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Zephaniah

Version 77

[en]

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Zephaniah

Introduction to Zephaniah

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of the Book of Zephaniah

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What is the Book of Zephaniah about?

Zechariah warned Judah and other nations that Yahweh was about to punish them. He also prophesied about how Yahweh would restore Judah. (See: **day of the Lord, day of Yahweh (p.111)**)

How should the title of this book be translated?

The traditional name of this book is "The Book of Zephaniah" or just "Zephaniah." Translators may decide to call it "The Sayings of Zephaniah." (See: **How to Translate Names (p.82)**)

Who wrote the Book of Zephaniah?

Zephaniah wrote this book. But four different Old Testament people have the name Zephaniah. This Zephaniah was probably the great-grandson of King Hezekiah and a cousin to King Josiah. Zephaniah lived in the city of Jerusalem. He began to prophesy about seventy years after the prophets Isaiah and Micah. Zephaniah spoke Yahweh's messages during the reign of King Josiah (about 640–621 B.C.), and just before Jeremiah began to prophesy.

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

Were the people of Judah faithful to Yahweh at the time Zephaniah started to prophesy?

Manasseh, the grandfather of Josiah, had been one of the worst kings of Judah. He led the people to worship other gods. After his death, his son Amon ruled for only two years before he was killed. Amon's son Josiah became king when he was eight years old. Josiah learned to worship and honor Yahweh. Zephaniah likely began his work after Josiah had destroyed most of the idols and shrines of false gods in Judah. (See: **god, false god, goddess, idol, idolater, idolatrous, idolatry (p.112)**)

What country is coming to invade Judah?

Zephaniah often said a foreign nation would invade the kingdom of Judah. Zephaniah probably meant Babylonia. However, the Book of Zephaniah never names this nation.

Zephaniah 1

Zephaniah 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetic song in 1:2-18.

Special concepts in this chapter

Prophecy

In this chapter, it is unclear whether these prophecies concern the fall of Jerusalem, the coming of the Messiah or the day of the Lord. It is possible that the prophecies reference more than one period of time. (See: [[rc:///*tw/dict/ bible/kt/prophet]] and [[rc:///*tw/dict/bible/kt/christ]] and **day of the Lord, day of Yahweh (p.111)**)

Zephaniah 1:1

General Information:

General Information:

Verses 1:2-18 refer to Yahweh's judgment. Verses 1:2-3 describe Yahweh's final judgment of every sinner in the future.

the word of Yahweh that came

This idiom is used to introduce a special message from God. Alternate translation: "Yahweh gave a message" or "Yahweh spoke this message" (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

Yahweh

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

son of Gedaliah son of Amariah son of Hezekiah

This is a list of Zephaniah's ancestors. These usages of "son of" are the broader sense of "descendant of." Here "Hezekiah" refers to King Hezekiah. These things can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "the grandson of Gedaliah, and the great-grandson of Amariah, whose father was King Hezekiah" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**)

Zephaniah 1:2

I will utterly destroy everything from off the surface of the earth

The words "everything" and "will cut off man" are deliberate exaggerations by Yahweh to express his anger at the people's sin. Yahweh will destroy neither sinners who repent nor all living things. (See: **Hyperbole (p.86)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.86)**)

destroy everything from off the surface of the earth

Alternate translation: "destroy everything that is on the entire earth"

this is Yahweh's declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Alternate translation: "this is what Yahweh has declared" or "this is what I, Yahweh, have declared" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**) (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**)

Zephaniah 1:3

I will cut off man from the surface of the earth

"I will kill all people." This is a hyperbole, as in Zephaniah 1:2.

man and beast

Alternate translation: "people and animals"

the ruins

This could mean: (1) the piles of rubble that will remain after the judgment or (2) the idols that Yahweh destroyed.

cut off

Destroying is spoken of as if it were cutting something off from what it was a part of. Alternate translation: "destroy" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 1:4

General Information:

General Information:

Verses 1:2-18 refer to Yahweh's judgment. Verses 1:4-16 describe Yahweh's judgment on the people of Judah.

I will reach out with my hand over Judah

This is an idiom that means God will punish. Alternate translation: "I will punish Judah" (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

I will cut off every remnant & the names of the idolatrous people among the priests

The verb "cut off" applies to each of these phrases, but has been used only once to avoid repetition. Alternate translation: "I will cut off every remnant … I will cut off the names of the idolatrous people among the priests" (See: **Ellipsis (p.77)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.77)**)

cut off

Destroying is spoken of as if it were cutting something off from what it was a part of. See how you translated this in Zephaniah 1:3. Alternate translation: "destroy" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

cut off & the names of the idolatrous people among the priests

Here "cut off … the names" is an idiom that means to cause people to forget them. Alternate translation: "cause everyone … to forget the priests who are idolatrous" (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

Zephaniah 1:5

the people who on the housetops & the people who worship and swear

The verb "cut off" (Zechariah 1:4) applies to these phrases, but has been used only once to avoid repetition. Alternate translation: "I will cut off the people who on the housetops … I will cut off the people who worship and swear" (See: **Ellipsis (p.77)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.77)**)

by their king

See the footnote about the possible rendering of this as "by Milcom."

Zephaniah 1:6

neither seek Yahweh nor ask for his guidance

Seeking **Yahweh** could mean: (1) asking God for help or (2) thinking about God and obeying him. Alternate translation: "do not think about Yahweh or ask him to guide them" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 1:7

General Information:

General Information:

Verses 1:2-18 refer to Yahweh's judgment. Verses 1:4-16 describe Yahweh's judgment on the people of Judah.

Be silent

This is an idiom. Here silence is meant to signal shock and amazement. Alternate translation: "Be shocked" (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

Yahweh has prepared the sacrifice and set apart his guests

The people of Judah are spoken of as Yahweh's sacrifice, and the enemy nations are spoken of as his guests who would eat the sacrifice. This can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has prepared the people of Judah as a sacrifice, and invited the enemy nations as his guests" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-metaphor]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-explicit]]) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

set apart his guests

Here "set apart" is an idiom that means he has invited them. (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

Zephaniah 1:8

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 1:8-13, Yahweh is speaking. He alternates between using first person and speaking about himself in the third person. (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**) (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**)

It will come about

This phrase is used to mark the point at which Yahweh's judgment of Judah will begin.

everyone dressed in foreign clothes

This phrase suggests that the Israelites wore clothes similar to the foreigners to show sympathy to their customs and to the worship of their foreign gods. Alternate translation: "everyone who worships foreign gods" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 70)**)

Zephaniah 1:9

On that day

Alternate translation: "On the day of Yahweh"

all those who leap over the threshold

This could mean: (1) this is a reference to people who did not step on thresholds as part of their worship of a god called Dagan or (2) people who leapt up onto platforms to worship pagan idols or (3) royal officials who climbed the steps to the throne.

fill their master's house with violence and deceit

The abstract nouns "violence" and "deceit" can be stated as actions. Alternate translation: "those who do violent things and tell lies in the temples of their gods"

Zephaniah 1:10

General Information:

General Information:

Zephaniah 1:2-18 refers to Yahweh's judgment. Zephaniah 1:4-16 describes Yahweh's judgment on the people of Judah. In Zephaniah 1:8-13, Yahweh is speaking. He alternates between using first person and speaking about himself in the third person. (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**) (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**)

Fish Gate

The Fish Gate was one of the gates in the Jerusalem city wall.

wailing from the Second District

"Mourn loudly from the Second District." The Second District was a newer part of Jerusalem.

a great crashing sound

This refers to the sound of buildings collapsing. This can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "a loud sound of buildings collapsing" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**)

from the hills

This refers to the hills surrounding Jerusalem.

Zephaniah 1:11

for all the merchants will be ruined; all those who weigh out silver will be cut off

These two phrases refer to the same people and are used to emphasize that business will be destroyed. Alternate translation: "for those who buy and sell goods will be killed" (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**)

those who weigh out silver

This refers to merchants. Before coins were used, people weighed out silver or gold as payment for things they bought.

cut off

Destroying is spoken of as if it were cutting something off from what it was a part of. See how you translated this in Zephaniah 1:3. Alternate translation: "destroyed" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 1:12

General Information:

General Information:

Verses 1:2-18 refer to Yahweh's judgment. Verses 1:4-16 describe Yahweh's judgment on the people of Judah.

It will come about at that time

This phrase is used to mark the time when Jerusalem has been destroyed by the enemies.

I will search Jerusalem with lamps

Yahweh speaks of knowing about all people of Jerusalem as if he had searched for them with lamps. (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

settled into their wine

They feel safe from trouble. (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

say in their heart, 'Yahweh will not do anything, either good or evil.'

This direct quotation can be stated as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "say in their heart that Yahweh will not do anything, either good or evil.

say in their heart

This idiom means they think to themselves. (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

Yahweh will not do anything, either good or evil

Here "good and evil" is a merism that includes everything in between. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will not do anything at all" (See: **Merism (p.94)**) (See: **Merism (p.94)**)

Zephaniah 1:13

an abandoned devastation

Alternate translation: "destroyed and abandoned"

Zephaniah 1:14

General Information:

General Information:

Verses 1:2-18 refer to Yahweh's judgment. Verses 1:4-16 describe Yahweh's judgment on the people of Judah.

near, near and hurrying quickly

The repetition of the word "near," along with the phrase "hurrying quickly," emphasize that the day when Yahweh judges the people will soon happen. Alternate translation: "close and will be here soon" (See: **Doublet (p.75)**) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

the day of Yahweh

See how you translated this phrase in Zephaniah 1:7.

a warrior crying bitterly

This could mean: (1) a soldier crying in despair or (2) a soldier's battle cry.

Zephaniah 1:15

That day & a day

These phrases refer back to the "day of Yahweh" in Zephaniah 1:14.

a day of distress and anguish

The words "distress" and "anguish" mean about the same thing and emphasize the intensity of the people's distress. Alternate translation: "a day when people feel terrible distress" (See: **Doublet (p.75)**) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

a day of storm and devastation

Here the word "storm" refers to divine judgment. The word "devastation" describes the effects of that judgment. Alternate translation: "a day of devastating storms" or "a day of devastating judgment" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-doublet]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-metonymy]]) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

a day of darkness and gloom

The words "darkness" and "gloom" share similar meanings and emphasize the intensity of darkness. Both words refer to a time of disaster or divine judgment. Alternate translation: "a day that is full of darkness" or "a day of terrible judgment" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-doublet]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-metonymy]]) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

a day of clouds and thick darkness

This phrase means the same thing as, and intensifies, the idea of the previous phrase. Like that phrase, both "clouds" and "thick darkness" refer to divine judgment. Alternate translation: "a day full of dark storm clouds" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-doublet]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-metonymy]]) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

Zephaniah 1:16

a day of trumpets and alarms

The words "trumpets" and "alarms" mean basically the same thing here. Both are means to call soldiers to prepare for battle. Alternate translation: "a day when people sound the alarm for battle" (See: **Doublet (p.75)**) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

fortified cities and the high battlements

These two phrases both refer to military strongholds. Alternate translation: "well fortified cities" (See: **Doublet (p. 75)**) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

Zephaniah 1:17

General Information:

General Information:

Verses 1:2-18 refer to Yahweh's judgment. Verses 1:17-18 describe Yahweh's final judgment of every sinner in the future.

they will walk about like blind men

The result of Yahweh's judgment is that people will be so confused and dazed when they walk about that people will think they are blind. Alternate translation: "they will walk around as confused and dazed as blind men" (See: **Simile (p.107)**) (See: **Simile (p.107)**)

Their blood will be poured out like dust

Their blood that is shed will be as worthless as dust. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Their enemies will pour out their blood and consider it to be worthless" (See: **Simile (p.107)**) (See: **Simile (p.107)**)

their inner parts like dung

The verb "poured out" is understood here. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "their enemies will cut open their bodies and leave them to rot like dung" (See: **Simile (p.107)**) (See: **Simile (p.107)**)

Zephaniah 1:18

the fire of his jealousy

Here "fire" refers to the intensity of Yahweh's anger. This can be stated as a simile. Alternate translation: "his jealousy is as intense as a fire" (See: [[rc:///ta/man/translate/figs-metaphor]] and [[rc:///ta/man/translate/figs-simile]]) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

all the inhabitants of the earth

It is understood that this refers to the wicked people. This can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "all the wicked people who live on the earth" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**)

Zephaniah 2

Zephaniah 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetic song in 2:1-9, 12-15.

Special concepts in this chapter

Prophecy

In this chapter, because the prophesied destruction is so complete, it is unclear whether these prophecies concern the time near the fall of Jerusalem or the day of the Lord. It is possible that the prophecies reference more than one period of time. (See: [[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/prophet]] and [[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/christ]] and **day of the Lord, day of Yahweh (p.111)**)

Zephaniah 2:1

Rally yourselves together and gather

These two phrases mean the same thing. Together they intensify the command for the people to gather together in order to repent of their sins. Alternate translation: "Gather yourselves together" (See: **Doublet (p.75)**) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

Zephaniah 2:2

before the decree takes effect

This phrase refers to the punishment that will happen as a result of Yahweh's decree. Alternate translation: "before Yahweh punishes you" (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**)

that day

This phrase relates to the "day of Yahweh." Translate as you did similar phrases in Zephaniah 1:9.

that day passes like the chaff

The chaff is the insignificant part of the plant that the wind blows away. In a similar way, the day of judgment will pass quickly. Alternate translation: "that day passes as quickly as chaff blown by the wind" (See: **Simile (p.107)**) (See: **Simile (p.107)**)

before the fierce anger of Yahweh's wrath comes upon you, before the day of the wrath of Yahweh comes upon you

The prophet repeats the same phrase almost exactly in order to emphasize how terrible Yahweh's judgment will be and the urgency with which the people must repent. (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**)

Yahweh's wrath

This stands for God's intent to punish. Alternate translation: "Yahweh's punishment" (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**)

Zephaniah 2:3

Seek Yahweh

Seeking **Yahweh** could mean: (1) asking God for help or (2) thinking about God and obeying him. (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Seek righteousness. Seek humility

The abstract nouns "righteousness" and "humility" can be stated as actions. Alternate translation: "Try to do what is right and to be humble" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.65)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.65)**)

you will be protected in the day of Yahweh's wrath

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will protect you in the day of his wrath" (See: **Active or Passive (p.67)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.67)**)

Zephaniah 2:4

General Information:

General Information:

In 2:4-15, Yahweh announces his judgment on the nations that surround Judah.

Gaza & Ashkelon & Ashdod & Ekron

These were the four major Philistine cities of that day.

will be abandoned & will turn into a devastation

These two phrases mean the same thing and emphasize the complete destruction of these cities. (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**)

They will drive out Ashdod at noon

Here "They" refers to the enemies of the Philistines. Here, **at noon** could mean: (1) the enemies will defeat Ashdod before noon or (2) the enemies will attack Ashdod at noon while the people are resting and unaware.

they will uproot Ekron

The defeat of Ekron is spoken of as if it was a tree that was pulled from the ground and thrown away. Alternate translation: "they will take the people of Ekron away as if uprooting a tree" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 2:5

the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Kerethites

The first phrase explains where the Kerethites lived.

Canaan, land of the Philistines

The Philistines were one of several people groups who lived in Canaan.

until no inhabitant remains

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "until every inhabitant is dead"

Zephaniah 2:6

General Information:

General Information:

In 2:4-15, Yahweh announces his judgment on the nations that surround Judah.

So the seacoast will become pastures for shepherds and for sheep pens

This probably means that the Philistine cities are gone, and only open fields remain. However, the Hebrew meaning is unclear and is sometimes translated differently by modern versions.

sheep pens

A sheep pen is a small area surrounded by a fence to keep the sheep together.

Zephaniah 2:7

Their people

Alternate translation: "The people of Judah"

lie down

Alternate translation: "lie down to sleep"

Zephaniah 2:8

General Information:

General Information:

In 2:4-15, Yahweh announces his judgment on the nations that surround Judah.

the taunts & the reviling

"the taunts ... the insults." These two phrases mean the same thing and emphasize that both Moab and Ammon have insulted Yahweh. (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**)

violated their borders

This refers to crossing over into Judah's territory in order to attack them.

Zephaniah 2:9

as I live

"as surely as I am alive." Yahweh uses this expression to show that what he says next is certainly true. This is a way of making a solemn promise. Alternate translation: "I solemnly swear" (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Alternate translation: "this is what Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, has declared" or "this is what I, Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, have declared" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**) (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**)

like Sodom & like Gomorrah

These two cities were so wicked that God completely destroyed them with fire from heaven. These similes therefore refer to complete destruction. This can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "completely destroyed like Sodom … like Gomorrah" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-explicit]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-simile]]) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**)

a place of nettles and a salt pit

"a place with thorns and a salt pit." This describes a barren, useless land.

the remnant of my people & the remainder of my nation

These two phrases mean the same thing and refer to the Israelites that survived Yahweh's punishment. (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**)

Zephaniah 2:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Zephaniah 2:11

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Zephaniah 2:12

General Information:

General Information:

In 2:4-15, Yahweh announces his judgment on the nations that surround Judah.

You Cushites also will be pierced by my sword

Here "pieced by my sword" is a metonym for being killed in battle. Alternate translation: "I will kill you people of Cush in battle" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-metonymy]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-activepassive]]) (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**)

Zephaniah 2:13

God's hand

Here "hand" refers to power. Alternate translation: "God's power" (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Metonymy (p. 102)**)

an abandoned devastation

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **devastation**, you can express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "ruined and deserted" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.65)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.65)**)

as dry as the desert

This means it will be so dry that nothing will grow there. (See: **Simile (p.107)**) (See: **Simile (p.107)**)

Zephaniah 2:14

every animal of the nations

Alternate translation: "every kind of animal"

the screech owl

This term is uncertain. Some versions translate it as "hedgehog."

in the top of her columns

When buildings were destroyed and fell down, the columns used for decoration and support would often remain standing.

A call will sing out from the windows

Alternate translation: "A call will be heard from the windows"

beams

Beams are long and thick pieces of wood that are used to keep a building stable.

Zephaniah 2:15

General Information:

General Information:

In 2:4-15, Yahweh announces his judgment on the nations that surround Judah.

the exultant city

"the city that is proud of itself." This refers to the city of Nineveh, about whom Yahweh began to speak in Zephaniah 2:13.

said in her heart

This idiom means "said to herself" or "she thought." The city is spoken of as if it were a person that could speak. It represents the people who live in that city. (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-idiom]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-personification]] and **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

I am, and nothing is my equal

It may be necessary to supply an object for "I am." Alternate translation: "I am the greatest city, and no other city is equal to me" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**)

a horror

Alternate translation: "a horrible place to see"

hiss and shake his fist

A hiss is an angry sound. This phrase indicates extreme anger of the people toward Nineveh.

Zephaniah 3

Zephaniah 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetic song in 3:1-20.

Special concepts in this chapter

Prophecy

In this chapter, because the prophesied destruction is so complete, it is unclear whether these prophecies concern the time near the fall of Jerusalem or the day of the Lord. It is possible that the prophecies reference more than one period of time. (See: [[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/prophet]] and [[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/dayofthelord]])

Zephaniah 3:1

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:1-5, Zephaniah speaks Yahweh's message of judgment to the sinful people of Jerusalem. The city represents the people who live within it. To make this clear, it may be helpful to replace the singular "she" and "her" with the plural "they" and "their." (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**)

the rebellious city

The nature of their rebellion can be stated. Alternate translation: "the people of the city who have rebelled against God" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**)

The violent city is defiled

Alternate translation: "The people of the city have committed violence and so I consider them unclean"

Zephaniah 3:2

She has not listened to the voice of God

The voice is a metonym for what the speaker says with the voice, and listening is a metonym for obeying. Alternate translation: "She has not obeyed what God has said to her" (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**)

Zephaniah 3:3

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:1-5, Zephaniah speaks Yahweh's message of judgment to the sinful people of Jerusalem. The city represents the people who live within it. To make this clear, it may be helpful to replace the singular "she" and "her" with the plural "they" and "their." (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**)

Her princes are roaring lions in her midst

Lions roar to chase other animals away from the prey they have caught. The princes of Jerusalem are spoken of as if they were roaring lions who were keeping the prey for themselves. Alternate translation: "Jerusalem's royalty are as greedy as roaring lions" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Her judges are evening wolves who leave nothing to be gnawed upon in the morning

Wolves are especially hungry before they hunt at night. The judges are spoken of as if they were hungry wolves. Alternate translation: "Her judges are as greedy as hungry wolves that leave nothing for anyone else" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 3:4

Her prophets are insolent and treasonous men

Alternate translation: "Her prophets do not listen to anyone and cannot be trusted"

have profaned what is holy

Alternate translation: "have treated holy things with disrespect"

have done violence to the law

Alternate translation: "have broken the law"

Zephaniah 3:5

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:1-5, Zephaniah speaks Yahweh's message of judgment to the sinful people of Jerusalem.

Yahweh is righteous & He can do no wrong

These two phrases mean the same thing, and emphasize Yahweh's righteousness even among the wicked people in Jerusalem. (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**)

in her midst

Alternate translation: "among them"

Morning by morning

This idiom means "Every day" or "Day after day." (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

he will dispense his justice

Yahweh's just treatment of every person is spoken of as if he was handing out a commodity. Alternate translation: "he will treat people justly" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

It will not be hidden in the light

This uses a negative statement to emphasize the positive truth that Yahweh's justice is always visible. Alternate translation: "His justice is clearly shown to all" (See: **Litotes (p.92)**) (See: **Litotes (p.92)**)

know no shame

Alternate translation: "are not ashamed"

Zephaniah 3:6

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:6-7, Yahweh rebukes the people of Jerusalem because they did not learn from how he judged other sinful cities. It may be helpful to add "Yahweh says this:" to the beginning of verse 6 to make this explicit. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 70)**)

I have made their streets ruins, so that no one passes over them. Their cities are destroyed so that there is no man inhabiting them

These two sentences express the same idea in two different ways in order to emphasize the complete destruction of the cities. (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**)

no one passes over them

Alternate translation: "no one walks on them"

there is no man inhabiting them

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "all the people are dead"

Zephaniah 3:7

I said, 'Surely you will fear me & I have planned to do to you.'

This can be stated as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "I thought they would surely fear me and accept correction so that they would not be cut off from their homes by all that I have planned to do to them." (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.73)**) (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.73)**)

and do not be cut off from your homes

Here "cut off" is an idiom that means to be removed. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "so that I will not remove you from your homes" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-idiom]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-activepassive]]) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

by corrupting all their deeds

Alternate translation: "by doing deeds that were corrupt"

Zephaniah 3:8

General Information:

General Information:

In verse 3:8, Yahweh warns that he will judge all nations.

wait for me & until the day

This phrase implies that they are waiting for judgment.

this is Yahweh's declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Alternate translation: "this is what Yahweh has declared" or "this is what I, Yahweh, have declared" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**) (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.80)**)

I rise up to seize the prey

Yahweh's judgment on the nations is spoken of as if he was an hungry animal that attacked a smaller animal. Alternate translation: "I will rise up and destroy them as an animal seizes its prey" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms

These two phrases mean the same thing and emphasize that Yahweh will judge all of the nations. (See: **Doublet (p. 75)**) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

my anger—all of my burning wrath

The words "anger" and "burning wrath" mean basically the same thing and emphasize the intensity of Yahweh's anger. Alternate translation: "my very fierce wrath" (See: **Doublet (p.75)**) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

in the fire of my jealousy all the earth will be consumed

This phrase can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the fire of my jealousy will devour all the land" (See: **Active or Passive (p.67)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.67)**)

in the fire of my jealousy & consumed

Yahweh's jealousy is here spoken of as if it were fire that could consume something. This can be stated as a simile. Alternate translation: "my jealousy will consume all the earth as a fire" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-metaphor]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-simile]]) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 3:9

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:9-10, Yahweh says that he will renew the Gentiles after the judgment.

I will purify the lips of the peoples

Here "lips" refers to the ability to speak. Alternate translation: "I will cause the peoples to speak what is right" (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**)

call upon the name of Yahweh

This is an idiom that means they worship Yahweh. Alternate translation: "worship Yahweh" (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

serve him shoulder to shoulder

Here "shoulder to shoulder" is an idiom that means "side by side." (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

Zephaniah 3:10

beyond the river of Cush

This may refer to the area where Sudan is located today.

Zephaniah 3:11

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:11-13, Yahweh encourages the remnant of Israel who survive the judgment.

In that day & at that time

"When that happens … at that time." These phrases here refer to the time of peace and restoration that immediately follows the day of Yahweh.

will not be put to shame for all your deeds

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "will no longer be ashamed of all your deeds" (See: **Active or Passive (p.67)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.67)**)

those who celebrated your pride

Alternate translation: "all the people who are very proud"

Zephaniah 3:12

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:11-13, Yahweh encourages the remnant of Israel who survive the judgment.

they will find refuge in the name of Yahweh

Yahweh's protection of this remnant is spoke of as if he was a refuge or a fortress. Here "name of Yahweh" refers to his person. Alternate translation: "they will come to Yahweh and he will help them" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-metaphor]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-metonymy]]) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 3:13

The remnant of Israel

This refers to the "lowly and poor people" of Zephaniah 3:12.

commit injustice

Alternate translation: "do unjust things"

no deceitful tongue will be found in their mouth

Here "tongue … in their mouth" represents the things that the tongue enables the mouth to speak. They can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "none of them will speak deceitful things" or "they will not say deceitful things" (See: [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-activepassive]] and [[rc:///*ta/man/translate/figs-metonymy]]) (See: **Active or Passive (p.67)**)

they will graze and lie down

Yahweh speaks of his provision for the people of Israel as if they are a flock of sheep that grazes and rests in safety. (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 3:14

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:14-20, Zephaniah tells the remnant of Israel who survived the judgment that they should rejoice.

daughter of Zion & daughter of Jerusalem

Here "daughter" refers to all the people who lived in the city. (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

Be glad and rejoice

These two phrases mean the same thing and emphasize how happy they should be. Alternate translation: "Be very happy" (See: **Doublet (p.75)**) (See: **Doublet (p.75)**)

with all your heart

Here "heart" refers to the inner being of a person. Alternate translation: "with all your inner being" (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**)

Zephaniah 3:15

Yahweh has taken away your punishment

Here to "take away" punishment is an idiom that means to stop doing it. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has stopped punishing you" (See: **Idiom (p.90)**) (See: **Idiom (p.90)**)

You will never again fear evil

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **evil**, you can express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "You will no longer be afraid that people will harm you" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.65)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.65)**)

Zephaniah 3:16

In that day

"At that time" or "When this happens." This phrase here refers to the time of peace and restoration that immediately follows the day of Yahweh.

say to Jerusalem & Zion

The names of these cities here refer to the people who live in them. Alternate translation: "say to the people of Jerusalem … people of Zion" (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.102)**)

Do not let your hands falter

To feel weak or helpless is spoken of as if their hands became physically weak. Here "hands" represents the whole person. Alternate translation: "Do not become weak" (See: [[rc:///ta/man/translate/figs-metaphor]] and [[rc:///ta/man/translate/figs-synecdoche]]) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 3:17

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:14-20, Zephaniah tells the remnant of Israel who survived the judgment that they should rejoice.

a mighty one to save you

"he is mighty and will save you." Yahweh is spoken of as a mighty warrior. Alternate translation: "he is a mighty warrior and will give you victory" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

He will celebrate over you with joy & he will be glad over you with a shout for joy

These two phrases mean the same thing and are repeated to emphasize Yahweh's joy that the remnant is restored to him. (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**)

he will be silent over you in his love

This could mean: (1) "he will quiet you by his love for you" or (2) "he will renew you because he loves you."

Zephaniah 3:18

no longer bear any shame for it

Here shame is spoken of as if it was a heavy thing that a person had to carry. Alternate translation: "no longer be ashamed because of it" (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

Zephaniah 3:19

General Information:

General Information:

In verses 3:19-20, Yahweh speaks directly to the remnant of Israel who survived the judgment and tells them that they should rejoice.

Behold

This tells the reader to pay special attention to what follows. Alternate translation: "Look" or "Pay attention"

I am about to deal with all your oppressors

It is understood that "deal with" means to punish the oppressors. This can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "I will severely punish all those who oppressed you" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.70)**)

I will rescue the lame and gather up the outcast

Here the Israelites who suffered in exile are spoken of as if they were lame and outcast sheep. This can be stated as a simile. Alternate translation: "I will rescue and bring together the remnant of Israel who are like lame and outcast sheep" (See: [[rc:///ta/man/translate/figs-metaphor]] and [[rc:///ta/man/translate/figs-simile]]) (See: **Metaphor (p.96)**)

the lame

This refers to people or animals that cannot walk.

I will make them as praise

The full thought here is, "I will make them to be objects of praise," that is, "I will make them to be praised by others." (See: **Simile (p.107)**) (See: **Simile (p.107)**)

I will change their shame into renown

The abstract nouns "shame" and "renown" can be stated as actions. Alternate translation: "I will cause them to no longer be ashamed, but for people to respect them" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.65)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.65)**)

Zephaniah 3:20

At that time I will lead you; at that time I will gather you together

These two lines mean basically the same thing and imply that Yahweh will bring the exiled people back to their homeland. Alternate translation: "At that time I will gather you together and lead you home" (See: **Parallelism (p. 104)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.104)**)

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Version 77

Abstract Nouns

Description

Abstract nouns are nouns that refer to attitudes, qualities, events, or situations. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as happiness, weight, unity, friendship, health, and reason. This is a translation issue because some languages may express a certain idea with an abstract noun, while others would need a different way to express it.

> This page answers the question: *What are abstract nouns and how do I deal with them in my translation?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Parts of Speech* *(UTA PDF)*
> *Sentence Structure* *(UTA PDF)*

Remember that nouns are words that refer to a person, place, thing, or idea. Abstract nouns are the nouns that refer to ideas. These can be attitudes, qualities, events, situations, or even relationships between those ideas. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as joy, peace, creation, goodness, contentment, justice, truth, freedom, vengeance, slowness, length, weight, and many, many more.

Some languages, such as Biblical Greek and English, use abstract nouns a lot. They provide a way of giving names to actions or qualities. With names, people who speak these languages can talk about the concepts as though they were things. For example, in languages that use abstract nouns, people can say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sin." But some languages do not use abstract nouns very much. In these languages, speakers may not have the two abstract nouns "forgiveness" and "sin," but they would express the same meaning in other ways. For example, they would express, "I believe that God is willing to forgive people after they have sinned," by using verb phrases instead of nouns for those ideas.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible that you translate from may use abstract nouns to express certain ideas. Your language might not use abstract nouns for some of those ideas. Instead, it might use phrases to express those ideas. Those phrases will use other kinds of words such as adjectives, verbs, or adverbs to express the meaning of the abstract noun. For example, "What is its **weight**?" could be expressed as "How much does it **weigh**?" or "How **heavy** is it?"

Examples From the Bible

> From **childhood** you have known the sacred writings … (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)

The abstract noun "childhood" refers to when someone was a child.

> But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)

The abstract nouns "godliness" and "contentment" refer to being godly and content. The abstract noun "gain" refers to something that benefits or helps someone.

> Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)

The abstract noun "salvation" here refers to being saved.

> The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)

The abstract noun "slowness" refers to the lack of speed with which something is done.

> He will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)

The abstract noun "purposes" refers to the things that people want to do and the reasons they want to do them.

Translation Strategies

If an abstract noun would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun. Alternative translations are indented below the Scripture example.

> … from **childhood** you have known the sacred writings … (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)
>
> > Ever since **you were a child** you have known the sacred writings.
>
> But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)
>
> > But **being godly** and **content** is very **beneficial**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **are godly** and **content**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **honor and obey God** and when we are **happy with what we have**.
>
> Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)
>
> > Today the people in this house **have been saved** … Today God **has saved** the people in this house …
>
> The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be. (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)
>
> > The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **moving slowly** to be.
>
> He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)
>
> > He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal **the things that people want to do and the reasons that they want to do them**.

"

Referenced in:

Active or Passive

Some languages use both active and passive sentences. In active sentences, the subject does the action. In passive sentences, the subject is the one that receives the action. Here are some examples with their subjects bolded:

> 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)*

- 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.

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: Zephaniah 2:3; Zephaniah 3:8; Zephaniah 3:11; Zephaniah 3:13

Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

Assumed knowledge is whatever a speaker assumes his audience knows before he speaks and gives them some kind of information. The speaker does not give the audience this information because he believes that they already know it.

> This page answers the question: *How can I be sure that my translation communicates the assumed knowledge and implicit information along with the explicit information of the original message?*

When the speaker does give the audience information, he can do so in two ways. The speaker gives explicit information in what he states directly. Implicit Information is what the speaker does not state directly because he expects his audience to be able to learn it from other things he says.

Description

When someone speaks or writes, he has something specific that he wants people to know or do or think about. He normally states this directly. This is explicit information.

The speaker assumes that his audience already knows certain things that they will need to think about in order to understand this information. Normally he does not tell people these things, because they already know them. This is called assumed knowledge.

The speaker does not always directly state everything that he expects his audience to learn from what he says. Implicit information is information that he expects people to learn from what he says even though he does not state it directly.

Often, the audience understands this implicit information by combining what they already know (assumed knowledge) with the explicit information that the speaker tells them directly.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

All three kinds of information are part of the speaker's message. If one of these kinds of information is missing, then the audience will not understand the message. Because the target translation is in a language that is very different from the biblical languages and is made for an audience that lives in a very different time and place than the people in the Bible, many times the assumed knowledge or the implicit information is missing from the message. In other words, modern readers do not know everything that the original speakers and hearers in the Bible knew. When these things are important for understanding the message, it is helpful if you include this information in the text or in a footnote.

Examples From the Bible

> Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

Jesus did not say what foxes and birds use holes and nests for, because he assumed that the scribe would have known that foxes sleep in holes in the ground and birds sleep in their nests. This is **assumed knowledge**.

Jesus did not directly say here "I am the Son of Man" but, if the scribe did not already know it, then that fact would be **implicit information** that he could learn because Jesus referred to himself that way. Also, Jesus did not state explicitly that he travelled a lot and did not have a house that he slept in every night. That is **implicit information** that the scribe could learn when Jesus said that he had nowhere to lay his head.

> Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the mighty deeds had been done in **Tyre and Sidon** which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But

> I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the **day of judgment** than for you. (Matthew 11:21-22 ULT)

Jesus assumed that the people he was speaking to knew that Tyre and Sidon were very wicked, and that the day of judgment is a time when God will judge every person. Jesus also knew that the people he was talking to believed that they were good and did not need to repent. Jesus did not need to tell them these things. This is all **assumed knowledge**.

An important piece of **implicit information** here is that the people he was speaking to would be judged more severely than the people of Tyre and Sidon would be judged **because** they did not repent.

> Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands when they eat bread**. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

One of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating. People thought that in order to be righteous, they had to follow all the traditions of the elders. This was **assumed knowledge** that the Pharisees who were speaking to Jesus expected him to know. By saying this, they were accusing his disciples of not following the traditions, and thus not being righteous. This is **implicit information** that they wanted him to understand from what they said.

Translation Strategies

If readers have enough assumed knowledge to be able to understand the message, along with any important implicit information that goes with the explicit information, then it is good to leave that knowledge unstated and leave the implicit information implicit. If the readers do not understand the message because one of these is missing for them, then follow these strategies:

(1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.
(2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.

> Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the foxes slept in their holes and birds slept in their nests.

> > Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes to live in**, and the birds of the sky **have nests to live in**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head and sleep."

> It will be more tolerable for **Tyre and Sidon** at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the people of Tyre and Sidon were very, very wicked. This can be stated explicitly.

> > At the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for **those cities of Tyre and Sidon, whose people were very wicked**, than it will be for you. or At the day of judgment, It will be more tolerable for those **wicked cities, Tyre and Sidon,** than for you.

> Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands**
> when they eat bread. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that one of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating, which they must do to be righteous. It was not to remove germs from their hands to avoid sickness, as a modern reader might think.

> Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not
> go through the ceremonial handwashing ritual of righteousness** when
> they eat bread.

(2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

> Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to
> him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to
> lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

The implicit information is that Jesus himself is the Son of Man. Other implicit information is that if the scribe wanted to follow Jesus, then, like Jesus, he would have to live without a house.

> Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests,
> but **I, the Son of Man**, have **no home to rest in. If you want to follow
> me, you will live as I live**."

> It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22
> ULT)

The implicit information is that God would not only judge the people; he would punish them. This can be made explicit.

> At the day of judgment, God will **punish Tyre and Sidon**, cities whose
> people were very wicked, **less severely than he will punish you**. or: At
> the day of judgment, God will **punish you more severely** than Tyre and
> Sidon, cities whose people were very wicked.

Modern readers may not know some of the things that the people in the Bible and the people who first read it knew. This can make it hard for them to understand what a speaker or writer says, and to learn things that the speaker left implicit. Translators may need to state some things explicitly in the translation that the original speaker or writer left unstated or implicit.

> Next we recommend you learn about: "
>
> *Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit (UTA PDF)*

Referenced in: Zephaniah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:8; Zephaniah 1:10; Zephaniah 1:18; Zephaniah 2:9; Zephaniah 2:15; Zephaniah 3:1; Zephaniah 3:6; Zephaniah 3:19

Direct and Indirect Quotations

Description

There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotations and indirect quotations.

A direct quotation occurs when someone reports what another person said from the viewpoint of that original speaker. People usually expect that this kind of quotation will represent the original speaker's exact words. In the example below, John would have said "I" when referring to himself, so the narrator, who is reporting John's words, uses the word "I" in the quotation to refer to John. To show that these are John's exact words, many languages put the words between quotation marks: "".

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

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

Referenced in: Zephaniah 3:7

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: Zephaniah 1:14; Zephaniah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:16; Zephaniah 2:1; Zephaniah 3:8; Zephaniah 3:14

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.
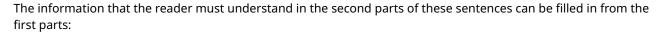
Examples From the Bible

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: Zephaniah 1:4; Zephaniah 1:5

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."

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)

Description

- First person — This is how a speaker normally refers to himself. English uses the pronouns "I" and "we." (Also: me, my, mine; us, our, ours)
- Second person — This is how a speaker normally refers to the person or people he is speaking to. English uses the pronoun "you." (Also: your, yours)
- Third person — This is how a speaker refers to someone else. English uses the pronouns "he," "she," "it," and "they." (Also: him, his, her, hers, its; them, their, theirs) Noun phrases like "the man" or "the woman" are also third person.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses the third person to refer to himself or to the people he is speaking to. Readers might think that the speaker was referring to someone else. They might not understand that he meant "I" or "you."

Examples From the Bible

Sometimes people used the third person instead of "I" or "me" to refer to themselves.

> But David said to Saul, "**Your servant** used to keep **his** father's sheep." (1 Samuel 17:34 ULT)

David referred to himself in the third person as "your servant" and used "his." He was calling himself Saul's servant in order to show his humility before Saul.

> Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, "... Do you have an arm like **God's**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?" (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)

God referred to himself in the third person with the words "God's" and "his." He did this to emphasize that he is God, and he is powerful.

Sometimes people use the third person instead of "you" or "your" to refer to the person or people they are speaking to.

> Abraham answered and said, "Look, I have undertaken to speak to my Lord, even though I am only dust and ashes!" (Genesis 18:27 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to the Lord, and referred to the Lord as "My Lord" rather than as "you." He did this to show his humility before God.

> So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)

After saying "each of you," Jesus used the third person "his" instead of "your."

Translation Strategies

If using the third person to mean "I" or "you" would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

(1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun "I" or "you."
(2) Simply use the first person ("I") or second person ("you") instead of the third person.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun "I" or "you."

> But David said to Saul, "**Your servant** used to keep **his** father's sheep." (1 Samuel 17:34)
>
>> But David said to Saul, "**I, your servant**, used to keep **my** father's sheep."

(2) Simply use the first person ("I") or second person ("you") instead of the third person.

> Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, "... Do you have an arm like **God's**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?" (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)
>
>> Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, "... Do you have an arm like **mine**? Can you thunder with a voice like **mine**?"

> So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)
>
>> So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **your** brother from your heart.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Forms of You (UTA PDF)

Referenced in: Zephaniah 1:2; Zephaniah 1:8; Zephaniah 1:10; Zephaniah 2:9; Zephaniah 3:8

How to Translate Names

Description

The Bible contains the names of many people, groups of people, and places. Some of these names may sound strange and be hard to say. Sometimes readers may not know what a name refers to, and sometimes they may need to understand what a name means. This page will help you see how you can translate these names and how you can help people understand what they need to know about them.

> This page answers the question: *How can I translate names that are new to my culture?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Translate Unknowns* *(UTA PDF)*

Meaning of names

Most names in the Bible have meaning. Most of the time, names in the Bible are used simply to identify the people and places they refer to, but sometimes the meaning of a name is especially important.

> For this **Melchizedek**, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, was the one who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him. (Hebrews 7:1 ULT)

Here the writer uses the name "Melchizedek" primarily to refer to a man who had that name, and the title "king of Salem" tells us that he ruled over a certain city.

> His name first indeed means "king of righteousness," and then also "king of Salem," that is, "king of peace." (Hebrews 7:2b ULT)

Here the writer explains the meanings of Melchizedek's name and title because those things tell us more about the person. Other times, the writer does not explain the meaning of a name because he expects the reader to already know the meaning. If the meaning of the name is important to understand the passage, you can include the meaning in the text or in a footnote.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the names in the Bible. They may not know whether a name refers to a person or place or something else.
- Readers may need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand the passage.
- Some names may have different sounds or combinations of sounds that are not used in your language or are unpleasant to say in your language. For strategies to address this problem, see Borrow Words.
- Some people and places in the Bible have two names. Readers may not realize that two names refer to the same person or place.

Examples From the Bible

> Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** … fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

Readers might not know that "Jordan" is the name of a river, "Jericho" is the name of a city, and "Amorites" is the name of a group of people.

> She said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?" Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

Readers may not understand the second sentence if they do not know that "Beer Lahai Roi" means "Well of the Living One who sees me."

> And she called his name **Moses** and she said, "For out of the water I drew him." (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

Readers may not understand why she said this if they do not know that the name Moses sounds like the Hebrew words "pull out."

> **Saul** was in agreement with his execution. (Acts 8:1a ULT)
>
> But when the apostles, Barnabas and **Paul**, heard of it, they tore their clothing. (Acts 14:14a ULT)

Readers may not know that the names Saul and Paul refer to the same person.

Translation Strategies

(1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.
(2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.
(3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.
(4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently.
(5) Or if a person or place has two different names, then use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.

> Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** … fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

> > You went over the **Jordan River** and came to the **city of Jericho**. The men of Jericho fought against you, along with **the tribe of the Amorites.**

> At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, "Leave and go away from here, because **Herod** wants to kill you." (Luke 13:31 ULT)

> > At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, "Go and leave here, because **King Herod** wants to kill you."

(2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.

> And she called his name **Moses** and she said, "For out of the water I drew him." (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

> > She called his name **Moses (which sounds like 'drawn out'),** and she said, "For out of the water I drew him."

(3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.

> She said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?" Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

>> She said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?"
>> Therefore, the well was called **Well of the Living One who sees me**.

(4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently. For example, Paul is called "Saul" before Acts 13 and "Paul" after Acts 13. You could translate his name as "Paul" all of the time, except in Acts 13:9 where it talks about him having both names.

> … a young man named **Saul**. (Acts 7:58b ULT)

>> … a young man named **Paul** 1

The footnote would look like:

>> [1] Most versions say "Saul" here, but most of the time in the Bible he is called "Paul."

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

> But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

>> But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

(5) Or if a person or place has two names, use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name. For example, you could write "Saul" where the source text has "Saul" and "Paul" where the source text has "Paul."

> a young man named **Saul** (Acts 7:58 ULT)

>> a young man named **Saul**

The footnote would look like:

>> [1] This is the same man who is called Paul beginning in Acts 13.

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

> But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

>> But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

Then after the story has explained the name change, you could translate this way.

> It came about in Iconium that **Paul** and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue (Acts 14:1 ULT)

>> It came about in Iconium that **Paul**[1] and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue

The footnote would look like:

>> [1] This is the same man who was called Saul before Acts 13.

"

Next we recommend you learn about:
Copy or Borrow Words *(UTA PDF)*

Referenced in: Introduction to Zephaniah

Hyperbole

Description

A speaker or writer can use exactly the same words to say something that he means as completely true, or as generally true, or as a hyperbole. This is why it can be hard to decide how to understand a statement. For example, the sentence below could mean three different things.

> This page answers the question: *What are hyperboles? What are generalizations? How can I translate them?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*

It rains here every night.

The speaker means this as literally true if he means that it really does rain here every night.
The speaker means this as a **generalization** if he means that it rains here most nights.
The speaker means this as a **hyperbole** if he wants to say that it rains more than it actually does, usually in order to express a strong attitude toward the amount or frequency of rain, such as being annoyed or being happy about it.

Hyperbole

In hyperbole, a figure of speech that uses exaggeration, a speaker deliberately describes something with an extreme or even unreal statement, usually to show his strong feeling or opinion about it. He expects people to understand that he is exaggerating.

> They will not leave **stone upon stone in you.** (Luke 19:44b ULT)

This is an exaggeration. It means that the enemies will completely destroy Jerusalem.

> Moses was educated in **all the wisdom of the Egyptians.** (Acts 7:22a ULT)

This hyperbole means that he had learned everything an Egyptian education could offer.

Generalization

This is a statement that is true most of the time or in most situations that it could apply to.

> The one who ignores instruction **will have poverty and shame,** but **honor will come** to him who learns from correction. (Proverbs 13:18)

These generalizations tell about what normally happens to people who ignore instruction and what normally happens to people who learn from correction. There may be some exceptions to these statements, but they are generally true.

> And when you pray, do not make useless repetitions as **the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.** (Matthew 6:7)

This generalization tells about what Gentiles were known for doing. Many Gentiles did this. It does not matter if a few did not. The point was that the hearers should not join in this well-known practice.

Even though a hyperbole or a generalization may have a strong-sounding word like "all," "always," "none," or "never," it does not necessarily mean **exactly** "all," "always," "none," or "never." It simply means "most," "most of the time," "hardly any," or "rarely."

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers need to be able to understand whether or not a statement is literally true.
If readers realize that a statement is not literally true, they need to be able to understand whether it is a hyperbole, a generalization, or a lie. (Though the Bible is completely true, it tells about people who did not always tell the truth.)

Examples From the Bible

Examples of Hyperbole

> If your hand causes you to stumble, **cut it off**. It is better for you to enter into life maimed …
> (Mark 9:43a ULT)

When Jesus said to cut off your hand, he meant that we should **do whatever extreme things** we need to do in order not to sin. He used this hyperbole to show how extremely important it is to try to stop sinning.

> The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel with 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and troops **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**. (1 Samuel 13:5a ULT)

The bolded phrase is an exaggeration for the purpose of expressing the emotion that the Philistine army was overwhelming in number. It means that there were **many, many** soldiers in the Philistine army.

> But as his anointing teaches you **everything** and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1 John 2:27b ULT)

This is a hyperbole. It expresses the assurance that God's Spirit teaches us about **all things that we need to know**. God's Spirit does not teach us about everything that it is possible to know.

> When they found him, they also said to him, "**Everyone** is looking for you." (Mark 1:37 ULT)

The disciples probably did not mean that everyone in the city was looking for Jesus, but that **many people** were looking for him, or that all of Jesus' closest friends there were looking for him. This is an exaggeration for the purpose of expressing the emotion that they and many others were worried about him.

Examples of Generalization

> Can **any good thing** come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46b ULT)

This rhetorical question is meant to express the generalization that there is nothing good in Nazareth. The people there had a reputation for being uneducated and not strictly religious. Of course, there were exceptions.

> One of them, of their own prophets, has said, "**Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy bellies**." (Titus 1:12 ULT)

This is a generalization that means that Cretans had a reputation to be like this because, in general, this is how Cretans behaved. It is possible that there were exceptions.

> **A lazy hand causes a person to be poor, but the hand of the diligent person gains riches.**
> (Proverbs 10:4 ULT)

This is generally true, and it reflects the experience of most people. It is possible that there are exceptions in some circumstances.

Caution

- Do not assume that something is an exaggeration just because it seems to be impossible. God does miraculous things.

> They saw Jesus **walking on the sea** and coming near the boat. (John 6:19b ULT)

This is not hyperbole. Jesus really walked on the water. It is a literal statement.

- Do not assume that the word "all" is always a generalization that means "most."

> Yahweh is righteous in **all** his ways and gracious in **all** he does. (Psalms 145:17 ULT)

Yahweh is always righteous. This is a completely true statement.

Translation Strategies

If the hyperbole or generalization would be natural and people would understand it and not think that it is a lie, consider using it. If not, here are other options.

(1) Express the meaning without the exaggeration.
(2) For a generalization, show that it is a generalization by using a phrase like "in general" or "in most cases."
(3) For a hyperbole or a generalization, add a word like "many" or "almost" to show that the hyperbole or generalization is not meant to be exact.
(4) For a hyperbole or a generalization that has a word like "all," "always," "none," or "never," consider deleting that word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Express the meaning without the exaggeration.

> The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and troops **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**. (1 Samuel 13:5a ULT)
>
>> The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and **a great number of troops**.

(2) For a generalization, show that it is a generalization by using a phrase like "in general" or "in most cases."

> **The one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame.** (Proverbs 13:18a ULT)
>
>> **In general,** the one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame

> When you pray, do not make useless repetitions as the **Gentiles do,** for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. (Matthew 6:7 ULT)
>
>> And when you pray, do not make useless repetitions as the Gentiles **generally** do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.

(3) For a hyperbole or a generalization, add a word like "many" or "almost" to show that the hyperbole or generalization is not meant to be exact.

> The **whole** country of Judea and **all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. (Mark 1:5a ULT)
>
>> **Almost all** the country of Judea and **almost all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. or:

> > **Many** of the country of Judea and **many** of the people of Jerusalem went
> > out to him.

(4) For a hyperbole or a generalization that has a word like "all," "always," "none," or "never," consider deleting that word.

> The **whole** country of Judea and **all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. (Mark 1:5a ULT)
>
> > The country of Judea and the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

"

Referenced in: Zephaniah 1:2

Idiom

An idiom is a figure of speech made up of a group of words that, as a whole, has a meaning that is different from what one would understand from the meanings of the individual words. Someone from outside of the culture usually cannot understand an idiom without someone inside the culture explaining its true meaning. Every language uses idioms. Some English examples are:

> 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: Zephaniah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:4; Zephaniah 1:7; Zephaniah 1:12; Zephaniah 2:9; Zephaniah 2:15; Zephaniah 3:5; Zephaniah 3:7; Zephaniah 3:9; Zephaniah 3:14; Zephaniah 3:15

Litotes

Description

Litotes is a figure of speech in which the speaker expresses a strong positive meaning by negating a word or phrase that means the opposite of the meaning that he intends. For example, someone could intend to communicate that something is extremely good by describing it as "not bad." The difference

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

between a litotes and a double negative is that a litotes heightens the positive meaning beyond what a plain positive statement would do, and a double negative does not. In the example above, the literal meaning of "not bad," taken as a plain double negative, would be "acceptable" or even "good." But if the speaker intended it as a litotes, then the meaning is "very good" or "extremely good."

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not use litotes. People who speak those languages might not understand that a statement using litotes actually strengthens the positive meaning. Instead, they might think that it weakens or even cancels the positive meaning.

Examples From the Bible

> For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was **not useless**, (1 Thessalonians 2:1 ULT)

By using litotes, Paul emphasized that his visit with them was **very** useful.

> Now when it became day, there was **no small disturbance** among the soldiers over what therefore had happened to Peter. (Acts 12:18 ULT)

By using litotes, Luke emphasized that there was a **lot** of excitement or anxiety among the soldiers about what happened to Peter. (Peter had been in prison, and even though there were soldiers guarding him, he escaped when an angel let him out. So they were very agitated.)

> But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are **not the least** among the leaders of Judah, for from you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. (Matthew 2:6 ULT)

By using litotes, the prophet emphasized that Bethlehem would be a **very important city**.

Translation Strategies

If the litotes would be understood correctly, consider using it.

(1) If the meaning with the negative would not be clear, give the **positive** meaning in a strong way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the meaning with the negative would not be clear, give the **positive** meaning in a strong way.

> For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was **not useless**. (1 Thessalonians 2:1 ULT)

>> "For you yourselves know, brothers, our visit to you **did much good**."

> Now when it became day, there was **no small disturbance** among the soldiers over what therefore had happened to Peter. (Acts 12:18 ULT)
>
> > "Now when it became day, there was **great excitement** among the soldiers, regarding what had happened to Peter."
> > or:
> > "Now when it became day, the soldiers were **very concerned** because of what had happened to Peter."

"

Referenced in: Zephaniah 3:5

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: Zephaniah 1:12

Metaphor

Description

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of one thing as if it were a different thing because he wants people to think about how those two things are alike.

For example, someone might say, "The girl I love is a red rose."

A girl and a rose are very different things, but the speaker considers that they are alike in some way. The hearer's task is to understand in what way they are alike.

> This page answers the question: *What is a metaphor and how can I translate a Bible passage that has one?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Figures of Speech (UTA PDF)*
> *Simile (UTA PDF)*

The Parts of a Metaphor

The example above shows us that a metaphor has three parts. In this metaphor, the speaker is talking about "the girl I love." This is the **Topic**. The speaker wants the hearer to think about what is similar between her and "a red rose." The red rose is the **Image** to which he compares the girl. Most probably, he wants the hearer to consider that they are both beautiful. This is the **Idea** that the girl and the rose both share, and so we may also call it the **Point of Comparison**.

Every metaphor has three parts:

- The **Topic**, the item being immediately discussed by the writer/speaker.
- The **Image**, the physical item (object, event, action, etc.) which the speaker uses to describe the topic.
- The **Idea**, the abstract concept or quality that the physical **Image** brings to the mind of the hearer when he thinks of how the **Image** and the **Topic** are similar. Often, the **Idea** of a metaphor is not explicitly stated in the Bible, but it is only implied from the context. The hearer or reader usually needs to think of the **Idea** himself.

Using these terms, we can say that a metaphor is a figure of speech that uses a physical **Image** to apply an abstract **Idea** to the speaker's **Topic**.

Usually, a writer or speaker uses a metaphor in order to express something about a **Topic**, with at least one **Point of Comparison** (**Idea**) between the **Topic** and the **Image**. Often in metaphors, the **Topic** and the **Image** are explicitly stated, but the **Idea** is only implied. The writer/speaker often uses a metaphor in order to invite the readers/listeners to think about the similarity between the **Topic** and the **Image** and to figure out for themselves the **Idea** that is being communicated.

Speakers often use metaphors in order to strengthen their message, to make their language more vivid, to express their feelings better, to say something that is hard to say in any other way, or to help people remember their message.

Sometimes speakers use metaphors that are very common in their language. However, sometimes speakers use metaphors that are uncommon, and even some metaphors that are unique. When a metaphor has become very common in a language, often it becomes a "passive" metaphor, in contrast to uncommon metaphors, which we describe as being "active." Passive metaphors and active metaphors each present a different kind of translation problem, which we will discuss below.

Passive Metaphors

A passive metaphor is a metaphor that has been used so much in the language that its speakers no longer regard it as one concept standing for another. Linguists often call these "dead metaphors." Passive metaphors are extremely common. Examples in English include the terms "table **leg**," "family **tree**," "book **leaf**" (meaning a page in

a book), or the word "crane" (meaning a large machine for lifting heavy loads). English speakers simply think of these words as having more than one meaning. Examples of passive metaphors in Biblical Hebrew include using the word "hand" to represent "power," using the word "face" to represent "presence," and speaking of emotions or moral qualities as if they were "clothing."

Patterned Pairs of Concepts Acting as Metaphors

Many ways of metaphorical speaking depend on pairs of concepts, where one underlying concept frequently stands for a different underlying concept. For example, in English, the direction "up" (the Image) often represents the concepts of "more" or "better" (the Idea). Because of this pair of underlying concepts, we can make sentences such as "The price of gasoline is going **up**," "A **highly** intelligent man," and also the opposite kind of idea: "The temperature is going **down**," and "I am feeling very **low**."

Patterned pairs of concepts are constantly used for metaphorical purposes in the world's languages because they serve as convenient ways to organize thought. In general, people like to speak of abstract qualities (such as power, presence, emotions, and moral qualities) as if they were body parts, or as if they were objects that could be seen or held, or as if they were events that could be watched as they happened.

When these metaphors are used in normal ways, it is rare that the speaker and audience regard them as figurative speech. Examples of metaphors in English that go unrecognized are:

  • "Turn the heat **up**." More is spoken of as up.
  • "Let us **go ahead** with our debate." Doing what was planned is spoken of as walking or advancing.
  • "You **defend** your theory well." Argument is spoken of as war.
  • "A **flow** of words." Words are spoken of as liquids.

English speakers do not view these as metaphorical expressions or figures of speech, so it would be wrong to translate them into other languages in a way that would lead people to pay special attention to them as figurative speech. For a description of important patterns of this kind of metaphor in biblical languages, please see Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns and the pages it will direct you to.

When translating something that is a passive metaphor into another language, do not treat it as a metaphor. Instead, just use the best expression for that thing or concept in the target language.

Active Metaphors

These are metaphors that people recognize as one concept standing for another concept, or one thing for another thing. Metaphors make people think about how the one thing is like the other thing, because in most ways the two things are very different. People also easily recognize these metaphors as giving strength and unusual qualities to the message. For this reason, people pay attention to these metaphors. For example,

> But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.
> (Malachi 4:2a ULT)

Here, God speaks about his salvation as if it were the sun rising in order to shine its rays on the people whom he loves. He also speaks of the sun's rays as if they were wings. Also, he speaks of these wings as if they were bringing medicine that would heal his people. Here is another example:

> And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox ..." (Luke 13:32a ULT)

Here, "that fox" refers to King Herod. The people listening to Jesus certainly understood that Jesus was intending for them to apply certain characteristics of a fox to Herod. They probably understood that Jesus intended to communicate that Herod was evil, either in a cunning way or as someone who was destructive, murderous, or who took things that did not belong to him, or all of these.

Active metaphors require the translator's special care to make a correct translation. To do so, you need to understand the parts of a metaphor and how they work together to produce meaning.

> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35 ULT)

In this metaphor, Jesus called himself the bread of life. The **Topic** is "I" (meaning Jesus himself) and the **Image** is "bread." Bread was the primary food that people ate in that place and time. The similarity between bread and Jesus is that people need both to live. Just as people need to eat food in order to have physical life, people need to trust in Jesus in order to have eternal life. The **Idea** of the metaphor is "life." In this case, Jesus stated the central Idea of the metaphor, but often the Idea is only implied.

Purposes of Metaphor

- One purpose of metaphor is to teach people about something that they do not know (the **Topic**) by showing that it is like something that they already do know (the **Image**).
- Another purpose is to emphasize that something (the **Topic**) has a particular quality (the **Idea**) or to show that it has that quality in an extreme way.
- Another purpose is to lead people to feel the same way about the **Topic** as they would feel about the **Image**.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not recognize that something is a metaphor. In other words, they may mistake a metaphor for a literal statement, and thus, misunderstand it.
- People may not be familiar with the thing that is used as an image, and so, not be able to understand the metaphor.
- If the topic is not stated, people may not know what the topic is.
- People may not know the points of comparison that the speaker wants them to understand. If they fail to think of these points of comparison, they will not understand the metaphor.
- People may think that they understand the metaphor, but they do not. This can happen when they apply points of comparison from their own culture, rather than from the biblical culture.

Translation Principles

- Make the meaning of a metaphor as clear to the target audience as it was to the original audience.
- Do not make the meaning of a metaphor more clear to the target audience than you think it was to the original audience.

Examples From the Bible

> Listen to this word, **you cows of Bashan**, (Amos 4:1q ULT)

In this metaphor Amos speaks to the upper-class women of Samaria ("you," the Topic) as if they were cows (the Image). Amos does not say what similarity(s) he intends between these women and cows. He wants the reader to think of them, and he fully expects that readers from his culture will easily do so. From the context, we can see that he means that the women are like cows in that they are fat and interested only in feeding themselves. If we were to apply similarities from a different culture, such as that cows are sacred and should be worshiped, we would get the wrong meaning from this verse.

NOTE: Amos does not actually mean that the women are cows. He speaks to them as human beings.

> Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; **we are the clay**. **You are our potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

The example above has two related metaphors. The Topic(s) are "we" and "you," and the Image(s) are "clay" and "potter." The similarity between a potter and God is the fact that both make what they wish out of their material.

The potter makes what he wishes out of the clay, and God makes what he wishes out of his people. The Idea being expressed by the comparison between the potter's clay and "us" is that **neither the clay nor God's people have a right to complain about what they are becoming**.

> Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of **the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees**."
> The disciples reasoned among themselves and said, "It is because we did not take bread."
> (Matthew 16:6-7 ULT)

Jesus used a metaphor here, but his disciples did not realize it. When he said "yeast," they thought he was talking about bread, but "yeast" was the Image in his metaphor, and the Topic was the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Since the disciples (the original audience) did not understand what Jesus meant, it would not be good to state clearly here what Jesus meant.

Translation Strategies

If people would understand the metaphor in the same way that the original readers would have understood it, go ahead and use it. Be sure to test the translation to make sure that people do understand it in the right way.

If people do not or would not understand it, here are some other strategies.

(1) If the metaphor is a common expression in the source language or expresses a patterned pair of concepts in a biblical language (that is, it is a passive metaphor), then express the **Idea** in the simplest way preferred by your language.
(2) If the metaphor seems to be an active metaphor, you can translate it literally **if you think that the target language also uses this metaphor in the same way to mean the same thing as in the Bible**. If you do this, be sure to test it to make sure that the language community understands it correctly.
(3) If the target audience does not realize that it is a metaphor, then change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as "like" or "as." See Simile.
(4) If the target audience would not know the **Image**, see Translate Unknowns for ideas on how to translate that image.
(5) If the target audience would not use that **Image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.
(6) If the target audience would not know what the **Topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the Topic was.)
(7) If the target audience would not know the intended similarity (the **Idea**) between the topic and the image, then state it clearly.
(8) If none of these strategies is satisfactory, then simply state the **Idea** plainly without using a metaphor.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the metaphor is a common expression in the source language or expresses a patterned pair of concepts in a biblical language (that is, a passive metaphor), then express the Idea in the simplest way preferred by your language.

> Then, see, one of the leaders of the synagogue, named Jairus, came, and when he saw him, **fell at his feet**. (Mark 5:22 ULT)

> > Then one of the leaders of the synagogue, named Jairus, came, and when he saw him, **immediately bowed down in front of him**.

(2) If the metaphor seems to be an active metaphor, you can translate it literally **if you think that the target language also uses this metaphor in the same way to mean the same thing as in the Bible**. If you do this, be sure to test it to make sure that the language community understands it correctly.

> But Jesus said to them, "He wrote this commandment to you because of your **hardness of heart.**" (Mark 10:5 ULT)

> > It was because of your **hard hearts** that he wrote you this law.

We made no change to this one, but it must be tested to make sure that the target audience correctly understands this metaphor.

(3) If the target audience does not realize that it is a metaphor, then change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as "like" or "as."

> Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we **are the clay.** You **are our potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

> > And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are **like** clay. You are **like** a potter; and we all are the work of your hand.

(4) If the target audience would not know the **Image**, see Translate Unknowns for ideas on how to translate that image.

> Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you **to kick against a goad**. (Acts 26:14b ULT)

> > Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to **kick against a pointed stick**.

(5) If the target audience would not use that **Image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.

> Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **clay**. You are our **potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

> > "And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **wood**. You are our **carver**; and we all are the work of your hand." "And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **string**. You are the **weaver**; and we all are the work of your hand."

(6) If the target audience would not know what the **Topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the topic was.)

> Yahweh lives; may **my rock** be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted. (Psalm 18:46 ULT)

> > Yahweh lives; **He is my rock**. May he be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted.

(7) If the target audience would not know the intended similarity between the Topic and the Image, then state it clearly.

> Yahweh lives; may **my rock** be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted. (Psalm 18:46 ULT)

> > Yahweh lives; may he be praised because he is the rock **under which I can hide from my enemies**. May the God of my salvation be exalted.

> Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you **to kick against a goad**. (Acts 26:14 ULT)

> > Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? You **fight against me and hurt yourself like an ox that kicks against its owner's pointed stick**.

(8) If none of these strategies are satisfactory, then simply state the idea plainly without using a metaphor.

> I will make you to become **fishers of men**. (Mark 1:17b ULT)

> > I will make you to become **people who gather men**. Now you gather fish.
> > I will make you **gather people**.

To learn more about specific metaphors, see Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns.

"

Referenced in: Zephaniah 1:3; Zephaniah 1:4; Zephaniah 1:6; Zephaniah 1:7; Zephaniah 1:11; Zephaniah 1:12; Zephaniah 1:18; Zephaniah 2:3; Zephaniah 2:4; Zephaniah 3:3; Zephaniah 3:5; Zephaniah 3:8; Zephaniah 3:12; Zephaniah 3:13; Zephaniah 3:16; Zephaniah 3:17; Zephaniah 3:18; Zephaniah 3:19

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: Zephaniah 2:2; Zephaniah 2:12; Zephaniah 2:13; Zephaniah 2:15; Zephaniah 3:1; Zephaniah 3:2; Zephaniah 3:3; Zephaniah 3:9; Zephaniah 3:14; Zephaniah 3:16

Parallelism

Description

Parallelism is a poetic device in which two phrases or clauses that are similar in structure or idea are used together. The following are some of the different kinds of parallelism.

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

- The second clause or phrase means the same as the first. This is called synonymous parallelism.
- The second clarifies or strengthens the meaning of the first.
- The second completes what is said in the first.
- The second says something that contrasts with the first, but adds to the same idea.

Parallelism is most commonly found in Old Testament poetry, such as in the books of Psalms and Proverbs. It also occurs in Greek in the New Testament, both in the four gospels and in the apostles' letters.

This article will only discuss synonymous parallelism, the kind in which the two parallel phrases mean the same thing, because that is the kind that presents a problem for translation. Note that we use the term "synonymous parallelism" for long phrases or clauses that have the same meaning. We use the term "doublet" for words or very short phrases that mean basically the same thing and are used together.

In the poetry of the original languages, synonymous parallelism has several effects:

- It shows that something is very important by saying it more than once and in more than one way.
- It helps the hearer to think more deeply about the idea by saying it in different ways.
- It makes the language more beautiful and raises it above the ordinary way of speaking.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use synonymous parallelism. They would either think it odd that someone said the same thing twice, or, since it is in the Bible, they would think that the two phrases must have some difference in meaning. For them it would be confusing, rather than beautiful. They would not understand that the repetition of the idea in different words serves to emphasize the idea.

Examples From the Bible

> Your word is a lamp to my feet
> and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105 ULT)

Both parts of the sentence are metaphors saying that God's word teaches people how to live. That is the single idea. The words "lamp" and "light" are similar in meaning because they refer to light. The words "my feet" and "my path" are related because they refer to a person walking. Walking is a metaphor for living.

> You make him to rule over the works of your hands;
> you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)

Both lines say that God made man the ruler of everything. "To rule over" is the same idea as putting things "under his feet," and "the works of your [God's] hands" is the same idea as "all things."

> Yahweh sees everything a person does
> and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

The first phrase and the second phrase mean the same thing. There are three ideas that are the same between these two phrases. "Sees" corresponds to "watches," "everything…does" corresponds to "all the paths…takes," and "a person" corresponds to "he."

> Praise Yahweh, all you nations;
> exalt him, all you peoples! (Psalm 117:1 ULT)

Both parts of this verse tell people everywhere to praise Yahweh. The words 'Praise' and 'exalt' mean the same thing. The words 'Yahweh' and 'him' refer to the same person. The terms 'all you nations' and 'all you peoples' refer to the same people.

> For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people,
> and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2b ULT)

The two parts of this verse say that Yahweh has a serious disagreement with his people, Israel. These are not two different disagreements or two different groups of people.

Translation Strategies

For most kinds of parallelism, it is good to translate both of the clauses or phrases. For synonymous parallelism, it is good to translate both clauses if people in your language understand that the purpose of saying something twice is to strengthen a single idea. But if your language does not use parallelism in this way, then consider using one of the following translation strategies.

(1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.
(2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as "truly" or "certainly."
(3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like "very," "completely," or "all."

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.

> Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. (Judges 16:13, ULT)

Delilah expressed this idea twice to emphasize that she was very upset.

> > Until now you have deceived me with your lies.
>
> Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

The phrase "all the paths he takes" is a metaphor for "all he does."

> > Yahweh pays attention to everything a person does.
>
> For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2 ULT)

This parallelism describes one serious disagreement that Yahweh had with one group of people. If this is unclear, the phrases can be combined:

> > For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, Israel.

(2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as "truly" or "certainly."

> Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)
>
> > Yahweh truly sees everything a person does.

> You make him to rule over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)
>
> > You have certainly made him to rule over everything that you have created.

(3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like "very," "completely" or "all."

> Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. (Judges 16:13, ULT)
>
> > All you have done is lie to me.

> Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)
>
> > Yahweh sees absolutely everything that a person does.

"

Next we recommend you learn about:

Personification *(UTA PDF)*

Referenced in: Zephaniah 1:11; Zephaniah 2:2; Zephaniah 2:4; Zephaniah 2:8; Zephaniah 2:9; Zephaniah 3:5; Zephaniah 3:6; Zephaniah 3:17; Zephaniah 3:20

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: Zephaniah 1:17; Zephaniah 2:2; Zephaniah 2:13; Zephaniah 3:19

unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 77

day of the Lord, day of Yahweh

Description:

The Old Testament term "day of Yahweh" is used to refer to a future time when God will punish people for their sin.

- The Old Testament term "day of Yahweh" is an expression that many of the prophets use.
- The New Testament term "day of the Lord" usually refers to the day or time when the Lord Jesus will come back to judge people at the end of time.
- This final, future time of judgment and resurrection is also sometimes referred to as the "last day." This time will begin when the Lord Jesus comes back to judge sinners and will permanently establish his rule.
- The word "day" in these phrases may sometimes refer to a literal day or it may refer to a "time" or "occasion" that is longer than a day.
- Sometimes the punishment is referred to as a "pouring out of God's wrath" upon those who do not believe.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, other ways to translate "day of Yahweh" could include "time of Yahweh" or "time when Yahweh will punish his enemies" or "time of Yahweh's wrath."
- Other ways to translate "day of the Lord" could include "time of the Lord's judgment" or "time when the Lord Jesus will return to judge people."

(See also: day, judgment day, Lord, resurrection, Yahweh)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 5:5
- 1 Thessalonians 5:2
- 2 Peter 3:10
- 2 Thessalonians 2:2
- Acts 2:20-21
- Philippians 1:9-11

Word Data:

- Strong's: H3068, H3117, G22500, G29620

"

Referenced in: Introduction to Zephaniah; Zephaniah 1 General Notes; Zephaniah 2 General Notes

god, false god, goddess, idol, idolater, idolatrous, idolatry

Definition:

A false god is something that people worship instead of the one true God. The term "goddess" refers specifically to a female false god.

- • These false gods or goddesses do not exist. Yahweh is the only God.
- • People sometimes make objects into idols to worship as symbols of their false gods.
- • In the Bible, God's people frequently turned away from obeying him in order to worship false gods.
- • Demons often deceive people into believing that the false gods and idols they worship have power.
- • Baal, Dagon, and Molech were three of the many false gods that were worshiped by people in Bible times.
- • Asherah and Artemis (Diana) were two of the goddesses that ancient peoples worshiped.

An idol is an object that people make so they can worship it. Something is described as "idolatrous" if it involves giving honor to something other than the one true God.

- • People make idols to represent the false gods that they worship.
- • These false gods do not exist; there is no God besides Yahweh.
- • Sometimes demons work through an idol to make it seem like it has power, even though it does not.
- • Idols are often made of valuable materials like gold, silver, bronze, or expensive wood.
- • An "idolatrous kingdom" means a "kingdom of people who worship idols" or a "kingdom of people who worship earthly things."
- • The term "idolatrous figure" is another word for a "carved image" or an "idol."

Translation Suggestions:

- • There may already be a word for "god" or "false god" in the language or in a nearby language.
- • The term "idol" could be used to refer to false gods.
- • In English, a lower case "g" is used to refer to false gods, and upper case "G" is used to refer to the one true God. Other languages also do that.
- • Another option would be to use a completely different word to refer to the false gods.
- • Some languages may add a word to specify whether the false god is described as male or female.

(See also: God, Asherah, Baal, Molech, demon, image, kingdom, worship)

Bible References:

- • Genesis 35:2
- • Exodus 32:1
- • Psalms 31:6
- • Psalms 81:8-10
- • Isaiah 44:20
- • Acts 7:41
- • Acts 7:43
- • Acts 15:20
- • Acts 19:27
- • Romans 2:22
- • Galatians 4:8-9
- • Galatians 5:19-21
- • Colossians 3:5
- • 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **10:2** Through these plagues, God showed Pharaoh that he is more powerful than Pharaoh and all of Egypt's **gods**.
- **13:4** Then God gave them the covenant and said, "I am Yahweh, your God, who saved you from slavery in Egypt. Do not worship other **gods**."
- **14:2** They (Canaanites) worshiped false **gods** and did many evil things.
- **16:1** The Israelites began to worship the Canaanite **gods** instead of Yahweh, the true God.
- **18:13** But most of Judah's kings were evil, corrupt, and they worshiped idols. Some of the kings even sacrificed their children to false **gods**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H0367, H0410, H0426, H0430, H0457, H1322, H1544, H1892, H2553, H3649, H4656, H4906, H5236, H5566, H6089, H6090, H6091, H6456, H6459, H6673, H6736, H6754, H7723, H8163, H8251, H8267, H8441, H8655, G14930, G14940, G14950, G14960, G14970, G22990, G27120

"

Referenced in: Introduction to Zephaniah

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