **second** to Jedaiah, the **third** to Harim, the **fourth** to Seorim … the **twenty-third** to Delaiah, and the **twenty-fourth** to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

The people cast lots and one went to each of these people in the order given.

> You must place in it four rows of precious stones. The **first** row must have a ruby, a topaz, and a garnet. The **second** row must have an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. The **third** row

> must have a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst. The **fourth** row must have a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper. They must be mounted in gold settings. (Exodus 28:17-20 ULT)

This describes four rows of stones. The first row is probably the top row, and the fourth row is probably the bottom row.

## Translation Strategies

If your language has ordinal numbers and using them would give the right meaning, consider using them. If not, here are some strategies to consider:

(1) Use "one" with the first item and "another" or "the next" with the rest.
(2) Tell the total number of items and then list them or the things associated with them.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Tell the total number of items, and use "one" with the first item and "another" or "the next" with the rest.

> The first lot went to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim … the twenty-third to Delaiah, and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

>> There were **24** lots. **One lot** went to Jehoiarib, **another** to Jedaiah, **another** to Harim … **another** to Delaiah, **and the last** went to Maaziah.

>> There were **24** lots. **One lot** went to Jehoiarib, **the next** to Jedaiah, **the next** to Harim … **the next** to Delaiah, **and the last** went to Maaziah.

> A river went out of Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became **four** rivers. The name of **the first** is Pishon. It is the one which flows throughout the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. There is also bdellium and the onyx stone there. The name of **the second** river is Gihon. This one flows throughout the whole land of Cush. The name of **the third** river is Tigris, which flows east of Asshur. **The fourth** river is the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14 ULT)

>> A river went out of Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became **four** rivers. The name of **one** is Pishon. It is the one which flows throughout the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. There is also bdellium and the onyx stone there. The name of **the next** river is Gihon. This one flows throughout the whole land of Cush. The name of **the next** river is Tigris, which flows east of Asshur. The **last** river is the Euphrates.

(2) Tell the total number of items and then list them or the things associated with them.

> The **first** lot went to Jehoiarib, the **second** to Jedaiah, the **third** to Harim, the **fourth** to Seorim … the **twenty-third** to Delaiah, and the **twenty-fourth** to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

>> They cast **24** lots. The lots went to Jerhoiarib, Jedaiah, Harim, Seorim … Delaiah, and Maaziah.

---

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Fractions (UTA PDF)*

---

**Referenced in:** Haggai 1:1; Haggai 1:15; Haggai 2:1; Haggai 2:10; Haggai 2:18; Haggai 2:20

# 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:** Haggai 1:10

# 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:** Haggai 2:13; Haggai 2:16

# Quote Markings

## Description

Some languages use quotation marks to mark off direct quotes from the rest of the text. English uses the mark " immediately before a quote and " immediately after it.

> • John said, "I do not know when I will arrive."

Quotation marks are not used with indirect quotes.

> • John said that he did not know when he would arrive.

When there are several layers of quotations inside of other quotations, it might be hard for readers to understand who is saying what. Alternating two kinds of quotation marks can help careful readers to keep track of them. In English, the outermost quotation has double quote marks, and the next quotation within it has single marks. If there is a third embedded quote, that quotation again has double quotation marks.

> • Mary said, "John said, 'I do not know when I will arrive.' "
> • Bob said, "Mary told me, 'John said, "I do not know when I will arrive." ' "

Some languages use other kinds of quotation marks: Here are some examples: ‚ ' ' „ " " ‹ › « » 7 — .

> This page answers the question: *How can quotes be marked, especially when there are quotes within quotes?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Direct and Indirect Quotations* *(UTA PDF)*

## Examples From the Bible

The examples below show the kind of quotation markings used in the ULT.

### A quotation with only one layer

A first layer direct quote has double quotation marks around it.

> So the king replied, "That is Elijah the Tishbite." (2 Kings 1:8b ULT)

### Quotations with two layers

A second layer direct quote has single quotation marks around it. We have printed it and the phrase in bold type for you to see them clearly.

> They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, **'Pick it up and walk'**?" (John 5:12 ULT)

> He sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you. As you enter, you will find a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. If any one asks you, **'Why are you untying it?'** you will say thus, **'The Lord has need of it.'**" (Luke 19:29b-31 ULT)

### A quotation with three layers

A third layer direct quote has double quotation marks around it. We have printed it in bold type for you to see them clearly.

> Abraham said, "Because I thought, 'Surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.' Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. When God caused me to leave my father's

> house and travel from place to place, I said to her, 'You must show me this faithfulness as my
> wife: At every place where we go, say about me, "**He is my brother**."'" (Genesis 20:11-13 ULT)

## A quotation with four layers

A fourth layer direct quote has single quotation marks around it. We have printed it in bold for you to see it clearly.

> They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you,
> and say to him, "Yahweh says this: **'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men
> to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the
> bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'** " ' " (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

## Quote Marking Strategies

Here are some ways you may be able to help readers see where each quote starts and ends so they can more
easily know who said what.

(1) Alternate two kinds of quote marks to show layers of direct quotation. English alternates double quote marks
and single quote marks.
(2) Translate one or some of the quotes as indirect quotes in order to use fewer quote marks, since indirect quotes
do not need them. (See Direct and Indirect Quotations.)
(3) If a quotation is very long and has many layers of quotation in it, indent the main overall quote, and use quote
marks only for the direct quotes inside of it.

## Examples of Quote Marking Strategies Applied

(1) Alternate two kinds of quotation marks to show layers of direct quotation as shown in the ULT text below.

> They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you,
> and say to him, "Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to
> consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to
> which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'"'" (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

(2) Translate one or more of the quotes as indirect quotes in order to use fewer quotation marks, since indirect
quotes do not need them. In English, the word "that" can introduce an indirect quote. In the example below,
everything after the word "that" is an indirect quote of what the messengers said to the king. Within that indirect
quote, there are some direct quotes marked with double and single quotation marks.

> They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you,
> and say to him, "Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to
> consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to
> which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'"'" (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)
>
> > They told him **that** a man came to meet them who said to them, "Go back
> > to the king who sent you, and say to him, 'Yahweh says this: "Is it because
> > there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the
> > god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which
> > you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die."'"

(3) If a quotation is very long and has many layers of quotation in it, indent the main overall quote, and use quote
marks only for the direct quotes inside of it.

> They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you,
> and say to him, "Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to
> consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to
> which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'"'" (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

They said to him,

> A man came to meet us who said to us, "Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, 'Yahweh says this: "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die."'"

"

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

**Referenced in:** Haggai 2:11

# Quotes within Quotes

## Description

A quotation may have a quote within it, and quotes that are inside of other quotes can also have quotes within them. When a quote has quotes within it, we say there are "layers" of quotation, and each of the quotes is a layer. When there are many layers of quotes inside of quotes, it can be hard for listeners and readers to know who is saying what. Some languages use a combination of direct quotes and indirect quotes to make it easier.

> This page answers the question: *What is a quote within a quote, and how can I help the readers understand who is saying what?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Direct and Indirect Quotations (UTA PDF)*

## Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

When there is a quote within a quote, the listener needs to know who the pronouns refer to. For example: if a quote that is inside a quote has the word "I," the listener needs to know whether "I" refers to the speaker of the inner quote or the outer quote.
Some languages make this clear by using different kinds of quotes when there are quotes within quotes. They may use direct quotes for some and indirect quotes for others.
Some languages do not use indirect quotes.

## Examples From the Bible

### A quotation with only one layer

> But Paul said, "I, however, was indeed born a citizen." (Acts 22:28b ULT)

### Quotations with two layers

> Jesus answered and said to them, "Be careful that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name. They will say, 'I am the Christ,' and will lead many astray." (Matthew 24:4-5 ULT)

The outermost layer is what Jesus said to his disciples. The second layer is what other people will say.

> Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king." (John 18:37b ULT)

The outermost layer is what Jesus said to Pilate. The second layer is what Pilate said about Jesus.

### A quotation with three layers

> Abraham said, "... I said to her, 'You must show me this faithfulness as my wife: At every place where we go, say about me, **"He is my brother."**'" (Genesis 20:11a, 13 ULT)

The outermost layer is what Abraham responded to Abimelech. The second layer is what Abraham had told his wife. The third layer is what he wanted his wife to say. (We have bolded the third layer.)

### A quotation with four layers

> They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Yahweh says this: **Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal- Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die."**'" (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

The outermost layer is what the messengers said to the king. The second layer is what the man who had met the messengers told them. The third is what that man wanted the messengers to say to the king. The fourth is what Yahweh said. (We have bolded the fourth layer.)

## Translation Strategies

Some languages use only direct quotes. Other languages use a combination of direct quotes and indirect quotes. In those languages it might sound strange and perhaps even be confusing if there are many layers of direct quotes.

(1) Translate all of the quotes as direct quotes.
(2) Translate one or some of the quotes as indirect quotes. (See Direct and Indirect Quotations.)

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate all of the quotes as direct quotes. In the example below we have bolded the indirect quotes in the ULT and the quotes that we have changed to direct quotes below it.

> Festus presented to the king the things concerning Paul, saying, "There is a certain man was left here as a prisoner by Felix. So I am uncertain about the things concerning this matter. I asked **if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there to be judged concerning these things**. But when Paul appealed **to keep him in custody for the decision of the emperor**, I ordered him **to be held in custody until when I could send him to Caesar**." (Acts 25:14b, 20-21 ULT)

>> Festus presented Paul's case to the king. He said, "A certain man was left behind here by Felix as a prisoner. I was uncertain about the things concerning this matter. I asked him, **'Will you go to Jerusalem to be judged there concerning these things?'** But when Paul said, **'I want to be kept in custody for the emperor's decision,'** I told the guard, **'Keep him in custody until when I can send him to Caesar.'"**

(2) Translate one or some of the quotes as indirect quotes. In English the word "that" can come before indirect quotes. It is bolded in the examples below. The pronouns that changed because of the indirect quote are also bolded.

> And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Speak to them and say, 'During the evenings you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be satisfied with bread. And you will know that I am Yahweh your God.'" (Exodus 16:11-12 ULT)

>> And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Tell them **that** during the evenings **they** will eat meat, and in the morning **they** will be satisfied with bread. And **they** will know that I am Yahweh **their** God.'"

> They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'"'" (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

>> They told him **that** a man had come to meet **them** who said to **them**, "Go back to the king who sent you, and tell him **that** Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'"

> *Quote Markings (UTA PDF)*

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *Quote Markings (UTA PDF)*

"

**Referenced in:**

# 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:** Haggai 1:4; Haggai 1:9; Haggai 2:3; Haggai 2:19

# Simile

## Description

A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. The simile focuses on a particular trait the two items have in common, and it includes the words "like," "as," or "than."

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

> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were troubled and discouraged, **like sheep not having a shepherd**. (Matthew 9:36)

Jesus compared the crowds of people to sheep without a shepherd. Sheep grow frightened when they do not have a good shepherd to lead them in safe places. The crowds were like that because they did not have good religious leaders.

> See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be as wise **as the serpents** and harmless **as the doves**. (Matthew 10:16 ULT)

Jesus compared his disciples to sheep and their enemies to wolves. Wolves attack sheep; Jesus' enemies would attack his disciples.

> For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

God's word is compared to a two-edged sword. A two-edged sword is a weapon that can easily cut through a person's flesh. God's word is very effective in showing what is in a person's heart and thoughts.

## Purposes of Simile

- A simile can teach about something that is unknown by showing how it is similar to something that is known.
- A simile can emphasize a particular trait, sometimes in a way that gets people's attention.
- Similes help form a picture in the mind or help the reader experience what he is reading about more fully.

## Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not know how the two items are similar.
- People may not be familiar with both of the items being compared.

## Examples From the Bible

> Suffer hardship with me, **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3 ULT)

In this simile, Paul compares suffering with what soldiers endure, and he encourages Timothy to follow their example.

> Just as the lightning flashing from a place under the sky shines to another place under the sky, so will the Son of Man be. (Luke 17:24b ULT)

This verse does not tell how the Son of Man will be like the lightning. But in context we can understand from the verses before it that just as lighting flashes suddenly and everyone can see it, the Son of Man will come suddenly and everyone will be able to see him. No one will have to be told about it.

## Translation Strategies

If people would understand the correct meaning of a simile, consider using it. If they would not, here are some strategies you can use:

(1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience. (2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote. (3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.

> See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves.** (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — This compares the danger that Jesus' disciples would be in with the danger that sheep are in when they are surrounded by wolves.
>
>> See, I send **you out among wicked people** and you will be in danger from them **as sheep are in danger when they are among wolves**.
>
> For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)
>
>> For the word of God is living and active and **more powerful than a very sharp two-edged sword**.

(2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.

> See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — If people do not know what sheep and wolves are, or that wolves kill and eat sheep, you could use some other animal that kills another.
>
>> See, I send you out **as chickens in the midst of wild dogs**.
>
> How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)
>
>> How often I wanted to gather your children together, **as a mother closely watches over her infants**, but you refused!
>
> If you have faith **as a grain of mustard** … (Matthew 17:20)
>
>> If you have faith even as small **as a tiny seed**,

(3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

> See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT)
>
>> See, I send you out among **people who will want to harm you**.
>
> How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

> > How often I wanted to **protect you**, but you refused!

"

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Metaphor* *(UTA PDF)*

*Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns* *(UTA PDF)*

**Referenced in:** Haggai 2:23

# 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

*Metonymy (UTA PDF)*

*Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies (UTA PDF)*

Next we recommend you learn about:                          "

*Metonymy (UTA PDF)*

*Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies (UTA PDF)*

**Referenced in:** Haggai 1:1; Haggai 1:11; Haggai 1:12; Haggai 1:14; Haggai 2:1; Haggai 2:14; Haggai 2:15; Haggai 2:17

# 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:** Haggai 2:23

# 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:** Haggai 1:9

# Contributors

## unfoldingWord® Translation Notes Contributors

Door43 World Missions Community
Aaron Fenlason
Abner Bauman
Adam Van Goor
Alan Bird
Alan Borkenhagen
Alfred Van Dellen
Alice Wright
Allen Bair
Allyson Presswood Nance
Amanda Adams
Andrew Belcher
Andrew Johnson
Andrew Rice
Angelo Palo
Anita Moreau
April Linton
Aurora Lee
Barbara Summers
Barbara White
Becky Hancock
Beryl Carpenter
Bethany Fenlason
Betty Forbes
Bianca Elliott
Bill Cleveland
Bill Pruett
Bob Britting
Bram van den Heuvel
Brian Metzger
Bruce Bridges
Bruce Collier
Bruce Smith
Caleb Worgess
Carlyle Kilmore
Carol Pace
Carol Heim
Caroline Crawford
Caroline Fleming
Caroline S Wong
Carol Lee
Carol Moyer
Carolyn Lafferty
Catherine C Newton
Charese Jackson
Charlotte Gibson
Charlotte Hobbs

Cheryl A Chojnacki
Cheryl Stieben
Cheryl Warren
Christian Berry
Christine Harrison
Clairmene Pascal
Connie Bryan
Connie Goss
Craig Balden
Craig Lins
Craig Scott
Cynthia J Puckett
Dale Hahs
Dale Masser
Daniel Lauk
Daniel Summers
Darlene M Hopkins
Darlene Silas
David Boerschlein
David F Withee
David Glover
David J Forbes
David Mullen
David N Hanley
David Sandlin
David Shortess
David Smith
David Whisler
Debbie Nispel
Debbie Piper
Deborah Bartow
Deborah Bush
Deborah Miniard
Dennis Jackson
Dianne Forrest
Donna Borkenhagen
Donna Mullis
Douglas Hayes
Drew Curley
Ed Davis
Edgar Navera
Edward Kosky
Edward Quigley
Elaine VanRegenmorter
Elizabeth Nataly Silvestre Herbas
Ellen Lee
Emeline Thermidor
Emily Lee
Esther Roman
Esther Trew
Esther Zirk
Ethel Lynn Baker
Evangeline Puen
Evelyn Wildgust
Fletcher Coleman

Freda Dibble
Gail Spell
Gary Greer
Gary Shogren
Gay Ellen Stulp
Gene Gossman
George Arlyn Briggs
Gerald L. Naughton
Glen Tallent
Grace Balwit
Grace Bird
Greg Stoffregen
Gretchen Stencil
Hallie Miller
Harry Harriss
Heather Hicks
Helen Morse
Hendrik deVries
Henry Bult
Henry Whitney
Hilary O'Sullivan
Ibrahim Audu
Ines Gipson
Irene J Dodson
Jackie Jones
Jacqueline Bartley
James Giddens
James Pedersen
James Pohlig
James Roe
Janet O'Herron
Janice Connor
Jaqueline Rotruck
Jeanette Friesen
Jeff Graf
Jeff Kennedy
Jeff Martin
Jennifer Cunneen
Jenny Thomas
Jerry Lund
Jessica Lauk
Jim Frederick
Jim Lee
Jimmy Warren
Jim Rotruck
Jim Swartzentruber
Jody Garcia
Joe Chater
Joel Bryan
Joey Howell
John Anderson
John Geddis
John D Rogers
John Hutchins
John Luton

John Pace
John P Tornifolio
Jolene Valeu
Jon Haahr
Joseph Fithian
Joseph Greene
Joseph Wharton
Joshua Berkowitz
Joshua Calhoun
Joshua Rister
Josh Wondra
Joy Anderson
Joyce Jacobs
Joyce Pedersen
JT Crowder
Judi Brodeen
Judith Cline
Judith C Yon
Julia N Bult
Patty Li
Julie Susanto
Kahar Barat
Kannahi Sellers
Kara Anderson
Karen Davie
Karen Dreesen
Karen Fabean
Karen Riecks
Karen Smith
Karen Turner
Kathleen Glover
Kathryn Hendrix
Kathy Mentink
Katrina Geurink
Kay Myers
Kelly Strong
Ken Haugh
Kim Puterbaugh
Kristin Butts Page
Kristin Rinne
Kwesi Opoku-debrah
Langston Spell
Larry Sallee
Lawrence Lipe
Lee Sipe
Leonard Smith
Lester Harper
Lia Hadley
Linda Buckman
Linda Dale Barton
Linda Havemeier
Linda Homer
Linda Lee Sebastien
Linn Peterson
Liz Dakota

Lloyd Box
Luis Keelin
Madeline Kilmore
Maggie D Paul
Marc Nelson
Mardi Welo
Margo Hoffman
Marilyn Cook
Marjean Swann
Marjorie Francis
Mark Albertini
Mark Chapman
Mark Thomas
Marselene Norton
Mary Jane Davis
Mary Jean Stout
Mary Landon
Mary Scarborough
Megan Kidwell
Melissa Roe
Merton Dibble
Meseret Abraham-Zemede
Michael Bush
Michael Connor
Michael Francis
Michael Geurink
Mike Tisdell
Mickey White
Miel Horrilleno
Monique Greer
Morgan Mellette
Morris Anderson
Nancy C. Naughton
Nancy Neu
Nancy VanCott
Neal Snook
Nicholas Scovil
Nick Dettman
Nils Friberg
Noah Crabtree
Pamela B Johnston
Pamela Nungesser
Pamela Roberts
Pam Gullifer
Pat Ankney
Pat Giddens
Patricia Brougher
Patricia Carson
Patricia Cleveland
Patricia Foster
Patricia Middlebrooks
Paul Mellema
Paula Carlson
Paula Oestreich
Paul Holloway

Paul Nungesser
Peggy Anderson
Peggyrose Swartzentruber
Peter Polloni
Phillip Harms
Phyllis Mortensen
Priscilla Enggren
Rachel Agheyisi
Rachel Ropp
Raif Turner
Ray Puen
Reina Y Mora
Rene Bahrenfuss
Renee Triplett
Rhonda Bartels
Richard Beatty
Richard Moreau
Richard Rutter
Richard Stevens
Rick Keaton
Robby Little
Robert W Johnson
Rochelle Hook
Rodney White
Rolaine Franz
Ronald D Hook
Rosario Baria
Roxann Carey
Roxanne Pittard
Ruben Michael Garay
Russell Isham
Russ Perry
Ruth Calo
Ruth E Withee
Ruth Montgomery
Ryan Blizek
Sam Todd
Samuel Njuguna
Sandy Anderson
Sandy Blanes
Sara Giesmann
Sara Van Cott (Barnes)
Sharon Johnson
Sharon Peterson
Sharon Shortess
Shelly Harms
Sherie Nelson
Sherman Sebastien
Sherry Mosher
Stacey Swanson
Steve Gibbs
Steve Mercier
Susan Langohr
Susan Quigley
Susan Snook

Suzanne Richards
Sylvia Thomas
Sze Suze Lau
Tabitha Price
Tammy L Enns
Tammy White
Teresa Everett-Leone
Teresa Linn
Terri Collins
Theresa Baker
Thomas Jopling
Thomas Nickell
Thomas Warren
Tim Coleman
Tim Ingram
Tim Linn
Tim Lovestrand
Tim Mentink
Tom Penry
Tom William Warren
Toni Shuma
Tracie Pogue
Tricia Coffman
Vicki Ivester
Victoria G DeKraker
Victor M Prieto
Vivian Kamph
Vivian Richardson
Ward Pyles
Warren Blaisdell
Wayne Homer
Wendy Coleman
Wendy Colon
Wilbur Zirk
Wil Gipson
William Carson
William Cline
William Dickerson
William Smitherman
William Wilder
Yvonne Tallent

## unfoldingWord® Literal Text Contributors

Nicholas Alsop
Scott Bayer
Larry T Brooks, M.Div., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary
Matt Carlton
George "Drew" Curley, M.Div., PhD, Professor of Biblical Languages
Dan Dennison
Jamie Duguid
Paul M Fahnestock, M.Div. Reformed Theological Seminary, D.Min. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Michael Francis
Laura Glassel, MA in Bible Translation
Jesse Griffin, BA Biblical Studies, MA Biblical Languages

Jesse Harris
C. Harry Harriss, M.Div.
Alrick G. Headley, M.Div., Th.M.
Bram van den Heuvel, M.A.
John Huffman
D. Allen Hutchison, MA in Old Testament, MA in New Testament
Jack Messarra
Gene Mullen
Adam W. Nagelvoort, M.Div. Academic Ministries, Columbia International University
Timothy Neu, Ph.D. Biblical Studies
Kristy Nickell
Tom Nickell
Elizabeth Oakes, BA in Religious Studies, Linguistics
Perry Oakes, PhD in Old Testament, MA in Linguistics
James N. Pohlig, M.Div., MA in Linguistics, D. Litt. in Biblical Languages
Ward Pyles, M.Div., Western Baptist Theological Seminary
Susan Quigley, MA in Linguistics
Dean Ropp
Joel D. Ruark, M.A.Th., Th.M., Ph.D. in Old Testament, University of Stellenbosch
Larry Sallee, Th.M Dallas Theological Seminary, D.Min. Columbia Biblical Seminary
Peter Smircich, BA Philosophy
Doug Smith, M.T.S., M.Div., Th.M., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Leonard Smith
Suzanna Smith
Tim Span
Dave Statezni, BA Orig langs., M.Div. Fuller Theological Seminary
Maria Tijerina
David Trombold, M. Div.
Aaron Valdizan, M.Div., Th.M. in Old Testament, The Masters Seminary
James Vigen
Hendrik "Henry" de Vries
Thomas Warren, M.Div., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, D.Min, Reformed Theological Seminary
Angela Westmoreland, M.A. in Theological Studies (Biblical Language track)
Henry Whitney, BA Linguistics
Benjamin Wright, MA Applied Linguistics, Dallas International University
Grant Ailie, BA Biblical Studies, M.Div.
Door43 World Missions Community

## unfoldingWord® Simplified Text Contributors

Nicholas Alsop
Larry T Brooks, M.Div., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary
Matt Carlton
George "Drew" Curley, M.Div., PhD, Professor of Biblical Languages
Paul M Fahnestock, M.Div. Reformed Theological Seminary, D. Min. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Michael Francis
Laura Glassel, MA in Bible Translation
Kailey Gregory
Jesse Griffin, BA Biblical Studies, MA Biblical Languages
C. Harry Harriss, M.Div.
Alrick G. Headley, M.Div., Th.M.
Bram van den Heuvel, M.A.
John Huffman
D. Allen Hutchison, MA in Old Testament, MA in New Testament
Robert Hunt

Demsin Lachin
Jack Messarra
Gene Mullen
Adam W. Nagelvoort, M.Div. Academic Ministries, Columbia International University
Timothy Neu, Ph.D. Biblical Studies
Kristy Nickell
Tom Nickell
Elizabeth Oakes, BA in Religious Studies, Linguistics
Perry Oakes, PhD in Old Testament, MA in Linguistics
James N. Pohlig, M.Div., MA in Linguistics, D. Litt. in Biblical Languages
Ward Pyles, M.Div., Western Baptist Theological Seminary
Susan Quigley, MA in Linguistics
Dean Ropp
Joel D. Ruark, M.A.Th., Th.M., Ph.D. in Old Testament, University of Stellenbosch
Larry Sallee, Th.M Dallas Theological Seminary, D.Min. Columbia Biblical Seminary
Peter Smircich, BA Philosophy
Christopher Smith, M.A.T.S. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Ph.D. Boston College
Leonard Smith
Dave Statezni, BA Orig langs., M.Div. Fuller Theological Seminary
David Trombold, M. Div.
James Vigen
Hendrik � Henry� de Vries
Thomas Warren, M.Div., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, D.Min, Reformed Theological Seminary
Angela Westmoreland, M.A. in Theological Studies (Biblical Language track)
Henry Whitney, BA Linguistics
Benjamin Wright, MA Applied Linguistics, Dallas International University
Door43 World Missions Community

## unfoldingWord® Translation Academy Contributors

Jesse Griffin, BA in Biblical Studies, MA in Biblical Languages
Perry Oakes, PhD in Old Testament, MA in Linguistics, MA in Theology, BA in Biblical Studies
Susan Quigley, MA in Linguistics
Henry Whitney, BA in Linguistics
James N. Pohlig, M.Div., MA in Linguistics, D. Litt. in Biblical Languages
Ben Jore, BA Biblical Studies, M.Div.
Joel D. Ruark, PhD in Old Testament, MA in Theology
Todd L. Price, PhD in New Testament/Linguistics
Bev Staley
Carol Brinneman
Jody Garcia
Kara Anderson
Kim Puterbaugh
Lizz Carlton
Door43 World Missions Community

## unfoldingWord® Translation Words Contributors

Andrew Belcher
David Book
Jesse Griffin, BA Biblical Studies, MA Biblical Languages
Henry Whitney, Bible translator, Papua New Guinea, 1982-2000
Larry Sallee, Th.M Dallas Theological Seminary, D.Min. Columbia Biblical Seminary
Lizz Carlton

Jan Zanutto
Matthew Latham
Perry Oakes, PhD in Old Testament, MA in Linguistics
Richard Joki
Door43 World Missions Community

## unfoldingWord® Translation Words Links Contributors

Door43 World Missions Community
Jesse Griffin (BA Biblical Studies, Liberty University; MA Biblical Languages, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary)
Perry Oakes (BA Biblical Studies, Taylor University; MA Theology, Fuller Seminary; MA Linguistics, University of
    Texas at Arlington; PhD Old Testament, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary)
Larry Sallee (Th.M Dallas Theological Seminary, D.Min. Columbia Biblical Seminary)
Joel D. Ruark (M.A.Th. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; Th.M. Stellenbosch University; Ph.D. Candidate in Old
    Testament Studies, Stellenbosch University)