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Ruth

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unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Ruth

Introduction to Ruth

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of Ruth

Naomi goes to Moab with her family (1:1–5)
Ruth comes to Bethlehem with Naomi (1:6–22)
Boaz helps Ruth as she gleans (2:1–23)
Boaz and Ruth at the threshing floor (3:1–18)
Ruth becomes the wife of Boaz (4:1–16)
Obed born to Ruth and Boaz; the genealogy of David (4:13–22)

What is the book of Ruth about?

This book is about a non-Israelite woman named Ruth. It tells how she came to join the people of Yahweh. The book also explains how Ruth became an ancestor of King David.

How should the title of this book be translated?

This book traditionally has the title **Ruth** because she is the main person in it. If the church prefers, you could use a fuller title such as **The Book About Ruth**. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.159)**)

When did the events in the book of Ruth occur?

The story of Ruth is set during the time when there were judges in Israel. This was after the people of Israel had entered into the land of Canaan, but before they had a king. The judges were men and women whom God chose to help the Israelites defeat their enemies. These leaders usually continued to help the people by deciding disputes among them. They also helped the people make important decisions. Many of these leaders served all the people of Israel, but some of them may have served only certain tribes.

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

Why does Scripture include a book about a woman from the foreign land of Moab?

In a period when Israel was often unfaithful to Yahweh, a woman from Moab showed great faith in him. The Israelites' frequent lack of faith in Yahweh is contrasted with the faith of this woman from a foreign land. This shows us that God is the God of all people, not just of Israel. (See: **faithful, faithfulness, trustworthy (p.236)**)

What important marriage custom is found in the book of Ruth?

Israelites practiced what is called "levirate marriage." In this custom, the closest male relative of a man who died without any children was obligated to provide for his widow by marrying her. Usually this would be one of the man's brothers. Any children born to them were to be regarded as children of the dead man. They did this so that the dead man would have descendants. If the closest relative did not marry the woman, another relative could fulfill this obligation.

What was a “kinsman-redeemer”?

A person's close relative or relatives were expected to act as “kinsmen-redeemers” (2:20 ULT) for him or her. They were responsible to provide for a relative in need, fulfill obligations of levirate marriage, and buy back land into the family that had been sold to someone outside of the family. In the book of Ruth, Boaz is one such kinsman-redeemer.

What was “gleaning” in the book of Ruth?

In Israel, poor people were allowed to follow after the men who harvested a field. These gleaners picked up stalks of grain that the harvesters missed or dropped. In this way, poor people were able to find some food. Ruth became a gleaner in a field belonging to Boaz.

What is covenant faithfulness or covenant loyalty?

A covenant is a formal, binding agreement between two parties that one or both parties must fulfill. Covenant faithfulness or covenant loyalty is when a person does what they said they would do according to the covenant that they had made. God made a covenant with Israel in which he promised that he would love and be faithful to the Israelites. The Israelites were to do the same toward him and toward each other.

The book of Ruth shows that what kinsmen-redeemers do for their relatives is part of Israel's duties according to God's covenant with them. The story of Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi gives examples to all of Israel of the good effects of covenant faithfulness. (See: **covenant faithfulness, covenant loyalty, covenant love (p.235)**)

What function did city gates have in the ancient Near East?

City gates in the time of Boaz were meeting places for the city elders. Elders were honored men who decided business matters and legal matters together. The city walls were thick, especially at the entryways, and the gates had guard towers beside and above them. Therefore, the gateway opening provided a large shady area for public meetings and there were places for important people to sit. For this reason, Boaz and the other elders sat in the gateway.

Some English Bible versions speak of Boaz sitting at the city gate, but it may be best for translators to make clear that Boaz sat in the city gateway.

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

How does the book of Ruth change from one topic to another topic?

The book of Ruth often changes to new topics or new parts of the story. The ULT uses various words to indicate these changes, such as “so,” “then,” and “now.” Translators should use the ways most natural in their own languages to signal these changes.

Ruth 1

Ruth 1 General Notes

Structure and Formatting

It happened in the days when the judges ruled

The events of this book occur during the period of Judges. The book is concurrent with the book of Judges. To understand the historical context of the book, the translator may wish to review the book of Judges.

Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

Women without a husband or children

In the ancient Near East, if a woman lacked a husband or sons, she was considered to be in a dire circumstance. She would not have been able to provide for herself. This is why Naomi told her daughters to remarry.

Translation Issues in This Chapter

Contrast

The actions of Ruth the Moabite are intended to contrast with the actions of Naomi the Jew. Ruth shows great faith in Naomi's God, while Naomi does not trust in Yahweh. (See: [\[\[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/faith\]\]](#) and [\[\[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/trust\]\]](#))

Ruth 1:1

Now it happened

This phrase translates a common way of beginning a historical story in the Bible. Use a natural way of beginning a true story that happened a long time ago. Alternative translation: "It was" (See: **Introduction of a New Event (p. 174)**)

in the days of the ruling of the judges

The phrase **in the days of** indicates the time period during which the famine happened. The famine probably lasted for years, not just days. Use a natural form in your language for introducing the time during which another event happened. Alternate translation: "in the time when the judges ruled" (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.126)**)

in the land

This phrase, **in the land**, refers to the land of Israel. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "in the land of Israel" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 106)**)

a certain man

This is a common way of introducing a character into a story. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a new participant in a story. (See: **Introduction of New and Old Participants (p.177)**)

Ruth 1:2

Ephrathites

The term **Ephrathites** refers to the people from the clan of Ephrathah, people who lived in the area around Bethlehem. Alternate translation: “from the clan of Ephrathah” (See: **How to Translate Names (p.159)**)

Ruth 1:3

And she was left, she and her two sons

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Naomi and her two sons remained in Moab without him" (See:

Active or Passive (p.103))

Ruth 1:4

And they took wives for themselves

The phrase **took wives for themselves** is an idiom that means that they married women. They did not take women by force or take women who were already married to other men. (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

the name of the first woman was Orpah, and the name of the second woman was Ruth

If your language must distinguish which woman married which son, you can say that Orpah married Kilion and that Ruth married Mahlon. Alternate translation: "the name of the woman who married Kilion was Orpah, and the name of the woman who married Mahlon was Ruth"

Ruth 1:5

and the woman was left without her two children or her husband

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “and the woman was alone without her husband or her two sons” or “and Naomi remained widowed and childless” (See: **Active or Passive (p.103)**)

Ruth 1:6

Then she arose, she and her daughters-in-law, and she returned

This part of the sentence forms an introductory summary of what will happen in the following section. It does not relate events in the timeline of the story. If your language does not use introductory summaries like this, you can translate these actions as events. Alternate translation: “Then she, along with her daughters-in-law, prepared to return” (See: **Introduction of a New Event (p.174)**)

Then she arose, she and her daughters-in-law, and she returned

The verbs **arose** and **returned** are singular, and refer to Naomi. This shows that Naomi is the main character who takes the initiative in these actions. However, her daughters-in-law are included. If your language requires plural verbs when more than one person is included in an action, you can use them here. Alternate translation: “Then she and her daughters-in-law arose and returned” (See: **Introduction of New and Old Participants (p.177)**)

and her daughters-in-law

Alternate translation: “and the women who had married her sons”

for she had heard in a field of Moab that Yahweh had visited his people, giving them bread

Naomi first heard about Yahweh visiting his people and then decided to return to Bethlehem, so it might be more natural to put this information first, as in the UST. (See: **Information Structure (p.172)**)

she had heard in a field of Moab

It is implied that the news came from Israel. Alternate translation: “while she was in the region of Moab, she had heard from someone who came from Israel” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

had visited his people

Here, **visited** is an idiom that means “taken care of.” If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “had relieved the hunger of his people” or “had come through for his people” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

giving them bread

Here, **bread** refers to food in general. Alternate translation: “giving them abundant harvests, so that they had plenty of food.” (See: **Synecdoche (p.225)**)

Ruth 1:7

And they traveled on the road

Alternate translation: "And they walked along the road"

Ruth 1:8

to her two daughters-in-law

Alternate translation: “to her two sons’ wives” or “to the widows of her two sons”

Go, return, each woman

Since Naomi is speaking to two people, the form of address would be dual here, if your language uses that form. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Dual/Plural (p.152)**)

Go, return, each woman to the house of her mother

If this custom seems strange to your readers, you could include a footnote to explain it, such as: “According to the custom of the ancient Hebrews, a young widow could either stay with the family of her deceased husband or return to live with her parents until she married again.”

to the house of her mother

Alternate translation: “to the home of your mother”

May Yahweh act with you in covenant faithfulness as you have acted with the dead and with me

Naomi is asking God to bless Orpah and Ruth. Use a natural form for a blessing in your language. Alternate translation: “I pray that Yahweh will show you covenant faithfulness such as you have shown to the dead and to me.” (See: **Blessings (p.115)**)

with the dead

The writer is using the adjective **dead** as a noun to mean those who have died. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this word with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: “toward your husbands, who died,” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.196)**)

in covenant faithfulness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **faithfulness**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: “loyally and faithfully” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.101)**)

Ruth 1:9

May Yahweh grant to you that you shall find

Here, Naomi continues her blessing. Use a natural form for a blessing in your language. Alternate translation: “May Yahweh give you” or “I pray that Yahweh will allow you to have” (See: **Blessings (p.115)**)

that you shall find rest

The word **rest** here does not refer to sitting down to rest. It means a place where these women would belong, a home for them, which would include the security that comes through marriage. Alternate translation: “a safe and stable home” (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

in the house of her husband

This means with new husbands, not with their previous husbands, who died, or with someone else’s husband. The word **house** refers to both a physical house that belongs to the husband and to the protection from shame and poverty that a husband provides. Alternate translation: “in her own husband’s household” (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

and they lifted up their voices and cried

To lift up the voice is an idiom for speaking or crying loudly. Alternate translation: “and they cried loudly” or “and they wept bitterly” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 1:10

we will return

When Orpah and Ruth said **we**, they were referring to themselves and not Naomi. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of **we** would use the exclusive form here. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.148)**)

But they said

The word **But** here indicates a strong contrast between what Naomi said and what the daughters-in-law are about to say. In your translation, indicate this strong contrast in a way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Nevertheless, they said" (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.120)**)

Rather

The daughters-in-law use the word **Rather** here to indicate a strong contrast between what Naomi wants them to do and what they propose to do. In your translation, indicate this strong contrast in a way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Instead of that" (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.120)**)

with you

The word **you** is singular here because it refers to Naomi. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.154)**)

Ruth 1:11

But Naomi said

The word **But** here indicates a strong contrast between what the daughters-in-law said and what Naomi is about to say. In your translation, indicate this strong contrast in a way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "However, Naomi said" (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.120)**)

my daughters

Orpah and Ruth are Naomi's daughters-in-law, but here and in the next two verses she calls them **my daughters** as a term of affection. If your language would not do that, you can express the affection in another way. Alternate translation: "my beloved daughters-in-law"

Why would you go with me

Naomi is using the question form here to convince the young women of her own conviction. If you would not use the question form for this purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or an exclamation. Alternate translation: "It does not make sense for you to go with me." or "You should not go with me!" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.219)**)

Do I still have sons in my womb, that they may become husbands for you

Naomi is using the question form to make the point that she cannot have other sons for the young women to marry. If you would not use the question form for this purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or an exclamation. Alternate translation: "You know that I cannot have any more sons who could become your husbands." (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.219)**)

Ruth 1:12

I am too old to belong to a husband

The implication is that Naomi cannot again marry and provide them with husbands. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "I am too old to marry again and bear more children" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

If I said I have hope, and if I belonged to a husband even tonight, and even if I would give birth to sons

This rhetorical question begins here and continues into the next verse. Naomi uses this question to emphasize that she cannot provide other sons for them to marry. If you would not use the question form for this purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or an exclamation. Alternate translation: "Even if it were possible that I could expect to marry right away and also give birth to sons right away" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.219)**)

I would give birth to sons

Alternate translation: "I were to bear sons" or "I were to deliver baby boys"

Ruth 1:13

would you therefore wait until the time when they are grown? Would you for this reason keep yourselves from belonging to a husband

Naomi completes the rhetorical question she began in the previous verse and immediately asks another rhetorical question which emphasizes the same meaning. Alternate translation: "you would not wait until they were grown up so that you could marry them. You would need to marry a husband before then." (See: **Rhetorical Question (p. 219)**)

would you therefore wait until the time when they are grown? Would you for this reason keep yourselves from belonging to a husband

This idea refers to the custom among the ancient Hebrews that, if a married man died, one of his brothers would marry the man's widow. See the introduction for more explanation. If it would be helpful, you could put some of this information in a footnote.

it is exceedingly bitter for me

Here, bitterness is a metaphor for grief. Alternate translation: "it is a great grief for me" (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me

Here, **hand** represents the power of God. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "the power of Yahweh has caused terrible things to happen to me" (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

the hand of Yahweh has gone out against me

The implication is that Yahweh caused the deaths of Naomi's family. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has taken away our husbands" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Ruth 1:14

Then they lifted up their voices and cried

Here, **they lifted up their voices** is an idiom meaning that they expressed themselves loudly. If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, use an idiom from your language that does have that meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "Then they wailed and wept loudly" (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

but Ruth clung to her

This could mean: (1) Ruth refused to leave Naomi. Alternate translation: "but Ruth would not leave her" or (2) Ruth physically held on to Naomi and would not let go of her. Alternate translation: "but Ruth held on to her" (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

Ruth 1:15

Behold

Naomi is using the term **Behold** to focus Ruth's attention on what she is about to say. Your language may have a comparable expression that you could use in your translation. Alternate translation: "Listen" or "You know" (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

your sister-in-law

Naomi is using the phrase **your sister-in-law** to refer to Orpah, the widow of Ruth's deceased husband's brother. Use the natural term in your language to refer to that relationship. Alternate translation: "the widow of your husband's brother" or "Orpah" (See: **Introduction of New and Old Participants (p.177)**)

her people

Here, Naomi is using the possessive form to describe the **people** to whom Orpah belongs. If your language would not use the possessive form for this, you could express this in another way. Alternate translation: "the clan that she came from" (See: **Possession (p.209)**)

her god

Here, Naomi is using the possessive form to describe the **god** of the Moabites that Orpah and Ruth used to worship before they married Naomi's sons and began to worship Yahweh. If your language would not use the possessive form to express the relationship between Orpah and this god, you could express this in another way. Alternate translation: "the god that they worship" (See: **Possession (p.209)**)

her god

The word translated here as **god** is plural, but Hebrew quite commonly uses the plural when referring to a deity. Here it probably refers to the god of the Moabites named Chemosh, as it does in 1 Kings 11:33. If the Bible commonly used in your area uses a plural here, you may choose to do so too. Alternate translation: "her gods" (See: **Unusual Uses of the Plural (p.232)**)

Ruth 1:16

and in where you stay

Alternate translation: “and where you live”

to forsake you, to turn back from behind you

The phrase **turn back from behind you** further defines the phrase **forsake you**. Ruth is using the two phrases together for emphasis. If it would be clearer for your readers, you could use a single phrase and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: “to forget my commitment to remain loyal to you” (See: **Doublet (p. 137)**)

Your people {are} my people, and your God {is} my God

With these phrases, Ruth completely identifies herself with the culture and religion of Naomi, an Israelite. The original does not have any verbs, so if your language requires verbs here, choose the ones that best communicate this. Alternate translation: “Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God” (See: **Ellipsis (p.139)**)

Ruth 1:17

May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add

Ruth uses this oath formula to show that she is very committed to doing what she says. She calls down a curse on herself, asking God to punish her if she does not do what she has said she would do. In keeping with the custom, she did not express what that punishment would be. Use a natural way in your language to express an oath.

Alternate translation: "May Yahweh strike me dead, and may he do more, and may he do even more" (See: **Oath Formulas (p.198)**)

if death separates between me and between you

This could mean: (1) even death cannot overcome Ruth's commitment to Naomi. This could be a form of hyperbole or simply a way to restate her commitment to be buried in the same place as Naomi is buried. Alternate translation: "if even death separates us from each other" (2) the only thing that can separate Ruth from Naomi would be the death of one of them. Alternate translation: "if anything other than death separates us from each other" or "if I leave you while you and I are both still alive" (See: **Hyperbole (p.163)**)

separates between me and between you

This phrase is an idiom that means "separates you and me." If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly.

Alternate translation: "separates the two of us" or "comes between us" (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 1:18

and she refrained from speaking to her

This phrase expresses the result of the previous phrase. You may want to indicate this by using a connector that introduces a result. Alternate translation: “so she refrained from speaking to her further” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.124)**)

and she refrained from speaking to her

In this phrase, **she** refers to Naomi, and **her** refers to Ruth. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use their names here. Also, this does not mean that Naomi was angry with Ruth or that she no longer spoke to her at all. It only means that she stopped trying to persuade Ruth to leave her. Alternate translation: “so Naomi stopped trying to persuade Ruth” (See: **Pronouns (p.213)**)

Ruth 1:19

And it happened

And it happened introduces a new event in the story. Use a word, phrase, or other method in your language that is natural for introducing a new event. Alternate translation: “And it came about” (See: **Introduction of a New Event (p.174)**)

as they were entering Bethlehem

This phrase provides background information about their arrival to help readers understand what happens next in the story. In your translation, present this information in a way that makes it clear that this is background information. Alternate translation: “while Naomi and Ruth were still walking into Bethlehem” (See: **Connect — Background Information (p.117)**)

the entire town

Here, **town** represents the people who live there. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “everyone who lived there” (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

the entire town

The word **entire** here is a generalization for emphasis. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a different way to express the emphasis. Many of the residents of the town were excited, but not all of the residents may have been excited by this news. Alternate translation: “most of the residents” (See: **Hyperbole (p.163)**)

Is this Naomi

The writer is using a rhetorical question to emphasize the reaction of the people to Naomi's condition upon her return. If you would not use the question form for this purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or an exclamation. Because it had been many years since Naomi lived in Bethlehem and now she no longer has her husband and two sons, it is likely that the women were expressing shock that this woman was actually Naomi. Alternate translation: “This must be Naomi, but I do not see her family!” (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.219)**)

Ruth 1:20

Do not call me Naomi

The name **Naomi** means “delight” or “pleasantness.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could include this information in the text or in a footnote. Alternate translation: “It is no longer appropriate to call me Naomi, the Pleasant One.” (See: **How to Translate Names (p.159)**)

Mara

The name **Mara** means “bitter.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could include this information in the text or in a footnote. Alternate translation: “Mara, the Bitter One” (See: **How to Translate Names (p.159)**)

Ruth 1:21

As for me, I went out full, but Yahweh has brought me back empty

Here, Naomi is speaking of herself as a container that can be **full** or **empty**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "As for me, I went out with a complete family, but Yahweh has brought me back with no one" (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

Why would you call me Naomi

Naomi is using the question form to emphasize that there is no reason to call her Naomi. If you would not use the question form for this purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or an exclamation. Alternate translation: "There is no reason to call me Naomi!" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.219)**)

But as for Yahweh, he has testified against me, and the Almighty has done evil to me

These two statements say the same thing using different words to emphasize the idea that God has made Naomi's life very hard. Both **Yahweh** and **the Almighty** refer to God. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could combine the statements to show that the second statement is not saying a new thing. Alternate translation: "But as for Yahweh, the Almighty God, he has opposed me and treated me badly." (See: **Parallelism (p.202)**)

he has testified against me

Here Naomi is speaking of **Yahweh** as if he were a witness who caused her to be punished for a crime. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "he has brought punishment on me" (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

has done evil to me

Alternate translation: "has brought calamity on me" or "has brought tragedy to me"

Ruth 1:22

So Naomi returned, with Ruth the Moabite woman her daughter-in-law, with her, the woman who returned from the fields of Moab

This sentence provides a brief summary and conclusion of the story so far. It does not provide new information or new events in the story. Your language may have its own way of showing that this is the end of a section of a story. Follow that way here. (See: **End of Story (p.142)**)

And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the harvest of barley

This sentence provides background information to help readers understand what happens next in the story. In your translation, present this information in a way that makes it clear that this is background information. (See: **Background Information (p.109)**)

at the beginning of the harvest of barley

The phrase **the harvest of barley** can be translated with a verbal phrase if that would be helpful in your language. Alternate translation: “when the farmers were just beginning to harvest barley” or “when the farmers started harvesting the barley” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.101)**)

Ruth 2

Ruth 2 General Notes

Translation Issues in This Chapter

“a man of great worth” (2:1)

This phrase describes Boaz as having good attributes, but in a very general way. The phrase could describe a man who is physically strong and able, wealthy, or of good, godly character, or all of those things. From the context of the story, we can see that Boaz has land, servants who respect him, and he lives in a way that honors God, so it seems that this phrase is describing his wealth and character. Think about how you would describe someone like this in your language.

“Do not go to glean in another field” (2:8)

Boaz said this because he could not guarantee Ruth's safety in another person's field. It seems that not everyone was as gracious and obedient to the law of Moses as was Boaz. (See: [\[\[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/grace\]\]](#) and [\[\[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/lawofmoses\]\]](#))

“kinsman-redeemer” (2:20)

A “kinsmen-redeemer” was a male relative who was responsible to provide for any close member of the same clan who was in need, fulfill obligations of levirate marriage, and buy back land into the family that had been sold to someone outside of the family. See the book introduction for more information.

Ruth 2:1

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband

Verse 1 gives background information about Boaz so that the reader will understand who he is. In your translation, present this information in a way that makes it clear that this is background information. (See: **Background Information (p.109)**)

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband

This phrase begins the introduction of **Boaz** as a new participant in the story. If your language has its own way of introducing new participants, you could use it here in your translation. (See: **Introduction of New and Old Participants (p.177)**)

a man of great worth

The expression **a man of great worth** describes Boaz as a person who was prosperous and well known in his community, with a good reputation. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom from your language or state this plainly. See the chapter introduction for more information. Alternate translation: “a prominent, wealthy man” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

from the clan of Elimelek

The use of the term **clan** here means that Boaz was related to Elimelek but did not have the same parents as Elimelek. The text is not saying that the clan was named after Elimelek or that Elimelek was the patriarch or leader of the clan, but only that Elimelek and Boaz belonged to the same clan. (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

Ruth 2:2

Ruth, the Moabite woman

Here the writer reintroduces Ruth after giving background information about someone else. If your language has its own way of reintroducing old participants when it resumes a story, you could use it here in your translation.

Alternate translation: “the same Moabite woman, Ruth” (See: **Introduction of New and Old Participants (p.177)**)

the Moabite woman

Alternate translation: “from the country of Moab”

the one in whose eyes I find favor

The idiom **in whose eyes I find favor** means “whoever will approve of me.” Ruth speaks of gaining someone’s favor as gaining permission, kindness, or approval. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “anyone who gives me permission” or “whoever will be kind to me” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

my daughter

Ruth was caring for Naomi as if she were her own mother, and Naomi addressed Ruth affectionately as her daughter. If it would be helpful in your language, use the term in your language that would indicate this kind of close relationship between two women. (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

Ruth 2:3

And her chance chanced upon

The phrase, **her chance chanced upon** indicates that Ruth did not know whose field she was in. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “Being unaware of who owned the field, Ruth came to” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

was from the clan of Elimelek

The use of the term **clan** here means that Boaz was related to Elimelek but did not have the same parents as Elimelek. The text is not saying that the clan was named after Elimelek or that Elimelek was the patriarch or leader of the clan. (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

Ruth 2:4

Then behold

The writer is using the term **behold** to alert us to the important event of Boaz arriving at the field and seeing Ruth for the first time. Your language may have a comparable way of calling attention to this event that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: "Then look" (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

coming from Bethlehem

Here the writer uses the present tense in past narration in order to call attention to an important event in the story. If it would not be natural to do that in your language, you could use the past tense and call attention to the event in another way. Alternate translation: "appeared, coming from Bethlehem" (See: **Irregular Use of Tenses (p.180)**)

Yahweh be with you

This is a blessing used as a greeting. Use a form for this that would be natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I ask Yahweh to be with you" (See: **Blessings (p.115)**)

May Yahweh bless you

This is a blessing used as a greeting. Use a form for this that would be natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I ask Yahweh to do good things for you" (See: **Blessings (p.115)**)

Ruth 2:5

who was set over

Here, **set over** is an idiom that means “managing.” If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “who was overseeing” or “who was in charge of” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Who does this young woman belong to

In that culture, women were under the authority of their male relatives. Boaz was asking whom Ruth’s husband or father might be. He did not think that Ruth was a slave. (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

Ruth 2:6

Then & answered and said

The two words **answered** and **said** express a single idea. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this idea in a different way. Alternate translation: “Then ... answered him by saying” or “Then ... said” (See: **Hendiadys (p.156)**)

Ruth 2:7

And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the bundles of grain after the reapers

If your language would not use a direct quotation inside of a direct quotation, you could translate this second direct quotation as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "She asked me if she could glean and gather among the bundles of grain after the reapers" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.215)**)

Please let me glean and gather

The two words **glean** and **gather** express a single idea. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this idea in a different way. Alternate translation: "Please let me glean by gathering" (See: **Hendiadys (p. 156)**)

in the house

Here, **the house** was a temporary shelter or garden hut in the field that provided shade from the sun where the workers could rest. Alternate translation: "in the hut" or "in the shed" (See: **[[translate-unknown]]**)

Ruth 2:8

Will you not listen, my daughter

Boaz is using the question form to draw Ruth's attention to what he will say to her. If you would not use the question form for this purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or an exclamation. Alternate translation: "Listen to me, my daughter!" or "Note well what I am telling you, my daughter!" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.219)**)

my daughter

Boaz's use of the term, **my daughter** was a kind way to address a younger woman. Ruth was not the actual daughter of Boaz, but he was treating her kindly and respectfully. Use the term that communicates kindness and respect from a man to a younger woman in your language. (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 2:9

Keep your eyes on the field

Here, the word **eyes** represents the capability of a person to see, watch or observe. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "Watch only the field" or "Pay attention only to the field" (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

behind them

Here, **them** is feminine and refers back to the "young female workers" in verse 8. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase that makes that clear. Alternate translation: "behind the women" (See: **Pronouns (p.213)**)

Have I not instructed the young men not to touch you

Boaz is using the question form to emphasize his hospitality—that he had already made provision to help Ruth. If you would not use the question form for this purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or an exclamation. Alternate translation: "I have given the men strict instructions not to interfere with you." (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.219)**)

the young men

The writer assumes that his readers will understand the implications of a woman toiling in a field near young male workers. You can include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "the workmen" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

not to touch you

The writer is referring to harm or sexual assault in a polite way by using the phrase **touch you**. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could use a polite way of referring to this in your language, or you could state this plainly. Alternate translation: "not to assault you sexually" (See: **Euphemism (p.144)**)

from what the young men draw

Alternate translation: "from water pulled up from the well by the workmen"

Ruth 2:10

Then she fell on her face and bowed down to the ground

These are two descriptions of a single action. The writer may be using the two terms together for emphasis. If it would be clearer for your readers, you could express the emphasis with a single phrase. Alternate translation: "Then she prostrated herself before him" (See: **Doublet (p.137)**)

Then she fell on her face and bowed down to the ground

The action of falling **on her face** and bowing **down to the ground** was a symbol of respect and reverence. She was showing honor to Boaz out of gratefulness for what he had done for her. It was also a posture of humility. If this would not be clear to your readers, you could explain the significance of this action. Alternate translation: "Then she prostrated herself before him to show gratitude and honor" (See: **Symbolic Action (p.223)**)

Then she fell on her face and bowed down to the ground

The idiom **fell on her face** means that she bowed low with her face to the ground. If your readers would misunderstand this, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "Then she bowed low, with her face to the ground" (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Why have I found favor in your eyes that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner

Ruth's question expresses surprise and also explicitly states the reason why she is surprised by Boaz's kindness. It is a contrast from her expectations. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. In some languages you may need to make part of her question a statement. Alternate translation: "Why have I found favor in your eyes? Israelites never show Moabites this sort of kindness." or "People never show foreigners this sort of kindness." (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.120)**)

have I found favor in your eyes

The phrase **found favor in your eyes** is an idiom that means that you have approved of someone. Ruth speaks of gaining someone's favor as gaining their kindness or approval. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "have you shown kindness to me" (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 2:11

Then Boaz answered and said

Both **answered** and **said** describe the same action. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use only one verb for this, as in the UST. Alternate translation: "Then Boaz responded" (See: **Hendiadys (p.156)**)

It has been fully reported

The words **It has been fully reported** translate a verb that is repeated twice to emphasize the fullness of the report. If your language can repeat words for emphasis, it would be appropriate to use that construction here in your translation. (See: **Reduplication (p.218)**)

It has been fully reported to me

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People have fully reported to me" (See: **Active or Passive (p.103)**)

and you came to a people

With the words **you came to a people**, Boaz is referring to Ruth coming to dwell with Naomi in a village and community, a country and religion that she did not know. (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

the day before yesterday

Here, **the day before yesterday** is an idiom that means "recently." If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "before" or "a little while ago" (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 2:12

your work

The implication is that her **work** was the good things she had done, everything Boaz had just described. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “your good deeds.” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

and may your full wages come from Yahweh

This clause and the previous clause mean basically the same thing. The second clause emphasizes the meaning of the first by repeating the same idea with different words. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could connect the clauses in a way that shows that the second clause is repeating the first one, not saying something additional. Alternate translation: “that is, may you receive everything that you deserve from Yahweh” (See: **Parallelism (p.202)**)

under whose wings you have come for refuge

Here, **under whose wings** is a metaphor that uses the picture of a mother bird gathering her chicks under her wings to protect them as a way to describe God’s protection for those who trust in him. Alternate translation: “in whose safe care you have placed yourself” (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

Ruth 2:13

May I find favor in your eyes

Here **find favor in your eyes** is an idiom that means to be approved of or to be found to be pleasing. Alternate translation: “May you continue to approve of me” or “May you continue to be pleased with me” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

my lord

Ruth speaks to Boaz using a respectful title, **my lord**. Use a form for addressing someone respectfully in your language. Boaz is not Ruth’s master, but he is the owner of the field where she is gleaning. He is also a Jew and a prominent man in the city. Therefore, Ruth is honoring him by calling him her **lord**, and speaking of herself as his servant. Alternate translation: “sir” or “master” (See: **Politeness (p.205)**)

to the heart of your female servant

Ruth is speaking about herself in the third person. If this would not be natural in your language, you could use the first person form. Alternate translation: “to the heart of me, your female servant” (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.150)**)

to the heart of

Here, **the heart** represents the inner thoughts and emotions of a person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a different metaphor or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “to the liver of” or “with kindness to” or “in an encouraging way to” (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

your female servant

Ruth is referring to herself as Boaz’s servant to show respect to him. She is not actually one of his servants. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make that clear. Alternate translation: “one who is as lowly as a servant” (See: **Politeness (p.205)**)

But as for me, I am not even like one of your female servants

Ruth is expressing surprise and gratitude that Boaz is treating her as if she belongs among his workers, which she does not. She is being very humble, admitting that she does not even have the status of a servant before him. Use a form for addressing someone respectfully in your language. Alternate translation: “But I do not even have the status of being one of your servant girls” (See: **Politeness (p.205)**)

Ruth 2:14

at the time of the meal

Alternate translation: “at the time of the midday meal”

Come here and eat from the bread, and dip your piece in the vinegar

The verbs in this sentence are imperatives that communicate a gracious invitation rather than a command. Use a form in your language that communicates a gracious invitation. It may be helpful to add an expression such as “please” to make this clear. Alternate translation: “Please come, and help yourself to the bread and dip it in the vinegar” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.169)**)

and eat from the bread, and dip your piece in the vinegar

It would be necessary to dip the bread and then eat it, so it might be more natural in your language to put the information about dipping the bread first. Alternate translation: “and dip some of this bread in the vinegar and eat it” (See: **Information Structure (p.172)**)

and dip your piece in the vinegar

This was a simple meal eaten in the field. People would sit on the ground around a cloth that had a bowl of wine vinegar on it and pieces of broken bread. They would take a piece of bread and dip it in the wine vinegar to add flavor before they ate it. The Israelites made vinegar from grape juice that was fermented beyond the point of being wine. At the vinegar stage, the juice becomes very sour and acidic. Alternate translation: “and please dip your piece of bread in the wine vinegar first” (See: [\[\[translate-unknown\]\]](#))

Ruth 2:15

Then Boaz commanded his young men

When Boaz spoke to his workers, it is likely that Ruth was far enough away that she did not hear Boaz's instructions. If it would be helpful in your language, you could include this information. Alternate translation: "Then Boaz privately instructed his young men" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

even among the bundles

Here, the word **even** lets the workers know that they are to do above and beyond what they normally do. People who were gleaning were normally forbidden from working close to the harvested grain because then it would be easy for them to steal from the grain that was already harvested. But Boaz instructs his workers to let Ruth glean close to the bundles of harvested grain. Alternate translation: "among the bundles as well" (See: [[translate-unknown]])

and do not shame her

Boaz is referring to shaming Ruth by scolding her verbally. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "and do not shame her by saying that she should stop" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Ruth 2:16

Even

Here Boaz goes another step beyond what is normal and tells his workers to also drop on the ground some of the grain that they had harvested for Ruth to pick up. Alternate translation: "Not only that, but also" (See: [[translate-unknown]])

and do not rebuke her

Alternate translation: "and do not cause her shame" or "and do not speak harshly to her"

Ruth 2:17

Then she beat out

Ruth would have beaten the barley stalks with a big stick until the kernels of edible grain came off. She would then keep only the kernels of grain. Alternate translation: "She beat the edible kernels of grain off of the stalks from" (See: [[translate-unknown]])

about an ephah of

An **ephah** is a unit of measurement equal to about 22 liters. Use the normal measurement for grain in your language. Alternate translation: "about 22 liters of" or "over half a bushel of" (See: **Biblical Volume (p.112)**)

Ruth 2:18

And she lifted it up and went into the city

It is implied that Ruth carried the grain home. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Ruth 2:19

Where did you glean today and where did you work

Naomi asked the same thing in two different ways to show that she was very excited and interested in knowing what had happened to Ruth that day. If it is not natural in your language to show excitement and interest by repeating a question, then use a more natural form. Alternate translation: "Wow, whose field did you work in today" (See: **Parallelism (p.202)**)

May the one who noticed you be blessed

Naomi is asking God to bless Boaz. You could express this as either a blessing or a prayer. Use whichever way is more natural in your language. Alternate translation: "God, bless the one who noticed Ruth today" (See: **Blessings (p.115)**)

May the one who noticed you be blessed

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "May God bless the one who noticed you" (See: **Active or Passive (p.103)**)

the one who noticed you

The writer is using the term **noticed** to mean that the person not only saw Ruth but also did something kind for her. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "the one who helped you" (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

Then she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked. And she said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today {is} Boaz

These two sentences mean basically the same thing. The second sentence repeats the meaning of the first, while using different words in order to emphasize the importance of this information for the story. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could combine the sentences or connect them in a way that shows that the second sentence is repeating the first one, not saying something additional. Alternate translation: "Then she told her mother-in-law that the name of the man with whom she had worked that day was Boaz" or "Then she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked. She said, 'The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.'" (See: **Parallelism (p.202)**)

Ruth 2:20

May he be blessed by Yahweh

Naomi is asking God to bless Boaz. You could express this as either a blessing or a prayer, in whichever way is more natural in your language. Alternate translation: "I pray that he will be blessed by Yahweh" (See: **Blessings (p.115)**)

May he be blessed by Yahweh

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. If you use an active form, you may need to start a new sentence afterward, as in the UST. (See: **Active or Passive (p.103)**)

who has not forsaken

If it would be clearer in your language, you could use a positive expression to translate this double negative that consists of the negative particle **not** and the negative word **forsaken**. Alternate translation: "who has continued to be loyal to" (See: **Double Negatives (p.134)**)

who has not forsaken

Here, **who** could refer to: (1) **Yahweh**, who has continued to be faithful to the living and the dead by acting through Boaz. (2) Boaz, who is showing faithfulness to Naomi's family by helping Ruth. (See: **Pronouns (p.213)**)

with the living

Naomi is using the adjective **living** as a noun to mean those who continue to live, referring to herself and Ruth. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this word with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: "with the people who are still living" (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.196)**)

and with the dead

Naomi is using the adjective **dead** as a noun to mean those who have died. She is referring to her husband and sons. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this word with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: "and with the people who have already died" (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.196)**)

That man is close to us. He is one of our kinsman-redeemers

These two sentences mean basically the same thing. The second sentence repeats the meaning of the first using different words in order to emphasize the importance of this information for the story. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could combine the sentences or connect them in a way that shows that the second sentence is repeating the first one, not saying something additional. Alternate translation: "That man is closely related to us, which means that he is one of our kinsman-redeemers" or "That man is closely related to us. Yes, he is one of our kinsman-redeemers" (See: **Parallelism (p.202)**)

one of our kinsman-redeemers

A kinsman-redeemer was a close male relative who had the responsibility to take care of any widows in the family. If one of his brothers died childless, he had the responsibility to marry the widow if she was still of child-bearing age, to raise a child for his brother. He would also reacquire the land his relatives had lost due to poverty and

redeem family members who had sold themselves into slavery. See the Introduction for more information. (See: [[translate-unknown]])

Ruth 2:21

In addition, he said to me

The implication is that what follows is beyond what anyone would have expected a landowner to say to Ruth. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "He even said to me" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

he said to me, 'You should keep close by the servants who belong to me until the time when they have finished all of the harvest that belongs to me

natural laIf your language would not use a direct quotation inside of a direct quotation, you could translate the second direct quotation as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "He said that I should keep close by his servants until they have finished all of his harvest" (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.215)**)

You should keep close by the servants who belong to me

The implication is that Boaz wants to protect and provide for Ruth. Boaz was expressing confidence that his workers would not harm Ruth. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "I want you to glean safely, near my field workers," (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Ruth 2:22

you go out with

Alternate translation: “you work with” or “you glean alongside”

so that they do not harm you

Here, **they** refers to anyone in general. Alternate translation: “so that someone does not harm you” or “so that no one would hurt you” (See: **Pronouns (p.213)**)

Ruth 2:23

So she stayed close

Here, **So** indicates that what follows is a result of what came before. Use a connector in your language that makes it clear that what follows is a result of what came before. Alternate translation: “Because of these instructions, she stayed close” or “Therefore, Ruth continued to work” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.124)**)

until the harvest of barley and the harvest of wheat were finished

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “until Boaz’s workers had harvested all of the barley and the wheat” (See: **Active or Passive (p.103)**)

Ruth 3

Ruth 3 General Notes

Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

Boaz's integrity

Boaz showed great integrity in this chapter by not having sexual relations with Ruth until they were married. He was also concerned with preserving Ruth's good reputation. Displaying Boaz's good character is an important point in this chapter.

Translation Issues in This Chapter

So that it may be well with you

Naomi wanted Ruth to have a secure home with a good husband who would care for her. She could see that Boaz would be the best husband for her. She also thought that Boaz, as a kinsman-redeemer, had an obligation to marry her. This could be true because, even though Ruth was a Gentile by birth, she had become part of Naomi's family and part of the nation of Israel. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Ruth 3:1

Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her

The writer is using the word translated **Then** to introduce the next part of the story, in which Ruth asks Boaz to perform the role of kinsman-redeemer for her and Naomi. Use a word, phrase, or other method in your language that is natural for introducing a new event. Alternate translation: "After some time, Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, said to her" (See: **Introduction of a New Event (p.174)**)

her mother-in-law

Naomi is the mother of Ruth's dead husband, and thus, is Ruth's **mother-in-law**. Alternate translation: "the mother of Ruth's dead husband" (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

Naomi, her mother-in-law

Naomi is Ruth's **mother-in-law**. If it is not natural to include both the name and the relationship term in your language, choose the one that refers to Naomi most naturally. Alternate translation: "Ruth's mother-in-law" (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

her mother-in-law

In this verse, **her** refers to Ruth. Alternate translation: "Ruth's mother-in-law" (See: **Pronouns (p.213)**)

My daughter

Ruth became Naomi's daughter-in-law by marrying Naomi's son. But here Naomi calls her **My daughter** to show that she loves her as much as she would love her own daughter. Use a form of address in your language that shows that Naomi loves Ruth as she would love a daughter. Alternate translation: "My dear one" (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

shall I not seek a resting place for you, that will be good for you

Naomi is using the question form to cause Ruth to think of her future. Here, Naomi uses this question to tell Ruth what she plans to do. If you would not use the question form for this purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement or an exclamation. Alternate translation: "I must look for a place for you to rest, in a place that will be good for you." or "I must find a husband to care for you, who will be good to you." (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.219)**)

a resting place

Here, Naomi is speaking of a permanent home as **a resting place**. This does not mean a place to rest temporarily from being tired. It means a place of permanent comfort and security in a good home with a husband. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "a permanent home" or "a husband" (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

Ruth 3:2

So now

Naomi's rhetorical question in 3:1 gave the reason for the plan that she is about to tell to Ruth in verses 3:2-4. Use a connector in your language that marks what follows as a planned result of what was said before. Alternate translation: "Because of that, I have been thinking." (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.124)**)

is not Boaz our relative, the one with whose young female workers you have been working

Naomi uses the question form here to remind Ruth of something she had already told her (See 2:20). If you would not use the question form for this purpose in your language, you could translate this as a statement. Alternate translation: "as you know, Boaz, the one with whose young female workers you have been working, is our relative." (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.219)**)

the one with whose young female workers you have been working

The implication is that Boaz owned the fields where Ruth worked together with these young women, not that Boaz owned the young women. You could clarify this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "the one who owns the fields where you have been working with the other female workers" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Behold

Naomi is using the term **Behold** to focus Ruth's attention on what she is about to say. Your language may have a comparable expression that you could use in your translation. Alternate translation: "Look" (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

Ruth 3:3

and anoint yourself

Alternate translation: “rub sweet-smelling oil on yourself”

and go down to the threshing floor

A **threshing floor** is an open, flat area where workers could thresh and winnow grain. It would be outside of the city, which was high on a hill, and thus, one would go “down” to it. If your readers would not be familiar with this type of agricultural site, you could use the name of something similar in your area or you could use a more general term. Alternate translation: “and leave the city to go to the flat place where he will thresh and winnow his grain” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.229)**)

eating and drinking

If it would be unnatural to express these details of a meal in your language, you could use a more natural phrase. Alternate translation: “his supper” (See: [\[\[figs-extrainfo\]\]](#))

Ruth 3:4

And let it be

The phrase **And let it be** introduces the next series of specific instructions that Naomi is about to give to Ruth. Use a form in your language that introduces a series of instructions, or omit the phrase if your language does not do this. Use a colon to replace the comma. Alternate translation: "Do this:" (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.169)**)

and uncover his feet

To **uncover his feet** means to remove the cloak or blanket covering his feet, and probably also his legs. This action by a woman was probably a symbolic action that was interpreted as a proposal of marriage. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could include this information in a footnote. (See: **Symbolic Action (p.223)**)

his feet

The word translated **feet** could be used as a euphemism for a man's private parts, but here it refers to the man's feet or legs. If your language has a word that works in this way, you can use it here. Otherwise, use a word for "feet" or "legs" and consider putting this information in a footnote. (See: **Euphemism (p.144)**)

Then he, himself, will tell you what you should do

The specific custom of that time is unclear, but Naomi appears to believe that Boaz will understand Ruth's action as a proposal of marriage. Boaz will then either accept or reject her offer. If it would be helpful, you could include this information in a footnote.

Then he, himself, will tell

Here, the word **himself** emphasizes that Boaz will decide what happens next, not Naomi or Ruth. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this significance. Alternate translation: "Then it will be Boaz who will tell" (See: **[[figs-rpronouns]]**)

Ruth 3:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Ruth 3:6

and did according to everything that her mother-in-law had instructed her

This statement summarizes the actions that Ruth will do in 3:7. If people misunderstand from this that Ruth did these actions in 3:6 and then did them again in 3:7, then you could translate this sentence as **and she obeyed her mother-in-law**. Or if it would make the order of events more clear, you could move this sentence to the end of 3:7, then combine the verse numbers as a verse bridge (6–7). (See: **Information Structure (p.172)**)

Ruth 3:7

and his heart was good

Here **heart** stands for “emotions” or “disposition.” Boaz’s emotions or feelings were good. This does not imply that Boaz was drunk. Alternate translation: “and he felt good” or “and he was in a good mood” (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

Then she came secretly

Alternate translation: “Then she sneaked in” or “Then she came in so quietly that no one could hear her”

and uncovered his feet

See how you translated **feet** in [3:4](#). Alternate translation: “and removed the covering from his legs” (See: **Euphemism (p.144)**)

Ruth 3:8

Then it happened in the middle of the night that

This clause gives information about when the next event in the story happened. Use a natural way in your language to give background information. Alternate translation: "Hours later, in the middle of the night," (See: **Background Information (p.109)**)

the man was startled

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. It is not clear what startled Boaz. Perhaps he suddenly felt the cold air on his feet or legs. Alternate translation: "the man startled" (See: **Active or Passive (p.103)**)

And behold

Here the word **behold** shows that what follows was very surprising to Boaz. Use your language's way of expressing surprise. Alternate translation: "And much to his surprise" (See: **Exclamations (p.146)**)

Ruth 3:9

your female servant. & your female servant

Ruth was not one of Boaz's servants, but she referred to herself as Boaz's servant as a polite way to express respect to Boaz. Use your language's way of expressing humility and respect. Alternate translation: "your humble handmaid" ... "your humble handmaid" (See: **Politeness (p.205)**)

So spread the edge of your cloak over your female servant

This was a cultural idiom for marriage. Alternate translation: "Please marry me" (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

a kinsman-redeemer

See how you translated this term in [2:20](#). (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

Ruth 3:10

Blessed be you by Yahweh

Use a natural form for a blessing in your language. Alternate translation: “A blessing from Yahweh on you” (See: **Blessings (p.115)**)

my daughter

See how you translated **my daughter** in 2:8. Boaz uses this phrase again here to communicate kindness and respect from a man to a younger woman. Use an appropriate phrase in your language. Alternate translation: “little one” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

You have made your covenant faithfulness better at the end than at the beginning

By marrying Naomi’s relative who is a kinsman-redeemer, Ruth would also provide for Naomi, honor Naomi’s son, and continue Naomi’s family line. Boaz considers this to be Ruth’s greatest demonstration of faithfulness to Naomi. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could put this information in a footnote. Alternate translation: “You are demonstrating even more loving kindness now than before” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

at the beginning

Boaz is using the phrase **at the beginning** to refer to the way that Ruth had earlier provided for her mother-in-law by staying with her and gleaning grain for food for both of them. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “when you first came here with Naomi” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

by not going after

Boaz is praising Ruth for **not going after* the young men, by which he means that Ruth could have ignored Naomi’s need and looked for a young and handsome husband for herself outside of Elimelek’s relatives, but she did not. Alternate translation: “because you have not looked for marriage among” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 3:11

So now

So now indicates that what came before in verse 3:10 is the reason for what follows here in verse 11. Use a natural connector for introducing a result. Alternate translation: “Therefore” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship** (p.124))

my daughter

See how you translated this in 2:8 and 3:10. Boaz uses this expression as a sign of kindness and respect toward Ruth as a younger woman. Use the form of address that would be appropriate in your language. (See: **Idiom** (p.167))

the whole gate of my people

Here, **gate** represents the people who gather at the gate. The gate was an area of the city where people gathered to do business, and the leaders met there to make decisions. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “all the important people of my city” (See: **Metonymy** (p.194))

a woman of worth

Alternate translation: “a woman of good character” or “a good woman” (See: **Idiom** (p.167))

Ruth 3:12

And now

The phrase **And now** indicates that what follows is something else important that Ruth should pay attention to, as well as what Boaz introduced by saying “So now” in 3:11. Alternate translation: “Another thing you must know” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.128)**)

but & also

The connector **but** indicates a contrast between Boaz’s willingness to marry Ruth 3:11 and the possibility of another man marrying her instead 3:12. The contrast can be indicated here or at the beginning of the verse, as in the UST. Alternate translation: “even so” or “nonetheless” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.120)**)

a kinsman-redeemer, & a kinsman-redeemer

See how you translated **kinsman-redeemer** in 2:20. This term refers to the male relative who was closest in family relationship to a man who died and who had the responsibility to help his widow. (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

Ruth 3:13

if he will redeem you

The implication of the word **redeem** is that in this culture it means “marry according to our custom concerning widows.” Boaz is referring to the expectation that the closest male relative of Ruth’s dead husband would marry her and raise a son to carry on the dead man’s family name. You could include some of this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “if he will take care of you” or “if he will redeem you, that is, marry you” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

then I will redeem you myself

Boaz uses the word **myself** to emphasize that he was committed to taking care of Ruth. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: “then I will certainly redeem you” (See: [[figs-rpronouns]])

as Yahweh lives

The phrase **as Yahweh lives** is an oath formula. This was a common Hebrew vow that obligated the speaker to perform what he said. Use a natural way in your language to express an oath. Alternate translation: “as surely as Yahweh lives” or “I swear by the life of Yahweh” (See: **Oath Formulas (p.198)**)

Ruth 3:14

So she lay at his feet

The implication of **So she lay at his feet** is that although Ruth and Boaz were alone together all night, they did not sin sexually. You can include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "Ruth slept at the feet of Boaz" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

before a man could recognize his friend

The idiom **before a man could recognize his friend** means that it was very early in the morning, before there was enough light to recognize the face of a familiar person. If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have that meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "before you could see your hand in front of your face" or "while it was still quite dark" (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

And he said

Boaz probably said this before Ruth lay down to sleep. If it would be helpful in your language, you could move this to the beginning of the verse, as in the UST, or indicate that this happened before Ruth lay down. Alternate translation: "She did this because Boaz had said" (See: **Information Structure (p.172)**)

Do not let it be known

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Do not let anyone know" (See: **Active or Passive (p.103)**)

Ruth 3:15

the cloak

A **cloak** was a long, thick outer garment usually made of cloth. Your language and culture may have a term for such a piece of clothing that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: “the cape” or “the coat” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.229)**)

six of barley

The actual amount is not stated. There is no word referring to the container that Boaz filled six times with barley. The original readers probably knew how big this container was, but we do not. The total amount was enough to be considered generous, yet not too much for Ruth to carry alone. Most scholars think that the total amount was around 25 to 30 kilograms. Alternate translation: “six measures of barley” (See: **Ellipsis (p.139)**)

and put it on her

The writer is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You could supply these words if it would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: “into it and then put the cloak full of barley on Ruth’s back” (See: **Ellipsis (p.139)**)

Then he went into the city

Many ancient manuscripts read **he went**, referring to Boaz. The ULT follows that reading. Other ancient manuscripts read “she went,” referring to Ruth. If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, you may wish to use the reading that it uses. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to use the reading of the ULT. (See: **Textual Variants (p.227)**)

Ruth 3:16

Who are you

Naomi's question to Ruth, "**Who are you, my daughter?**" appears to be an idiom that probably asks about her current status. In other words, it is likely that Naomi is asking if Ruth is now betrothed to be married. Alternate translation: "How is it with you" or "How did it go for you" (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

my daughter

Ruth is actually Naomi's daughter-in-law, but Naomi calls her **my daughter** as an endearment. Use an appropriate endearment in your language, if there is one. Alternate translation: "my dear one" or "my daughter-in-law" (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

everything that the man had done for her

Most of what **the man had done for her** was verbal. That is, the main thing was that Boaz promised Ruth that he would make sure that she and Naomi were taken care of. If it would be helpful in your language, you could indicate that what Boaz did included the things that he said to her. Alternate translation: "everything that the man had promised to do for her" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Ruth 3:17

six of barley

See how you translated this in [3:15](#). Alternate translation: “six measures of barley” (See: **Ellipsis (p.139)**)

for he said, ‘You must not go empty to your mother-in-law

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: “saying to me that I should not go empty to my mother-in-law” (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.215)**)

You must not go empty

To **go empty** is an idiom that means to go to someone with nothing to offer that person. Alternate translation: “You must not go empty-handed” or “Do not go with nothing” or “You must take something” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 3:18

Sit

Here, **Sit** is an idiom that means to wait patiently and calmly. If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “Stay quiet” or “Be patient” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

my daughter

See how you translated this in 1:11–13; 2:2, 8, 22; 3:1, 10, 11, 16. (See: **Politeness (p.205)**)

how the matter falls

Here, **how the matter falls** is an idiom that means “what is going to happen.” If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “how the situation will turn out” or “what will happen” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

the man will not rest unless

Naomi is using a figure of speech here that expresses a strongly positive meaning by using a negative word, **not**, together with **rest**, which is the opposite of the intended meaning. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the positive meaning and strengthen it another way. Alternate translation: “the man will diligently pursue this until” (See: **Litotes (p.186)**)

unless he has finished this matter

Here, **this matter** refers to the need of the two women for a kinsman-redeemer. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “unless he has resolved our problem” or “until he gets us a kinsman-redeemer” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Ruth 4

Ruth 4 General Notes

Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

King David

Despite being a Moabitess, Ruth became an ancestress of David. David was Israel's greatest king. It may be surprising that a Gentile would become a part of such an important lineage, but it reminds us that God loves all people. Ruth had great faith in Yahweh. This shows us that God welcomes all who trust in him.

“You also acquire Ruth the Moabite woman”

With the privilege of using the family's land came the responsibility to take care of the widows of the family. Therefore, the relative who wanted to use Naomi's land had to also help Ruth to have a son who would carry on the family name and inheritance and provide for her.

Translation Issues in This Chapter

“In earlier times in Israel”

Verse seven of chapter four is a comment made by the writer of the text. This indicates that there was a considerable period of time between the events that occurred and the time when they were written down, during which customs had changed. Consider how to indicate that this is a comment about the story rather than a part of the story.

Ruth 4:1

Now Boaz had gone up to the gate

The writer is using this clause to introduce the next part of the story, in which Boaz takes the leading role as kinsman-redeemer and marries Ruth. Use a word, phrase, or other method in your language that is natural for introducing a new event. Alternate translation: “As for Boaz, he went up to the town gate” (See: **Introduction of a New Event (p.174)**)

to the gate

The original readers knew that **the gate** was the place inside the entrance to the town where community business was publicly conducted. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “to the gathering place inside the gateway of the town” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

And behold

The writer is using the term **behold** to focus our attention on the important event of Boaz seeing the exact person whom he wanted to see walking by. Your language may have a comparable expression that you could use in your translation. Alternate translation: “And amazingly” or “To his delight” (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

the kinsman-redeemer

The term **kinsman-redeemer** specifically refers to the closest living male relative to Elimelek. If your language has a specific word for such a person, it would be appropriate to use it here. See how you translated **kinsman-redeemer** in 2:20. (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

And he said, “Turn aside and sit down here, a certain person

In many languages, **a certain person** is an awkward and unnatural way for someone to address another person. A way to make this more natural could be to turn this into an indirect quotation. A combination of indirect and direct quotation is also possible, as in the UST. Alternate translation: “Boaz called to this certain person and asked him to turn aside and sit down there” (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.132)**)

a certain person

Boaz did not actually say **a certain person**; instead, he called the kinsman-redeemer by his name. This is an idiom that means a specific person, but the name is not given. The narrator has substituted this general term for the person's name either because he did not want to give the specific name or because the man's name had been forgotten. If your language has an idiom to refer to a specific person without using his name, use that here. Alternate translation: “so-and-so” or “such a one” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 4:2

Then he took ten men

Alternate translation: "Then he chose ten men"

Ruth 4:3

our brother

Here the term **brother** is used in the broad sense to mean a male relative of an extended family. If your language has a word for this, it would be appropriate to use it here. (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

Ruth 4:4

I said that

Here, **said** refers to something that Boaz said to himself in his own mind. Alternate translation: “I said to myself that” or “I felt that” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

I should uncover your ear

I should uncover your ear is an idiom that means “I should tell you” or “I should let you know.” If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “I should inform you” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

in the presence of those who are sitting here

Having these men as witnesses would make the transaction legal and binding. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “before these witnesses” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

If you will redeem {it}

Here, Boaz is asking about the man’s willingness to redeem the property. Use a natural way to express this in your language. Alternate translation: “If you are willing to buy it back to keep it in the family” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

there is no one to redeem {it} besides you, and I am after you

In some languages, it may be confusing to say these things together: (1) there is no one to redeem the land besides you, (2) I can redeem the land after you. It may appear that Boaz is making a statement and then contradicting it. If so, you could say this differently. Alternate translation: “you are the first in line to redeem it, and I am the next one in line” (See: **Connect — Exception Clauses (p.122)**)

I will redeem {it} myself

The man uses the word **myself** here to emphasize that he will do it and no one else. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this significance. Alternate translation: “I will be the one who redeems it” (See: **[[figs-pronouns]]**)

Ruth 4:5

On the day of

Here, **On the day** is an idiom that means “at the time.” If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “At the hour” or “At the same time” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

from the hand of Naomi

Boaz is using one part of a person, the **hand of Naomi**, to represent Naomi herself and her legal possession of the land. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your culture or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “from Naomi” (See: **Synecdoche (p.225)**)

you also acquire Ruth

Boaz is using the term **acquire** to mean that the man must marry the Moabite woman. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “you must also marry Ruth” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

the wife of the dead

Alternate translation: “the widow of Elimelek’s son who died”

in order to raise up the name of the dead over his inheritance

Here, **raise up the name of the dead over** is an idiom that means “supply an heir for.” If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “so that she may give birth to a son to inherit the property and carry on her dead husband’s family name” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

the dead, & the dead

Boaz is using the adjective **dead** as a noun to mean the one who died. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this word with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: “the man who died ... the dead man” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.196)**)

Ruth 4:6

I damage my own inheritance

Here, **I damage my own inheritance** means that if the man marries Ruth, the property that he buys would belong to her son, not to his own children. In that way, he would be taking away from the wealth that his own children would inherit from him and giving it instead to the children that Ruth might bear. Alternate translation: “lest I take away from my own children’s inheritance.” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

You redeem for yourself my right of redemption

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the ideas of **right** or **redemption**, you could express the same ideas in another way. Alternate translation: “I will allow you to redeem the property for yourself” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.101)**)

Ruth 4:7

Now this

The word **Now** marks what follows as background information that the writer wants the reader to know in order to understand the story. Use your language's way of giving background information in a story. Alternate translation: "You need to know this:" (See: **Background Information (p.109)**)

Now this

Here some words are left out that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You could supply these words if it would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "Now this was the custom" (See: **Ellipsis (p.139)**)

formerly

The word **formerly** implies that this custom was no longer practiced when the book of Ruth was written. Use a word or phrase that has this meaning. Alternate translation: "in earlier times" (See: **Background Information (p.109)**)

to his friend

The words **to his friend** refer to the person with whom a man was making the agreement. Alternate translation: "to the counterparty" or "to the man with whom he was making an agreement" (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 4:8

So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” and he took off his sandal

The events of the story start again here after the background information of verse 7. Use your language's way of starting to tell the events of the story again. (See: **Introduction of a New Event (p.174)**)

So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” and he took off his sandal

The word **So** at the beginning of this verse indicates that this event happened because of the custom described in the previous verse. If it would be clearer in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases. Alternate translation: “So the kinsman-redeemer took off his sandal and said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.124)**)

and he took off his sandal

The writer assumes that his readers will understand that the kinsman-redeemer gave the sandal to Boaz. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. See the UST. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Ruth 4:9

to the elders and to all the people

Here, **to the elders and to all the people** refers to all the people who were present at the meeting place, not to everyone in the town. The writer uses it here as a generalization for emphasis. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a different way to express the emphasis. Alternate translation: “to everyone there, including the elders” (See: **Hyperbole (p.163)**)

from the hand of Naomi

The **hand of Naomi** represents Naomi. Since her husband and sons had died, the right to the property belonged to her. Alternate translation: “from Naomi” (See: **Synecdoche (p.225)**)

everything that belonged to Elimelek and everything that belonged to Kilion and Mahlon

Alternate translation: “all the property that was formerly owned by Naomi’s deceased husband and sons”

Ruth 4:10

And also

This connecting phrase indicates that the people sitting at the gate are also witnesses to what follows. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “You are also witnesses that” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

in order to raise up the name of the dead over his inheritance

See how you translated this phrase in [4:5](#). Alternate translation: “so that I might give her a son who will inherit the dead man’s property”

the dead & the dead

Boaz is using the adjective **dead** as a noun to mean the one who died. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this word with an equivalent phrase. See how you translated it in [4:5](#). Alternate translation: “the man who died ... the dead man” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.196)**)

so that the name of the dead will not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his place

Being forgotten is spoken of here as if one’s name were being cut off from a list of one’s people. Alternate translation: “so that he will not be forgotten by his brothers’ descendants and by the people of this town” (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

so that the name of the dead will not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his place

If it would be clearer in your language, you could use a positive expression to translate this double negative that consists of the negative particle **not** and the negative **be cut off**. Alternate translation: “so that the name of the dead man will be preserved among his brothers and at the gate of his place” (See: **Double Negatives (p.134)**)

and from the gate of his place

Here, **the gate** refers to the location where the leaders gathered and made important legal decisions for **his place**, which refers to his town. This location represents the people there. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “and the important people of his town” (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

Today you are witnesses

Alternate translation: “You have seen and heard these things today and can speak of them tomorrow”

Ruth 4:11

the people who were in the gate

The implication is that **the people who were in the gate** are the same people who heard and observed the meeting between Boaz and the man who had been first as kinsman-redeemer. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “the people who had observed Boaz’s meeting with the first kinsman-redeemer” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

who is coming into your house

This has both a literal and a figurative meaning. As Ruth marries Boaz, she will move into his physical house. “House” can be a metonym that represents “family,” so this also refers to becoming part of Boaz’s family by being his wife. Alternate translation: “who is becoming part of your family” (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

May Yahweh make this woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built up the house of Israel

Here, the people are asking God to bless Ruth. Their blessing continues for Ruth and Boaz through verse 12. You could express this as either a blessing or a prayer, in whichever way is more natural in your language. Alternate translation: “We ask Yahweh to make this woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built up the house of Israel” (See: **Blessings (p.115)**)

like Rachel and Leah, the two who built up the house of Israel

Rachel and **Leah** are the names of two women, the two wives of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. They are considered to be the female ancestors of the people of Israel. They had many children, so implied in this blessing is the request that God give Ruth many children. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “like Rachel and Leah, who bore many children who then became the nation of Israel” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

built up the house of Israel

Here the people are speaking of the nation of **Israel** as if it were a **house**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “bore many children who then became the nation of Israel” (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

Prosper in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The second emphasizes the meaning of the first by repeating the same idea with different words. The area around the town of Bethlehem was known as Ephrathah, and that became another name for the town. Presumably, this name came from the Israelite clan that settled in and around the city of Bethlehem. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could connect the phrases with a word other than **and** in order to show that the second phrase is repeating the first one, not saying something additional. Alternate translation: “May you prosper among your clan of Ephrathah, yes, may you be important in Bethlehem” (See: **Parallelism (p.202)**)

Prosper in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem

The verbs here are command forms, but they communicate the good desire of the people rather than commands. They serve to continue the blessing while shifting it from Ruth to Boaz. Use the style of blessing that is appropriate in your language. Alternate translation: “And you, Boaz, may you prosper among your clan of Ephrathah, yes, may you be important in Bethlehem” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.169)**)

Ruth 4:12

And may your house become like the house of Perez

Here, **house** represents the people who might live in a house plus all of their descendants. Perez had many descendants who became large clans in Israel, including the clan of Ephrathah. Also, many of his descendants became important people. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "And may your clan become like the clan of Perez" (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

from the seed that Yahweh gives you

The people are asking for a blessing from Yahweh, that through Ruth he would give Boaz many children who would do good things, just as Yahweh did for Perez. Use the form of blessing that is appropriate in your language. (See: **Blessings (p.115)**)

Ruth 4:13

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife

These two clauses mean basically the same thing. The second clause emphasizes the meaning of the first by repeating the same idea with different words. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could combine the clauses into one clause. Alternate translation: “So Boaz took Ruth home to be his wife” (See: **Parallelism (p.202)**)

So Boaz took Ruth

The word translated as **So** indicates that Boaz did what he said he would do in verse 4:10. Use a connector in your language that makes it clear that what follows is a reason for what came before. This phrase does not imply any form of violence. Along with the following phrase, it simply means that Boaz married Ruth. Use a connecting word that indicates that this action by Boaz is a result of the agreement in verse 4:10. (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.124)**)

and he went in to her

The phrase, **he went in to her** is a polite way of referring to sexual intercourse. Use a polite way of referring to this in your language, or, if it is not offensive, you could state this plainly. Alternate translation: “and he slept with her” (See: **Euphemism (p.144)**)

Ruth 4:14

the women

These are **the women** of the town as mentioned in 1:19. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “the women of the town” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.106))

Blessed be Yahweh

The women are praising God for what he has done for Naomi and Ruth. If it does not make sense in your language to “bless” God, use a word like “praise” or “we give thanks.” Alternate translation: “We give thanks to Yahweh” (See: **Blessings** (p.115))

has not left you today without a kinsman-redeemer

If it would be clearer in your language, you could use a positive expression to translate this double negative that consists of the negative particle **not** and the negative preposition **without**. Alternate translation: “has provided you today with a kinsman to redeem you” (See: **Double Negatives** (p.134))

May his name be renowned

This is a blessing, stating that the women desire that Naomi’s grandson will have a good reputation and character. Use the form of blessing that is appropriate in your language. Alternate translation: “May Yahweh make him a great man” (See: **Blessings** (p.115))

May his name be renowned in Israel

Here, **name** represents the son’s person and reputation. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “May he become a great man in Israel” (See: **Metonymy** (p.194))

Ruth 4:15

a restorer of life

This phrase, **a restorer of life**, refers to how Naomi will again experience joy and hope in her life as a result of having this grandson. Alternate translation: “one who brings joy to you again” or “one who will make you feel young and strong again” (See: **Metaphor (p.188)**)

and a nourisher of your old age

Here, **old age** represents Naomi when she is old. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “and he will provide for you when you become old” (See: **Metonymy (p.194)**)

For

For indicates that what follows this word gives the reason for what came before it. Here, **For** indicates that what follows (the fact that Ruth has borne him) is the reason for the women’s confident prediction of his character. Use a connection word or other way to indicate that the second sentence of this verse explains the first one. Alternate translation: “We know this because” or “It is certain because” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.124)**)

is better to you than seven sons

In this culture, the number **seven** represented the idea of completeness or perfection. This is a way to praise Ruth for how she has provided for Naomi by bearing a grandson for her by Boaz, when Naomi’s husband and sons could not provide for her because they had died. Alternate translation: “better to you than any son” or “worth more to you than many sons” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

Ruth 4:16

And Naomi took the child

The phrase **And Naomi took the child** does not mean that she took him away from Ruth in any hostile way. This probably indicates that Naomi held the child for a kind of ceremony of adoption. (See: **Symbolic Action (p.223)**)

and she became his nurse

Alternate translation: "and she took care of him"

Ruth 4:17

So the neighbor women called out a name for him, saying, “& And they called his name Obed

These two clauses mean basically the same thing. The first phrase introduces the naming event, and the second repeats it in order to report the event. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could combine the clauses that both refer to calling out a name. Alternate translation: “Then the women of the neighborhood said ... And they called him Obed” (See: **Parallelism (p.202)**)

A son has been born to Naomi

A son has been born to Naomi is an idiom that means “Naomi now has a grandson, a male in her family line.” If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “Naomi now has a male heir again” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

And they called his name Obed

Here, **called his name** is an idiom that means “named.” If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “And they called him Obed” or “And they gave him the name Obed” (See: **Idiom (p.167)**)

He was the father of Jesse

Here the term **father** specifically refers to a male parent. It may be necessary to make it clear that much time passed between the births of Obed, Jesse, and David. Alternate translation: “Later, Obed fathered a son, Jesse” (See: **Kinship (p.184)**)

the father of David

Though **King** is not stated, it was clear to the original audience that this David was King David. Alternate translation: “who later became the father of King David” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.106)**)

Ruth 4:18

the generations of Perez

Because it was mentioned earlier that Perez was the son of Judah, the writer continues listing the family line that came from Perez. Verse 4:17 was the end of the story about Naomi and Ruth, and verse 4:18 begins a final section that lists the family line of the clan of Ephrathah, showing how important Obed was as the grandfather of King David. Use a connecting word that signals that this is a new section. You may also need to make it clear that this verse refers to a much earlier time than the time period of the story. Alternate translation: “the successive descendants of our clan, starting with Perez” (See: **Introduction of a New Event (p.174)**)

Perez fathered Hezron

Perez and **Hezron** are the names of men. Use forms of these names that are natural in your language. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.159)**)

Ruth 4:19

and Hezron & Ram; & Amminadab

Hezron, Ram, and **Amminidab** are the names of men. Use forms of these names that are natural in your language. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.159)**)

Ruth 4:20

Amminidab, **Nahshon**, and **Salmon** are the names of men. Use forms of these names that are natural in your language. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.159)**)

Ruth 4:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Ruth 4:22

David

See the note about **David** on [4:17](#). Alternate translation: “King David” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.106))



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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: [Ruth 1:8](#); [Ruth 1:22](#); [Ruth 4:6](#)

Active or Passive

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

- Active: **My father** built the house in 2010.
- Passive: **The house** was built in 2010.

Translators whose languages do not use passive sentences will need to know how they can translate passive sentences that they find in the Bible. Other translators will need to decide when to use a passive sentence and when to use the active form.

This page answers the question: *What do active and passive mean, and how do I translate passive sentences?*

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

Description

Some languages have both active and passive forms of sentences.

- In the active form, the subject does the action and is always mentioned.
- In the passive form, the action is done to the subject, and the one who does the action is not always mentioned.

In the examples of active and passive sentences below, we have bolded the subject.

- active: **My father** built the house in 2010.
- passive: **The house** was built by my father in 2010.
- passive: **The house** was built in 2010. (This does not tell who did the action.)

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

All languages use active forms. Some languages use passive forms, and some do not. Some languages use passive forms only for certain purposes, and the passive form is not used for the same purposes in all of the languages that use it.

Purposes for the Passive

- The speaker is talking about the person or thing the action was done to, not about the person who did the action.
- The speaker does not want to tell who did the action.
- The speaker does not know who did the action.

Translation Principles Regarding the Passive

- Translators whose language does not use passive forms will need to find another way to express the idea.
- Translators whose language has passive forms will need to understand why the passive is used in a particular sentence in the Bible and decide whether or not to use a passive form for that purpose in his translation of the sentence.

Examples From the Bible

Then their shooters shot at your soldiers from off the wall, and some of the king's servants **were killed**, and your servant Uriah the Hittite **was killed** too. (2 Samuel 11:24 ULT)

This means that the enemy's shooters shot and killed some of the king's servants, including Uriah. The point is what happened to the king's servants and Uriah, not who shot them. The purpose of the passive form here is to keep the focus on the king's servants and Uriah.

When the men of the city arose early in the morning, and see, the altar of Baal **was torn down**.
(Judges 6:28a ULT)

The men of the town saw what had happened to the altar of Baal, but they did not know who broke it down. The purpose of the passive form here is to communicate this event from the perspective of the men of the town.

It would be better for him if a millstone **were put** around his neck and he **were thrown** into the sea. (Luke 17:2a ULT)

This describes a situation in which a person ends up in the sea with a millstone around his neck. The purpose of the passive form here is to keep the focus on what happens to this person. Who does these things to the person is not important.

Translation Strategies

If your language would use a passive form for the same purpose as in the passage that you are translating, then use a passive form. If you decide that it is better to translate without a passive form, here are some strategies that you might consider.

(1) Use the same verb in an active sentence and tell who or what did the action. If you do this, try to keep the focus on the person receiving the action. (2) Use the same verb in an active sentence, and do not tell who or what did the action. Instead, use a generic expression like "they" or "people" or "someone." (3) Use a different verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the same verb in an active sentence and tell who did the action. If you do this, try to keep the focus on the person receiving the action.

A loaf of bread **was given** him every day from the street of the bakers. (Jeremiah 37:21b ULT)

The king's servants gave Jeremiah a loaf of bread every day from the street of the bakers.

(2) Use the same verb in an active sentence, and do not tell who did the action. Instead, use a generic expression like "they" or "people" or "someone."

It would be better for him if a millstone **were put** around his neck and he **were thrown** into the sea. (Luke 17:2a ULT)

It would be better for him if **they were to put** a millstone around his neck and **throw** him into the sea. It would be better for him if **someone were to put** a heavy stone around his neck and **throw** him into the sea.

(3) Use a different verb in an active sentence.

A loaf of bread **was given** him every day from the street of the bakers. (Jeremiah 37:21 ULT)

He **received** a loaf of bread every day from the street of the bakers.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Abstract Nouns \(UTA PDF\)](#)

[Word Order \(UTA PDF\)](#)

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:3](#); [Ruth 1:5](#); [Ruth 2:11](#); [Ruth 2:19](#); [Ruth 2:20](#); [Ruth 2:23](#); [Ruth 3:8](#); [Ruth 3:14](#)

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: [Ruth 1:1](#); [Ruth 1:6](#); [Ruth 1:12](#); [Ruth 1:13](#); [Ruth 2:3](#); [Ruth 2:9](#); [Ruth 2:12](#); [Ruth 2:15](#); [Ruth 2:18](#); [Ruth 2:21](#); [Ruth 3 General Notes](#); [Ruth 3:2](#); [Ruth 3:10](#); [Ruth 3:13](#); [Ruth 3:14](#); [Ruth 3:16](#); [Ruth 3:18](#); [Ruth 4:1](#); [Ruth 4:4](#); [Ruth 4:6](#); [Ruth 4:8](#); [Ruth 4:10](#); [Ruth 4:11](#); [Ruth 4:14](#); [Ruth 4:17](#); [Ruth 4:22](#)

Background Information

Description

When people tell a story, they normally tell the events in the order that they happened. This sequence of events makes up the storyline. The storyline is full of action verbs that move the story along in time. But sometimes a writer may take a break from the storyline and give some information to help his listeners understand the story better. This type of information is called background information. The background information might be about things that happened before the events he has already told about, or it might explain something in the story, or it might be about something that would happen much later in the story.

This page answers the question: *What is background information, and how can I show that some information is background information?*

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

Order of Events ([UTA PDF](#))

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Example — The bolded phrases in the story below are all background information.

Peter and John went on a hunting trip because **their village was going to have a feast the next day. Peter was the best hunter in the village. He once killed three wild pigs in one day!** They walked for hours through low bushes until they heard a wild pig. The pig ran, but they managed to shoot the pig and kill it. Then they tied up its legs with some rope **they had brought with them** and carried it home on a pole. When they brought it to the village, Peter's cousin saw the pig and realized that it was his own pig. Peter had mistakenly killed his cousin's pig.

Background information often tells about something that had happened earlier or something that would happen much later. Examples of these are: "their village was going to have a feast the next day," "He once killed three wild pigs in one day," and "that they had brought with them."

Often background information uses "be" verbs like "was" and "were," rather than action verbs. Examples of these are "their village was going to have a feast the next day," and "Peter **was** the best hunter in the village."

Background information can also be marked with words that tell the reader that this information is not part of the event line of the story. In this story, some of these words are "because," "once," and "had."

A writer may use background information:

- to help their listeners be interested in the story
- to help their listeners understand something in the story
- to help the listeners understand why something is important in the story
- to tell the setting of a story

- Setting includes:
 - where the story takes place
 - when the story takes place
 - who is present when the story begins
 - what is happening when the story begins

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Languages have different ways of marking background information and storyline information.
- You (the translator) need to know the order of the events in the Bible, which information is background information, and which is storyline information.
- You will need to translate the story in a way that marks the background information in a way that your own readers will understand the order of events, which information is background information, and which is storyline information.

Examples From the Bible

Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram **was 86 years old** when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:15-16 ULT)

The first sentence tells about two events. Hagar gave birth and Abraham named his son. The second sentence is background information about how old Abram was when those things happened.

And Jesus himself **was beginning about 30 years old**. He **was the son (as it was assumed)** of Joseph, of Heli, (Luke 3:23 ULT)

The verses before this tell about when Jesus was baptized. This sentence introduces a section of background information about Jesus' age and ancestors (Luke 3:23-38). The story resumes in chapter 4 where it tells about Jesus going to the wilderness.

Then **it happened on a Sabbath** that he **was going through the grain fields**, and his disciples **were picking and eating the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands**. But some of the Pharisees said ... (Luke 6:1-2a ULT)

These verses give the setting of the story. The events took place in a grain field on the Sabbath day. Jesus, his disciples, and some Pharisees were there, and Jesus' disciples were picking heads of grain and eating them. The main action in the story starts with the phrase, "But some of the Pharisees said"

Translation Strategies

To keep translations clear and natural you will need to study how people tell stories in your language. Observe how your language marks background information. You may need to write down some stories in order to study this. Observe what kinds of verbs your language uses for background information and what kinds of words or other markers signal that something is background information. Do these same things when you translate, so that your translation is clear and natural and people can understand it easily.

- (1) Use your language's way of showing that certain information is background information.
- (2) Reorder the information so that earlier events are mentioned first. (This is not always possible when the background information is very long.)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use your language's way of showing that certain information is background information. The examples below explain how this was done in the ULT English translations.

And Jesus himself **was** beginning about 30 years old. He **was** the son **(as it was assumed)** of Joseph, of Heli. (Luke 3:23 ULT)

As here, English sometimes uses the word "and" to show that there is some kind of change in the story. The verb "was" shows that it is background information. A set of parentheses is also a way to mark background information. Here, "as it was assumed" gives background information to the phrase, "He was the son." People assumed that Joseph was Jesus' father, although his true father was God.

Therefore, also exhorting many other things, he preached the good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, having been rebuked by him concerning Herodias, the wife of his brother, and **concerning all the evil things that Herod had done**, added even this to them all: He locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20 ULT)

The bolded phrase happened before John rebuked Herod. In English, the helping verb "had" in "had done" shows that Herod did those things before John rebuked him.

(2) Reorder the information so that earlier events are mentioned first.

Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.
Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:16 ULT)

"When Abram was 86 years old, Hagar gave birth to his son, and Abram named his son Ishmael."

Therefore, also exhorting many other things, he preached the good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, having been rebuked by him concerning Herodias, the wife of his brother, and **concerning all the evil things that Herod had done**, added even this to them all: He locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20 ULT)

The translation below reorders John's rebuke and Herod's actions.

"Now Herod the tetrarch married his brother's wife, Herodias, and **he did many other evil things**, so John rebuked him. But then Herod did another very evil thing. He had John locked up in prison."

Next we recommend you learn about:

Connecting Words and Phrases ([UTA PDF](#))

Introduction of a New Event ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:22](#); [Ruth 2:1](#); [Ruth 3:8](#); [Ruth 4:7](#)

Biblical Volume

Description

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

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

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

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-decimal\]\]](#)

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

Translation Principles

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

When the unit of measure is stated

Translation Strategies

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

Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only 22 liters¹, and 220 liters² of seed will yield only 22 liters³."

The footnotes would look like:

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

When the unit of measure is implied

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

- (2) Use a generic word like “measure” or “quantity” or “amount.”

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

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

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

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

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Fractions \(UTA PDF\)](#)

[Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit \(UTA PDF\)](#)

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:17](#)

Blessings

Description

Blessings are short sayings that people use to ask God to do something good for another person. In the Bible, the person saying the blessing speaks or writes directly to the person who will receive the blessing. The person who says the blessing does not directly speak to God, but it is understood that God is the one who will do the good thing mentioned. It is also understood that God hears the blessing, whether he is mentioned by name or not.

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

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Poetry ([UTA PDF](#))

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Each language has its own ways of saying blessings. There are many blessings in the Bible. They need to be translated in the way that people say blessings in your language, so that people recognize them as blessings and understand what one person wants God to do for another.

Examples From the Bible

In the Bible, people often said a blessing when they met someone or when they were leaving someone or sending someone off.

In the book of Ruth, when Boaz meets his workers in the fields, he greets them with a blessing:

Then behold, Boaz coming from Bethlehem! And he said to the reapers, "Yahweh be with you." And they said to him, "May Yahweh bless you." (Ruth 2:4 ULT)

Similarly, when Rebekah leaves her family, they say farewell with a blessing:

They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them." (Genesis 24:60 ULT)

In a similar way, the writers of letters in the New Testament often wrote a blessing at the beginning of their letters as well as at the end. Here are examples from the beginning and end of Paul's second letter to Timothy:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (2 Tim 1:2 ULT) The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

Translation Strategies

Find out how people say blessings in your language. Collect a list of common blessings, noting the form of the verb, the use of certain words, and the words that are not used in a blessing but would normally be in a sentence. Also find out what differences there might be between blessings that people use when they are speaking to each other and when they are writing to each other.

If translating a blessing literally would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing that. If not, here are some options:

Add a verb if that is natural in your language.

Mention God as the subject of a blessing if that is natural in your language.

Translate the blessing in a form that is natural and clear in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add a verb if that is natural in your language.

■ The Lord with your spirit. The grace with you. (2 Tim 4:22, literal from the Greek)

In the Greek of this verse, there is no verb 'be.' However, in blessings in English, it is natural to use a verb. The idea that the 'grace' from God will be or remain with the person is implied in Greek.

The Lord **be** with your spirit. Grace **be** with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

(2) Mention God as the subject of a blessing if that is natural in your language.

If people expect a blessing to refer to God in your language, you might have to provide 'God' as the subject or as the source of the blessing. In Greek and Hebrew, usually God is not explicitly mentioned in the blessing, but it is implied that God is the one acting to show his kindness to the person being addressed.

■ The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

The Lord be with your spirit. **May God give** grace to you.

■ They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them." (Genesis 24:60 ULT)

They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, may **God grant that** you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may **God empower** your descendants **to** possess the gate of those who hate them."

(3) Translate the blessing in a form that is natural and clear in your language.

Here are some ideas for ways that people might say a blessing in their language.

■ The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

May the Lord be with your spirit. May God cause his grace to be with you.

May you have God's presence with you. May you experience grace from God.

■ "Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them." (Genesis 24:60 ULT)

"Our sister, we pray to God that you may be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and appeal to him that your descendants may possess the gate of those who hate them."

"Our sister, by God's power you will be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and your descendants will possess the gate of those who hate them."

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:8](#); [Ruth 1:9](#); [Ruth 2:4](#); [Ruth 2:19](#); [Ruth 2:20](#); [Ruth 3:10](#); [Ruth 4:11](#); [Ruth 4:12](#); [Ruth 4:14](#)

Connect — Background Information

Time Relationship

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

This page answers the question: *How can I translate clauses that give background information?*

Background Clause

Description

A background clause is one that describes something that is ongoing. Then, in the same sentence, another clause indicates an event that begins to happen during that time. These events are also simultaneous events, but they have the further relationship of background event and main event because the event that is already happening serves as the background for the other event, the one that is in focus. The background event simply provides the time frame or other context for the main event or events.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages indicate a shift in time in different ways. You (the translator) need to understand how these shifts in time are indicated in the original languages in order to communicate them clearly in your own language. Background clauses often indicate a time that began long before the event that is in focus. Translators need to understand how both the source language and the target language communicate background events. Some English words that indicate background events are “now,” “when,” “while,” and “during.” Those words can also indicate simultaneous events. To tell the difference, ask yourself if all of the events seem to be equal in importance and started at about the same time. If so, they are probably simultaneous events. But if an event(s) is ongoing and another event(s) just started, then the ongoing event(s) is probably background to the other event(s). Some common phrases that indicate background events are “in those days” and “at that time.”

Examples From OBS and the Bible

When Solomon was old, he also worshiped their gods. (OBS Story 18 Frame 3)

Solomon began to worship foreign gods at a time when he was old. Being old is the background event. Worshiping other gods is the main event.

And his parents went **every year** to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up according to the custom of the feast. (Luke 2:41-42 ULT)

The first event—going to Jerusalem—is ongoing and started long ago. We know this because of the words “every year.” Going to Jerusalem is the background event. Then an event begins that started during the time “when he was twelve years old.” So the main event is the specific time Jesus and his family traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover festival **when he was twelve years old**.

And it came about that, **while** they were there, the days were fulfilled for her to give birth. (Luke 2:6 ULT)

Being in Bethlehem is the background event. The birth of the baby is the main event.

And in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—**while** Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **during** the high priesthood of

Annas and Caiaphas—the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.
(Luke 3:1-2 ULT)

This example begins with five background clauses (marked by commas), signalled as background by the words “while” and “during.” Then the main event happens: “the word of God came to John.”

Translation Strategies

If the way that the Background Clauses are marked is also clear in your language, then translate the Background Clauses as they are.

- (1) If the connecting word does not make it clear that what follows is a Background Clause, use a connecting word that communicates this more clearly.
- (2) If your language marks Background Clauses in a different way than using connecting words (such as by using different verb forms), then use that way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

And in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—**while** Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **during** the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.
(Luke 3:1-2 ULT)

- (1) If the connecting word does not make it clear that what follows is a background clause, use a connecting word that communicates this more clearly.

It happened during the time that Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, **and during the time that** Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, **and during the time that** his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, **and during the time that** Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **and also during the time that** Annas and Caiaphas were high priests—**that** the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

- (2) If your language marks background clauses in a different way than using connecting words, such as with different verb forms, then use that way.

Pontius Pilate **was governing** Judea, and Herod **was ruling over** Galilee, and his brother Philip **was ruling over** the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias **was ruling over** Abilene, and Annas and Caiaphas **were being** high priests—the word of God **came** to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

Example of Differences in Time Relationship Connecting Words:

Category	Example
Background setting	Yahweh's word was rare in those days ;
Background repeated	there was no frequent prophetic vision.
Introduction of main event	At that time, when Eli
Background	whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see well,
Simultaneous background	was lying down in his own bed.
Simultaneous background	The lamp of God had not yet gone out,
Simultaneous background	and Samuel was lying down to sleep in the temple of Yahweh,
Simultaneous background	where the ark of God was.
Main event	Yahweh called to Samuel,
Sequential event	who said, "Here I am." (1 Sam 3:1-4 ULT)

In the above example, the first two lines talk about a condition that was going on for a long time. This is the general, long-term background. We know this from the phrase "in those days." After the introduction of the main event ("At that time,"), there are several lines of simultaneous background. The first one is introduced by "when," and then three more follow, with the last connected by "and." The background clause introduced by "where" explains a little more about the background clause before it. Then the main event happens, followed by more events. Translators will need to think about the best way to show these relationships in their language.

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:19](#)

Connect — Contrast Relationship

Logical Relationships

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

This page answers the question: *How can I translate a contrast relationship?*

Contrast Relationship

Description

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From OBS and the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:10](#); [Ruth 1:11](#); [Ruth 2:10](#); [Ruth 3:12](#)

Connect — Exception Clauses

Exceptional Relationship

This page answers the question: *How can I translate exception clauses?*

Description

Exceptional relationship connectors exclude one or more items or people from a group.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

English indicates exceptional relationships by first describing a group (Part 1) and then stating what is not in that group by using words like “except,” “but not,” “other than,” “besides,” “unless,” “however ... not,” and “only” (Part 2). Some languages do not indicate in this way that one or more items or people are excluded from a group. Instead, they have other ways of doing this. In some languages this type of construction does not make sense because the exception in Part 2 seems to contradict the statement in Part 1. Translators need to understand who (or what) is in the group and who (or what) is excluded in order to be able to accurately communicate this in their language.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

God told Adam that he could eat from **any** tree in the garden **except** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (OBS Story 1 Frame 11)

But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for there is **no one** to redeem it **besides** you, and I am after you. (Ruth 4:4b ULT)

David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Not** a man escaped **except for** 400 young men, who rode on camels and fled. (1 Samuel 30:17 ULT)

The man said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.” Jacob said, “I will **not** let you go **unless** you bless me.” (Genesis 32:26 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If the way that Exceptional Clauses are marked in the source language is also clear in your language, then translate the Exceptional Clauses in the same way.

- (1) Very often, the exception in Part 2 contradicts something that was negated in Part 1. In this case, the translator can phrase the same idea without the contradiction by deleting the negative and using a word like “**only**.”
- (2) Reverse the order of the clauses so that the exception is stated first, and then the larger group is named second.

Examples of Translation Strategy Applied

- (1) Very often, the exception in Part 2 contradicts something that was negated in Part 1. In this case, the translator can phrase the same idea without the contradiction by deleting the negative and using a word like “**only**.”

David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Not a man escaped except for 400 young men**, who rode on camels and fled. (1 Samuel 30:17 ULT)

- Part 1: (**Not** a man escaped)
- Part 2: (**except for** 400 young men)

David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Only** 400 young men escaped; they rode on camels and fled.

But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for there is **no one** to redeem it **besides** you, and I am after you. (Ruth 4:4 ULT)

But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for **you are first in line to redeem it {only you can redeem it}**, and I am after you.

The man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." Jacob said, "I will **not** let you go **unless** you bless me." (Genesis 32:26 ULT)

The man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." Jacob said, "I will let you go **only if** you bless me."

(2) Reverse the order of the clauses, so that the exception is stated first, and then the larger group is named second.

God told Adam that he could eat from **any** tree in the garden **except** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (OBS Story 1 Frame 11)

God told Adam that he could **not** eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but he could eat from **any other** tree in the garden.

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 4:4](#)

Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

Logical Relationships

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

This page answers the question: *How can I translate the reason-result relationship?*

Reason-and-Result Relationships

Description

A reason-and-result relationship is a logical relationship in which one event is the **reason** or cause for another event. The second event, then, is the **result** of the first event.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

A reason-and-result relationship can look forward — “I did Y because I wanted X to happen.” But usually it is looking backward — “X happened, and so I did Y.” Also, it is possible to state the reason either before or after the result. Many languages have a preferred order for the reason and the result, and it will be confusing for the reader if they are in the opposite order. Common words used to indicate a reason-and-result relationship in English are “because,” “so,” “therefore,” and “for.” Some of these words can also be used to indicate a goal relationship, so translators need to be aware of the difference between a goal relationship and a reason-and-result relationship. It is necessary for translators to understand how the two events are connected, and then communicate them clearly in their language.

If the reason and result are stated in different verses, it is still possible to put them in a different order. If you change the order of the verses, then put the verse numbers together at the beginning of the group of verses that were rearranged like this: 1-2. This is called a [Verse Bridge](#).

Examples From OBS and the Bible

The Jews were amazed, **because** Saul had tried to kill believers, and now he believed in Jesus!
(Story 46 Frame 6 OBS)

The **reason** is the change in Saul — that he had tried to kill people who believed in Jesus, and now he himself believed in Jesus. The **result** is that the Jews were amazed. “Because” connects the two ideas and indicates that what follows it is a reason.

Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **so that** the boat was covered with the waves.
(Matthew 8:24a ULT)

The **reason** is the great storm, and the **result** is that the boat was covered with the waves. The two events are connected by “so that.” Notice that the term “so that” often indicates a goal relationship, but here the relationship is reason-and-result. This is because the sea cannot think and therefore does not have a goal.

God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it he rested from all his work which he had done in his creation. (Genesis 2:3 ULT)

The **result** is that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. The **reason** is because he rested on the seventh day from his work.

“Blessed are the poor, **for** yours is the kingdom of God.” (Luke 6:20b ULT)

The **result** is that the poor are blessed. The **reason** is that the kingdom of God is theirs.

But he raised up in their place their sons that Joshua circumcised, being uncircumcised, **because** they had not been circumcised on the way. (Joshua 5:7 ULT)

The **result** is that Joshua circumcised the boys and men who had been born in the wilderness. The **reason** was that they had not been circumcised while they were journeying.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses reason-and-result relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

- (1) If the order of the clauses is confusing for the reader, then change the order.
- (2) If the relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a more clear connecting word.
- (3) If it is more clear to put a connecting word in the clause that does not have one, then do so.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it he rested from all his work which he had done in his creation. (Genesis 2:3 ULT)

- (1) God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done in his creation. **That is why** he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

Blessed are the poor, **for** yours is the kingdom of God. (Luke 6:20 ULT)

- (1) The kingdom of God belongs to you who are poor. **Therefore**, the poor are blessed.
- (2) Blessed are the poor, **because** yours is the kingdom of God.
- (3) **The reason that** the poor are blessed **is because** yours is the kingdom of God.

Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **so that** the boat was covered with the waves. (Matthew 8:24a ULT)

- (1) Behold, the boat was covered with the waves **because** a great storm arose on the sea.
- (2) Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **with the result that** the boat was covered with the waves.
- (3) Behold, **because** a great storm arose on the sea, the boat was covered with the waves.

Since he was not able to find out anything for certain because of the noise, he ordered that he be brought into the fortress. (Acts 21:34b ULT)

- (1) The captain ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress, **because** he could not tell anything because of all the noise.
- (2) **Because** the captain could not tell anything because of all the noise, he ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress.
- (3) The captain could not tell anything because of all the noise, **so** he ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress.

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:18](#); [Ruth 2:23](#); [Ruth 3:2](#); [Ruth 3:11](#); [Ruth 4:8](#); [Ruth 4:13](#); [Ruth 4:15](#)

Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship

Time Relationships

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

This page answers the question: *How can I translate clauses with a simultaneous time relationship?*

Simultaneous Clause

Description

A simultaneous clause is a time relationship that connects two or more events that occur at the same time.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages indicate in many different ways that events occur simultaneously. These ways may vary based on whether or not something is causing the events to occur simultaneously. Connecting words that may indicate simultaneous events are words such as “while,” “as,” and “during.” Often the Bible does not state a relationship between the events but simply says they occurred at the same time. It is important that you (the translator) know when a time relationship is implied and when it is not implied so that you can communicate it clearly. A simultaneous clause communicates that events happened at the same time but it does not indicate that one event caused the other. That would be a reason-and-result relationship.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

Joseph served his master well, **and** God blessed Joseph. (OBS Story 8 Frame 4)

Two events happened while Joseph was a slave to a wealthy government official: Joseph served well, and God blessed Joseph. There is no indication of a reason-and-result (cause and effect) relationship between the two, or that the first event happened, and then the second event happened.

But in truth I say to you that there were many widows in Israel **during** the days of Elijah. (Luke 4:25b ULT)

The connecting word “**during**” tells us clearly that two things happened at the same time, but one event did not cause the other.

And the people were waiting for Zechariah, **and** they were wondering at his delaying in the temple. (Luke 1:21 ULT)

The people were both waiting and wondering at the same time. The general connector “**and**” indicates this.

While they were looking intensely into heaven **as** he was going up, suddenly, two men stood by them in white clothing. (Acts 1:10 ULT)

Three events happened at the same time — the disciples looking, Jesus going up, and two men standing. The connector words “**while**” and “**as**” tell us this.

Translation Strategies

If the way that the simultaneous clauses are marked also is clear in your language, then translate the simultaneous clauses as they are.

- (1) If the connecting word does not make it clear that the simultaneous clauses are happening at the same time, use a connecting word that communicates this more clearly.
- (2) If it is not clear which clause the simultaneous clause is connected to, and that they are happening at the same time, mark all of the clauses with a connecting word.
- (3) If your language marks events as simultaneous in a different way than using connecting words, then use that way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

Below, each Bible verse will be restated in three different ways, according to the translation strategies in the list above. Each restatement will have the same number as the translation strategy that it is using.

And the people were waiting for Zechariah, **and** they were wondering at his delaying in the temple. (Luke 1:21 ULT)

- (1) Now **while** the people were waiting for Zechariah, they were wondering at his delaying in the temple.
- (2) Now **while** the people were waiting for Zechariah, they were **also** wondering at his delaying in the temple.
- (3) Now the people were waiting for Zechariah, wondering at his delaying in the temple.

While they were looking intently into heaven **as** he was going up, suddenly, two men stood by them in white clothing. (Acts 1:10 ULT)

- (1) And **during the time** they were looking intently into heaven **while** he was going up, suddenly, two men stood by them in white clothing.
- (2) And **while** they were looking intently into heaven **as** he was going up, suddenly, **at that same time** two men stood by them in white clothing.
- (3) They were looking intently into heaven; he was going up **when** they saw two men standing by them in white clothing.

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:1](#)

Connecting Words and Phrases

Description

This page answers the question: *How do connecting words work to join parts of the text in different ways?*

As humans, we write our thoughts in phrases and sentences. We usually want to communicate a series of thoughts that are connected to each other in different ways. **Connecting words and phrases** show how these thoughts are related to each other. For example, we can show how the following thoughts are related by using the Connecting Words in bold type:

- It was raining, **so** I opened my umbrella.
- It was raining, **but** I did not have an umbrella. **So** I got very wet.

Connecting words or phrases can connect phrases or clauses within a sentence. They can connect sentences to each other. They can also connect entire chunks to one another in order to show how the chunk before relates to the chunk after the connecting word. Very often, the connecting words that connect entire chunks to one another are either conjunctions or adverbs.

It was raining, but I did not have an umbrella, so I got very wet.

Now I must change my clothes. Then I will drink a cup of hot tea and warm myself by the fire.

In the above example, the word **now** connects the two short chunks of text, showing the relationship between them. The speaker must change his clothes, drink hot tea, and warm himself because of something that happened earlier (that is, he got wet in the rain).

Sometimes people might not use a connecting word because they expect the context to help the readers understand the relationship between the thoughts. Some languages do not use connecting words as much as other languages do. They might say:

- It was raining. I did not have an umbrella. I got very wet.

You (the translator) will need to use the method that is most natural and clear in the target language. But in general, using connecting words whenever possible helps the reader to understand the ideas in the Bible most clearly.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You need to understand the relationship between paragraphs, between sentences, and between parts of sentences in the Bible, and how connecting words and phrases can help you to understand the relationship between the thoughts that they are connecting.
- Each language has its own ways of showing how thoughts are related.
- You need to know how to help readers understand the relationship between the thoughts in a way that is natural in your language.

Translation Principles

- You need to translate in a way that readers can understand the same relationship between thoughts that the original readers would have understood.
- Whether or not a connecting word is used is not as important as readers being able to understand the relationship between the ideas.

The Different Types of Connections

Listed below are different types of connections between ideas or events. These different types of connections can be indicated by using different connecting words. When we write or translate something, it is important to use the right connecting word so that these connections are clear for the reader. If you would like additional information, simply click the colored, hyperlinked word to be directed to a page containing definitions and examples for each type of connection.

- [Sequential Clause](#) — a time relationship between two events in which one happens and then the other happens.
- [Simultaneous Clause](#) — a time relationship between two or more events that occur at the same time.
- [Background Clause](#) — a time relationship in which the first clause describes a long event that is happening at the time when the beginning of the second event happens, which is described in the second clause.
- [Exceptional Relationship](#) — one clause describes a group of people or items, and the other clause excludes one or more items or people from the group.
- [Hypothetical Condition](#) — the second event will only take place if the first one takes place. Sometimes what takes place is dependent on the actions of other people.
- [Factual Condition](#) — a connection that sounds hypothetical but is already certain or true, so that the condition is guaranteed to happen.
- [Contrary-to-Fact Condition](#) — a connection that sounds hypothetical but is already certain that it is not true. See also: [Hypothetical Statements](#).
- [Goal Relationship](#) — a logical relationship in which the second event is the purpose or goal of the first.
- [Reason and Result Relationship](#) — a logical relationship in which one event is the reason for the other event, the result.
- [Contrast Relationship](#) — one item is being described as different or in opposition to another.

Examples from the Bible

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. **Instead**, I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. **Then** after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days. (Galatians 1:16b-18 ULT)

The word “instead” introduces something that contrasts with what was said before. The contrast here is between what Paul did not do and what he did do. The word “then” introduces a sequence of events. It introduces something that Paul did after he returned to Damascus.

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

The word “therefore” links this section with the section before it, signaling that the section that came before gave the reason for this section. “Therefore” usually links sections larger than one sentence. The word “and” links only two actions within the same sentence, that of breaking commandments and teaching others. In this verse the word “but” contrasts what one group of people will be called in God’s kingdom with what another group of people will be called.

We place nothing as a stumbling block in front of anyone, **so that** our ministry might not be discredited. **Instead**, we commend ourselves in everything as God’s servants. (2 Corinthians 6:3-4 ULT)

Here the words “so that” connect what follows as the reason for what came before; the reason that Paul does not place stumbling blocks is that he does not want his ministry brought into disrepute. “Instead” contrasts what Paul does (prove by his actions that he is God’s servant) with what he said he does not do (place stumbling blocks).

General Translation Strategies

See each type of Connecting Word above for specific strategies

If the way the relationship between thoughts is shown in the ULT would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, then consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Use a connecting word (even if the ULT does not use one).
- (2) Do not use a connecting word if it would be strange to use one and people would understand the right relationship between the thoughts without it.
- (3) Use a different connecting word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a connecting word (even if the ULT does not use one).

Jesus said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Then immediately they left the nets and followed him. (Mark 1:17-18 ULT)

They followed Jesus because he told them to. Some translators may want to mark this clause with the connecting word "so."

Jesus said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." **So**, immediately they left the nets and followed him.

- (2) Do not use a connecting word if it would be odd to use one, and if people would understand the right relationship between the thoughts without it.

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

Some languages would prefer not to use connecting words here because the meaning is clear without them and using them would be unnatural. They might translate like this:

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments, teaching others to do so as well, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. **Instead**, I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. **Then** after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days. (Galatians 1:16b-18 ULT) (Galatians 1:16-18 ULT)

Some languages might not need the words "instead" or "then" here. They might translate like this:

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me. I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. After three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days.

- (3) Use a different connecting word.

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

Instead of a word like “therefore,” a language might need a phrase to indicate that there was a section before it that gave the reason for the section that follows. Also, the word “but” is used here because of the contrast between the two groups of people. But in some languages, the word “but” would show that what comes after it is surprising because of what came before it. So “and” might be clearer for those languages. They might translate like this:

Because of that, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.
And whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

”

Referenced in: [Ruth 3:12](#)

Direct and Indirect Quotations

Description

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

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

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

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

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

This page answers the question: *What are direct and indirect quotations?*

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

Pronouns ([UTA PDF](#))

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

Quotations and Quote Margins ([UTA PDF](#))

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: [Ruth 4:1](#)

Double Negatives

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each express the meaning of “not.” Double negatives mean very different things in different languages. To translate sentences that have double negatives accurately and clearly, you need to know what a double negative means in the Bible and how to express this idea in your language.

This page answers the question: *What are double negatives?*

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

Parts of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Description

Negative words are words that have in them the meaning “not.” Examples in English are “no,” “not,” “none,” “no one,” “nothing,” “nowhere,” “never,” “nor,” “neither,” and “without.” Also, some words have prefixes or suffixes that mean “not,” such as the bolded parts of these words: “**un**happy,” “**im**possible,” and “**useless**.” Some other kinds of words also have a negative meaning, such as “lack” or “reject,” or even “fight” or “evil.”

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each have a negative meaning.

We did this **not** because we have **no** authority ... (2 Thessalonians 3:9a ULT)

And this was **not** done **without** an oath! (Hebrews 7:20a ULT)

Be sure of this—the wicked person will **not** go **un**punished. (Proverbs 11:21a ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

- In some languages, such as English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one, creating a positive sentence. So, “He is not unintelligent” means “He is intelligent.”
- In some languages, such as French and Spanish, two negative words in a clause do not cancel each other to become a positive. The Spanish sentence, “No vi a nadie,” literally says “I did not see no one.” It has both the word ‘no’ next to the verb and ‘nadie,’ which means “no one.” The two negatives are seen as in agreement with each other, and the sentence means, “I did not see anyone.”
- In some languages, a double negative creates a stronger negative statement.
- In some languages, a double negative creates a positive sentence, but it is a weak statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” means, “He is somewhat intelligent.”
- In some languages, including the languages of the Bible, a double negative can produce a stronger positive meaning than a simple positive statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” can mean “He is very intelligent.” In this case, the double negative is actually the figure of speech called [litotes](#).

Biblical Greek can do all of the above. So to translate sentences with double negatives accurately and clearly in your language, you need to know what each double negative means in the Bible and how to express the same idea in your language.

Examples From the Bible

The Greek of John 15:5 says:

χωρίς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν
Without me **not** you can do **nothing**

We cannot reproduce this double negative in the English ULT because in English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one. In English, and perhaps in your language, we need to choose only one of the negatives and say either:

Without me, you can do **nothing**.

or:

Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

... in order **not** to be **unfruitful**. (Titus 3:14b ULT)

This means "in order to be fruitful."

A prophet is **not without** honor (Mark 6:4 ULT)

This means "a prophet is honored."

I do **not** want you to be **ignorant**. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

This means "I want you to be knowledgeable."

Translation Strategies

If the way that the double negative is used in the Bible is natural and has the same meaning as in your language, consider using it in the same way. Otherwise, you could consider these strategies:

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.
- (2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.
- (3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.

For we do **not** have a high priest who **cannot** feel sympathy for our weaknesses. (Hebrews 4:15a ULT)

"For we have a high priest who can feel sympathy for our weaknesses."

... in order **not** to be **unfruitful**. (Titus 3:14b ULT)

"... so that they may be fruitful."

- (2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν
Without me **not** you can do **nothing** (John 15:5)

Without me, you can do **nothing**.

or:

Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

(3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

...ἰῶτα ἐν ἡ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου (Matthew 5:18)

...iota one or one serif **not not** may pass away from the law

...**not even** one iota or one serif may pass away from the law

or:

...**certainly no** iota or serif may pass away from the law

Next we recommend you learn about:

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:20](#); [Ruth 4:10](#); [Ruth 4:14](#)

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: [Ruth 1:16](#); [Ruth 2:10](#)

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:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, **nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**
(Psalm 1:5 ULT)

There is ellipsis in the second part because “nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous” is not a complete sentence. The speaker assumes that the hearer will understand what it is that sinners will not do in the assembly of the righteous by filling in the action from the previous clause. With the action filled in, the complete sentence would read:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **will** sinners **stand** in the assembly of the righteous.

[^1]: English has a punctuation symbol which is also called an ellipsis. It is a series of three dots (...) used to indicate an intentional omission of a word, phrase, sentence or more from text without altering its original meaning. This translationAcademy article is not about the punctuation mark, but about the concept of omission of words that normally should be in the sentence.

Two Types of Ellipsis

A Relative Ellipsis happens when the reader has to supply the omitted word or words from the context. Usually the word is in the previous sentence, as in the example above.

An Absolute Ellipsis happens when the omitted word or words are not in the context, but the phrases are common enough in the language that the reader is expected to supply what is missing from this common usage or from the nature of the situation.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers who see incomplete sentences or phrases may not know that there is information missing that the writer expects them to fill in. Or readers may understand that there is information missing, but they may not know what information is missing because they do not know the original biblical language, culture, or situation as the original readers did. In this case, they may fill in the wrong information. Or readers may misunderstand the ellipsis if they do not use ellipsis in the same way in their language.

Examples From the Bible

Relative Ellipsis

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox.** (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

The writer wants his words to be few and to make good poetry. The full sentence with the information filled in would be:

This page answers the question: *What is ellipsis ?*

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

Figures of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**not as unwise but as wise**. (Ephesians 5:15b ULT)

The information that the reader must understand in the second parts of these sentences can be filled in from the first parts:

Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**walk** not as unwise but **walk** as wise,

Absolute Ellipsis

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

It seems that the man answered in an incomplete sentence because he wanted to be polite and not directly ask Jesus for healing. He knew that Jesus would understand that the only way he could receive his sight would be for Jesus to heal him. The complete sentence would be:

“Lord, **I want you to heal me so** that I might receive my sight.”

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. (Titus 1:4 ULT)

The writer assumes that the reader will recognize this common form of a blessing or wish, so he does not need to include the full sentence, which would be:

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. **May you receive** grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Translation Strategies

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

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **sinner in the assembly** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, and **sinner will not stand in the assembly** of the righteous.

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

Then when the man was near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, **I want you to heal me** that I might receive my sight.”

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox**. (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:16](#); [Ruth 3:15](#); [Ruth 3:17](#); [Ruth 4:7](#)

End of Story

Description

There are different types of information that may be given at the end of a story. Often this is background information. This background information is different from the actions that make up the main part of the story. A book of the Bible is often made up of many smaller stories that are part of the larger story of the book itself. For example, the story of Jesus' birth is a smaller story in the larger story of the book of Luke. Each of these stories, whether large or small, can have background information at the end of it.

This page answers the question: *What kinds of information are given at the end of a story?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Background Information ([UTA PDF](#))

The following are purposes for end of story information:

- to summarize the story
- to give a conclusion about what the story means or what is important about it
- to connect a smaller story to the larger story it is a part of
- to tell the reader what happens to a specific character after the main part of the story ends
- to tell on-going action that continues after the main part of the story ends
- to tell what happens after the story as a result of the events that happened in the story itself

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of presenting these kinds of information. If you (the translator) do not use your language's ways of doing this, readers may not know:

- that this information is ending the story
- what the purpose of the information is
- how the information is related to the story

Translation Strategies

- Translate the particular kind of information at the end of a story the way your language expresses that kind of information.
- Translate it so that people will understand how it relates to the story it is part of.
- If possible, translate the end of the story in a way that people will know where that story ends and the next begins.

Examples From the Bible

- To summarize the story

Then the rest of the men should follow, some on planks, and some on other things from the ship. **In this way it happened that all of us were brought safely to the land.** (Acts 27:44 ULT)

- To give a conclusion about what the story means or what is important about it

Many of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of everyone. Then they counted the value of them, and found it was 50,000 pieces of silver. **So the word of the Lord was spreading and prevailing with power.** (Acts 19:19-20 ULT)

- To tell the reader what happens to a specific character after the main part of the story ends

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in God my savior." **And Mary stayed with her about three months and then returned to her house.** (Luke 1:46-47, 56 ULT)

- To tell on-going action that continues after the main part of the story ends

All who those who heard it were amazed concerning the things that were spoken to them by the shepherds. **But Mary kept all the things, pondering them in her heart.** (Luke 2:18-19 ULT)

- To tell what happens after the story as a result of the events that happened in the story itself

"Woe to you, experts in the Jewish law, because you have taken away the key of knowledge; you do not enter in yourselves, and you hinder those who are entering." **After he went from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to fiercely oppose him and argued against him about many things, lying in wait to trap him in something from his mouth.** (Luke 11:52-54 ULT)

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:22](#)

Euphemism

Description

A euphemism is a mild or polite way of referring to something that is unpleasant, embarrassing, or socially unacceptable, such as death or activities usually done in private.

... they found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa.
(1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

This means that Saul and his sons “were dead.” It is a euphemism because the important thing was not that Saul and his sons had fallen but that they were dead. Sometimes people do not like to speak directly about death because it is unpleasant.

This page answers the question: *What is a euphemism?*

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

Figures of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages use different euphemisms. If the target language does not use the same euphemism as in the source language, readers may not understand what it means and they may think that the writer means only what the words literally say.

Examples From the Bible

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT)

The original hearers would have understood that Saul went into the cave to use it as a toilet, but the writer wanted to avoid offending or distracting them, so **he did not say specifically** what Saul did or what he left in the cave.

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man**?” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

In order **to be polite**, Mary uses a euphemism to say that she has never had sexual intercourse with a man.

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.
- (2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT) — Some languages might use euphemisms like these:

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **dig a hole**”

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **have some time alone**”

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man**?” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not **slept with a man?**"

(2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

They found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa. (1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

"They found Saul and his sons **dead** on Mount Gilboa."

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:9](#); [Ruth 3:4](#); [Ruth 3:7](#); [Ruth 4:13](#)

Exclamations

Description

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

This page answers the question: *What are ways of translating exclamations?*

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

Sentence Types ([UTA PDF](#))

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

- (1) If an exclamation in your language needs a verb, add one. Often a good verb is "is" or "are."
- (2) Use an exclamation word from your language that shows the strong feeling.
- (3) Translate the exclamation word with a sentence that shows the feeling.
- (4) Use a word that emphasizes the part of the sentence that brings about the strong feeling.
- (5) If the strong feeling is not clear in the target language, then tell how the person felt.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

“You **are** such a worthless person!”

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

“Oh, the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God **are** so deep!”

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

They were extremely astonished, saying, “He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” (Mark 7:37 ULT)

“They were extremely astonished, saying, ‘**Wow!** He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’”

Alas, oh my Lord Yahweh! For because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face! (Judges 6:22b ULT)

“**Oh no**, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

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

“**Alas**, O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!” (Judges 6:22 ULT)

“Lord Yahweh, **what will happen to me?** For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!” “**Help**, Lord Yahweh! For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

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

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

“His judgments are **so** unsearchable and his ways are **far** beyond discovering!”

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

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

Gideon understood that this was the angel of Yahweh. **He was terrified** and said, “**Alas**, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

”

Referenced in: [Ruth 3:8](#)

Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

Description

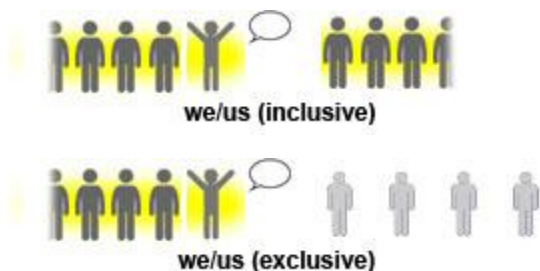
Some languages have more than one form of "we": an inclusive form that means "I and you" and an exclusive form that means "I and someone else but not you." The exclusive form excludes the person being spoken to. The inclusive form includes the person being spoken to and possibly others. This is also true for "us," "our," "ours," and "ourselves." Some languages have inclusive forms and exclusive forms for each of these. Translators whose language has separate exclusive and inclusive forms for these words will need to understand what the speaker meant so that they can decide which form to use.

This page answers the question: *What are the exclusive and inclusive forms of "we"?*

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

[Pronouns \(UTA PDF\)](#)

See the pictures. The people on the right are the people that the speaker is talking to. The yellow highlight shows who the inclusive "we" and the exclusive "we" refer to.



Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. Like English, these languages do not have separate exclusive and inclusive forms for "we." If your language has separate exclusive and inclusive forms of "we," then you will need to understand what the speaker meant so that you can decide which form of "we" to use.

Examples From the Bible

Exclusive

They said, "There are not more than five loaves of bread and two fish with us—unless **we** go and buy food for all these people." (Luke 9:13 ULT)

In the second clause, the disciples are talking about some of them going to buy food. They were speaking to Jesus, but Jesus was not going to buy food. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" would use the **exclusive** form there.

We have seen it, and **we** bear witness to it. **We** are announcing to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and which has been made known to **us**. (1 John 1:2 ULT)

John is telling people who have not seen Jesus what he and the other apostles have seen. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" and "us" would use the **exclusive** forms in this verse.

Inclusive

The shepherds said one to each other, "Let **us** now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to **us**." (Luke 2:15b ULT)

The shepherds were speaking to one another. When they said “us,” they were including the people they were speaking to, so languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of “we” and “us” would use the **inclusive** form in this verse.

Now it happened that on one of those days, he indeed got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, “Let **us** go over to the other side of the lake.” So they set sail. (Luke 8:22 ULT)

When Jesus said “us,” he was referring to himself and to the disciples he was speaking to, so languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of “we” and “us” would use the **inclusive** form in this verse.

Next we recommend you learn about:

When Masculine Words Include Women ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:10](#)

First, Second or Third Person

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

Description

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

This page answers the question: *What are first, second, and third person, and how do I translate when a third person form does not refer to the third person?*

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

Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit ([UTA PDF](#))

Pronouns ([UTA PDF](#))

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: [Ruth 2:13](#)

Forms of 'You' — Dual/Plural

Description

Some languages have a singular form of “you” for when the word “you” refers to just one person, and a plural form for when the word “you” refers to more than one person. Some languages also have a dual form of “you” for when the word “you” refers to only two people. Translators who speak one of these languages will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for “you” in their language. Other languages, such as English, have only one form, which people use regardless of how many people it refers to.

This page answers the question: *How do I know if the word 'you' is dual or plural?*

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

[Forms of You \(UTA PDF\)](#)

[Pronouns \(UTA PDF\)](#)

[Parts of Speech \(UTA PDF\)](#)

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. These languages all have a singular form of “you” and a plural form of “you.” When we read the Bible in those languages, the pronouns and verb forms show us whether the word “you” refers to one person or more than one person. However, they do not show us whether it refers to only two people or more than two people. When the pronouns do not show us how many people the word “you” refers to, we need to look at the context to see how many people the speaker was speaking to.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

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

Often the context will make it clear whether the word “you” refers to one person or more than one. If you look at the other pronouns in the sentence, they will help you know how many people the speaker was addressing.

Examples From the Bible

Then **James and John**, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him, saying to him, “Teacher, we desire that you to do for us whatever we ask you.” 36 So he said to them, “What do **you** want me to do for **you**?” (Mark 10:35-36 ULT)

Jesus is asking the two, James and John, what they want him to do for them. If the target language has a dual form of “you,” use that. If the target language does not have a dual form, then the plural form would be appropriate.

Jesus sent out two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village opposite us. As soon as **you** enter it, **you** will find a colt tied there, on which no one has yet sat. Untie it and bring it to me.” (Mark 11:1b-2 ULT)

The context makes it clear that Jesus is addressing two people. If the target language has a dual form of “you,” use that. If the target language does not have a dual form, then the plural form would be appropriate.

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are in the dispersion: Greetings. Consider it all joy, my brothers, when **you** experience various troubles. You know that the testing of **your** faith produces endurance. (James 1:1-3 ULT)

James wrote this letter to many people, so the word “you” refers to many people. If the target language has a plural form of “you,” it would be best to use it here.

Strategies for finding out how many people “you” refers to

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

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

Forms of 'You' — Singular ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:8](#)

Forms of 'You' — Singular

Description

Some languages have a **singular** form of “you” for when the word “you” refers to just one person, and a **plural** form for when the word “you” refers to more than one person. Translators who speak one of these languages will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for “you” in their language. Other languages, such as English, have only one form, which people use regardless of how many people it refers to.

This page answers the question: *How do I know if the word 'you' is singular?*

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

Parts of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Forms of You ([UTA PDF](#))

Pronouns ([UTA PDF](#))

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strategies for finding out how many people “you” refers to

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

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:10](#)

Hendiadys

Description

In a hendiadys, a speaker uses two words that mean different things and that are connected with “and.” These two words work together to express a single idea. Usually one of the words is the primary idea and the other word further describes the primary one.

This page answers the question: *What is hendiadys and how can I translate phrases that have it?*

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

Figures of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Parts of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

... his own **kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

Though “kingdom” and “glory” are both nouns, “glory” actually tells what kind of kingdom it is: it is a **kingdom of glory** or **a glorious kingdom**.

Two phrases connected by “and” can also be a hendiadys when they refer to a single person, thing, or event.

while we look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

Titus 2:13 contains two hendiadyses. “The blessed hope” and “appearing of the glory” refer to the same thing and serve to strengthen the idea that the return of Jesus Christ is greatly anticipated and wonderful. Also, “our great God” and “Savior Jesus Christ” refer to one person, not two.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Often a hendiadys contains an abstract noun. Some languages may not have a noun with the same meaning.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that the second word is further describing the first one.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that only one person or thing is meant, not two.

Examples From the Bible

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

“A mouth” and “wisdom” are nouns, but in this figure of speech “wisdom” describes what comes from the mouth.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

“Willing” and “obedient” are adjectives, but “willing” describes “obedient.”

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.
- (2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.
- (3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.
- (4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the

other.

(5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

For I will give you **wise words** ...

Walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own glorious kingdom**.

(2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

for I will give you **words of wisdom**.

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own kingdom of glory**.

(3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

If you are **willingly obedient** ...

(4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the other.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

The adjective "obedient" can be substituted with the verb "obey."

if you **obey willingly** ...

(4) and (5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

We look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

The noun "glory" can be changed to the adjective "glorious" to make it clear that Jesus' appearing is what we hope for. Also, "Jesus Christ" can be moved to the front of the phrase and "great God and Savior" put into a relative clause that describes the one person, Jesus Christ.

We look forward to receiving **what we are longing for, the blessed and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, who is our great God and Savior**.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Doublet ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:6](#); [Ruth 2:7](#); [Ruth 2:11](#)

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 Ruth](#); [Ruth 1:2](#); [Ruth 1:20](#); [Ruth 4:18](#); [Ruth 4:19](#); [Ruth 4:20](#)

Hyperbole

Description

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

It rains here every night.

The speaker means this as literally true if he means that it really does rain here every night.

The speaker means this as a **generalization** if he means that it rains here most nights.

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

This page answers the question: *What are hyperboles? What are generalizations? How can I translate them?*

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

Figures of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

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: [Ruth 1:17](#); [Ruth 1:19](#); [Ruth 4:9](#)

Idiom

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

- You are pulling my leg. (This means, “You are teasing me by telling me something that is not true.”)
- Do not push the envelope. (This means, “Do not take a matter to its extreme.”)
- This house is under water. (This means, “The debt owed for this house is greater than its actual value.”)
- We are painting the town red. (This means, “We are going around town tonight celebrating very intensely.”)

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

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

Figures of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

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: [Ruth 1:4](#); [Ruth 1:6](#); [Ruth 1:9](#); [Ruth 1:14](#); [Ruth 1:17](#); [Ruth 2:1](#); [Ruth 2:2](#); [Ruth 2:5](#); [Ruth 2:8](#); [Ruth 2:10](#); [Ruth 2:11](#); [Ruth 2:13](#); [Ruth 3:9](#); [Ruth 3:10](#); [Ruth 3:11](#); [Ruth 3:14](#); [Ruth 3:16](#); [Ruth 3:17](#); [Ruth 3:18](#); [Ruth 4:1](#); [Ruth 4:4](#); [Ruth 4:5](#); [Ruth 4:7](#); [Ruth 4:15](#); [Ruth 4:17](#)

Imperatives — Other Uses

Description

Imperative sentences are mainly used to express a desire or requirement that someone do something. In the Bible, sometimes imperative sentences have other uses.

This page answers the question: *What other uses are there for imperative sentences in the Bible?*

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

Sentence Types ([UTA PDF](#))

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use an imperative sentence for some of the functions that they are used for in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

Speakers often use imperative sentences to tell or ask their listeners to do something. In Genesis 26, God spoke to Isaac and told him not to go to Egypt but to live where God would tell him to live.

Now Yahweh appeared to him and said, “**Do not go down** to Egypt; **live** in the land that I tell you to live in.” (Genesis 26:2 ULT)

Sometimes imperative sentences in the Bible have other uses.

Imperatives that make things happen

God can make things happen by commanding that they happen. Jesus healed a man by commanding that the man be healed. The man could not do anything to obey the command, but Jesus caused him to be healed by commanding it. (In this context, the command “Be clean” means to “be healed” so that others around would know that it was safe to touch the man again.)

“I am willing. **Be clean.**” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. (Matthew 8:3b ULT)

In Genesis 1, God commanded that there should be light, and by commanding it, he caused it to exist. Some languages, such as the Hebrew of the Bible, have commands that are in the third person. English does not do that, and so it must turn the third-person command into a general, second-person command, as in the ULT:

God said, “**Let there be** light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

Languages that have third-person commands can follow the original Hebrew, which translates into English as something like “light must be.”

Imperatives that function as blessings

In the Bible, God blesses people by using imperatives. This indicates what his will is for them.

God blessed them and said to them, “**Be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **Have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28 ULT)

Imperatives that function as conditions

An imperative sentence can also be used to tell the **condition** under which something will happen. The proverbs mainly tell about life and things that often happen. The purpose of Proverbs 4:6 below is not primarily to give a command, but to teach what people can expect to happen **if** they love wisdom.

Do not abandon wisdom and she will watch over you; **love** her and she will keep you safe.
(Proverbs 4:6 ULT)

The purpose of Proverbs 22:6, below, is to teach what people can expect to happen if they teach their children the way they should go.

Teach a child the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction. (Proverbs 22:6 ULT)

Imperatives that function as good results

An imperative sentence can also describe a desirable result. In Proverbs 3:3-4, several imperatives give instructions, then the final imperative describes the good outcome of following those instructions.

Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you; tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and **find favor** and good insight in the eyes of God and man!
(Proverbs 3:3-4 ULT)

Translation Strategies

- (1) If people would not use an imperative sentence for one of the functions in the Bible, try using a statement instead.
- (2) If people would not understand that a sentence is used to cause something to happen, add a connecting word like “so” to show that what happened was a result of what was said.
- (3) If people would not use a command as a condition, translate it as a statement with the words “if” and “then.”

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If people would not use an imperative sentence for one of the functions in the Bible, try using a statement instead.

Be clean. (Matthew 8:3b ULT)

You are now clean. I now cleanse you.

God said, “**Let there be** light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

God said, “**There is now** light” and there was light.

God blessed them and said to them, “**Be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **Have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28 ULT)

God blessed them and said to them, “**My will for you is that you be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **I want you to have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you; tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, **and find favor** and good insight in the eyes of God and man! (Proverbs 3:3-4 ULT)

Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you; tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, **then you will find favor** and good insight in the eyes of God and man!

(2) If people would not understand that a sentence is used to cause something to happen, add a connecting word like “so” to show that what happened was a result of what was said.

God said, “**Let there be** light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

God said, ‘Let there be light,’ **so** there was light. God said, “Light must be;” **as a result**, there was light.

(3) If people would not use a command as a condition, translate it as a statement with the words “if” and “then.”

Teach a child the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction. (Proverbs 22:6 ULT)

Translated as:

“**If** you teach a child the way he should go, **then** when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction.”

”

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:14](#); [Ruth 3:4](#); [Ruth 4:11](#)

Information Structure

Description

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

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

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

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

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

This page answers the question: *How do languages arrange the parts of a sentence?*

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

Translation Strategies Applied

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

This is the verse in the original Greek order:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Word Order \(UTA PDF\)](#)

[Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding \(UTA PDF\)](#)

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:6](#); [Ruth 2:14](#); [Ruth 3:6](#); [Ruth 3:14](#)

Introduction of a New Event

Description

When people tell a story, they tell about an event or a series of events. Often they put certain information at the beginning of the story, such as who the story is about, when it happened, and where it happened. This information that the writer gives before the events of the story begin is called the setting of the story. Some new events in a story also have a setting because they might involve new people, new times, and new places. In some languages, people also tell if they saw the event or heard about it from someone else.

This page answers the question: *How do we introduce a new event in a story?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Order of Events ([UTA PDF](#))

When your people tell about events, what information do they give at the beginning? Is there a certain order that they put it in? In your translation, you will need to follow the way your language introduces new information at the beginning of a story or a new event rather than the way the source language did that. In this way your translation will sound natural and communicate clearly in your language.

Examples From the Bible

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, **there was a certain priest named Zechariah**, from the division of Abijah. And **his wife was** from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (Luke 1:5 ULT)

The verses above introduce a story about Zechariah. The first bolded phrase tells when it happened, and the next two bolded phrases introduce the main people. The next two verses go on to explain that Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and did not have any children. All of this is the setting. Then the phrase “And it happened that” in Luke 1:8 helps to introduce the first event in this story:

And it happened that in his performing as priest before God, in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, he came up by lot to enter into the temple of the Lord to burn incense. (Luke 1:8-9 ULT)

The birth of Jesus Christ happened in the following way. His mother, Mary, was engaged to marry Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18 ULT)

The bolded sentence above makes it explicit that a story about Jesus is being introduced. The story will tell about how the birth of Jesus happened.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, learned men from the east arrived in Jerusalem. (Matthew 2:1 ULT)

The bolded phrase above shows that the events concerning the learned men happened **after** Jesus was born.

Now in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. (Matthew 3:1-22 ULT)

The bolded phrase above shows that John the Baptist came preaching around the time of the previous events. It is probably very general and refers to when Jesus lived in Nazareth.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River to John, to be baptized by him. (Matthew 3:13 ULT)

The word “then” shows that Jesus came to the Jordan River some time after the events in the previous verses.

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

The author first introduced the new person and then told about what he did and when he did it. In some languages, it might be more natural to tell about the time first.

6 Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. 7 Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives went into the ark together because of the waters of the flood. (Genesis 7:6-7 ULT)

Verse 6 is a statement of the events that happen in the rest of chapter 7. Chapter 6 already told about how God told Noah that there would be a flood, and how Noah prepared for it. Chapter 7 verse 6 introduces the part of the story that tells about Noah and his family and the animals going into the ship, the rain starting, and the rain flooding the earth. Some languages might need to make it clear that this verse simply introduces the event, or move this verse after verse 7. Verse 6 is not one of the events of the story. The people went into the ship before the flood came.

Translation Strategies

If the information given at the beginning of a new event is clear and natural to your readers, consider translating it as it is in the ULT or UST. If not, consider one of these strategies:

- (1) Put the information that introduces the event in the order that your people put it.
- (2) If readers would expect certain information but it is not in the Bible, consider using an indefinite word or phrase to fill in that information, such as: "another time" or "someone."
- (3) If the introduction is a summary of the whole event, use your language's way of showing that it is a summary.
- (4) If it would be strange in the target language to give a summary of the event at the beginning, indicate that the event would actually happen later in the story.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Put the information that introduces the event in the order that your people put it.

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

There was a **man whose name was Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Council**. One night he came to Jesus.

One night **a man named Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Council**, came to Jesus.

As he passed by, **he saw Levi the son of Alpheus, sitting** at the tax collector's tent, and he said to him ... (Mark 2:14a ULT)

As he passed by, **Levi the son of Alpheus was sitting** at the tax collector's tent. Jesus saw him and said to him ...

As he passed by, **there was a man sitting** at the tax collector's tent. His name was Levi, and he was the son of Alpheus. Jesus saw him and said to him ...

As he passed by, **there was a tax collector** sitting at the tax collector's tent. His name was Levi, and he was the son of Alpheus. Jesus saw him and said to him ...

(2) If readers would expect certain information, but it is not in the Bible, consider using an indefinite word or phrase such as “another time,” or “someone.”

Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6 ULT) — If people expect to be told something about when the new event happened, the phrase “after that” can help them see that it happened after the events already mentioned.

After that, when Noah was 600 years old, the flood came upon the earth.

Again he began to teach beside the sea. (Mark 4:1a ULT) — In chapter 3 Jesus was teaching at someone’s house. Readers may need to be told that this new event happened at another time, or that Jesus actually went to the sea.

Another time Jesus began to teach people again beside the sea.

Jesus went to the sea and **began to teach people again** there.

(3) If the introduction is a summary of the whole event, use your language’s way of showing that it is a summary.

Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6 ULT)

Now this is what happened when Noah was 600 years old and the flood came upon the earth.

This part tells about what happened when the flood came upon the earth. It happened when Noah was 600 years old.

(4) If it would be strange in the target language to give a summary of the event at the beginning, show that the event will actually happen later in the story.

Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives went into the ark together because of the waters of the flood. (Genesis 7:6-7 ULT)

Now this is what happened when Noah was 600 years old. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives went into the ark together because **God had said that the waters of the flood would come.**

Next we recommend you learn about:

Background Information ([UTA PDF](#))

Introduction of New and Old Participants ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:1](#); [Ruth 1:6](#); [Ruth 1:19](#); [Ruth 3:1](#); [Ruth 4:1](#); [Ruth 4:8](#); [Ruth 4:18](#)

Introduction of New and Old Participants

Description

The first time that people or things are mentioned in a story, they are **new participants**. After that, whenever they are mentioned, they are **old participants**.

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

This page answers the question: *Why cannot the readers of my translation understand who the author was writing about?*

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

Parts of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

The first bolded phrase introduces Nicodemus as a new participant. After being introduced, he is then referred to as “This man” and “him” when he has become an old participant.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In order to make your translation clear and natural, it is necessary to refer to the participants in such a way that people will know if they are new participants or participants that they have already read about. Different languages have different ways of doing this. You must follow the way that your language does this, not the way that the source language does this.

Examples From the Bible

New Participants

Often the most important new participant is introduced with a phrase that says that he existed, such as “There was a man,” as in the example below. The phrase “There was” tells us that this man existed. The word “a” in “a man” tells us that the author is speaking about him for the first time. The rest of the sentence tells where this man was from, who his family was, and what his name was.

Now there was a man from Zorah, of the families of the Danites, and his name was Manoah. (Judges 13:2a ULT)

A new participant who is not the most important participant is often introduced in relation to the more important person who was already introduced. In the example below, Manoah’s wife is simply referred to as “his wife.” This phrase shows her relationship to him.

Now there was one man from Zorah, of the families of the Danites, and his name was Manoah. **His wife** was barren and she had never given birth. (Judges 13:2 ULT)

Sometimes a new participant is introduced simply by name because the author assumes that the readers know who the person is. In the first verse of 1 Kings, the author assumes that his readers know who King David is, so there is no need to explain who he is.

Now King David was old, he had advanced in the days, and they covered him with the garments, but it was not warm enough for him. (1 Kings 1:1 ULT)

Old Participants

A person who has already been brought into the story can be referred to with a pronoun after that. In the example below, Manoah is referred to with the pronoun “his,” and his wife is referred to with the pronoun “she.”

His **wife** was barren and **she** had never given birth. (Judges 13:2 ULT)

Old participants can also be referred to in other ways, depending on what is happening in the story. In the example below, the story is about bearing a son, and Manoah's wife is referred to by the noun phrase "the wife."

The angel of Yahweh appeared to **the wife** and he said to her ... (Judges 13:3a ULT)

If the old participant has not been mentioned for a while, or if there could be confusion between participants, the author may use the participant's name again. In the example below, Manoah is referred to by his name, which the author has not used since verse 2.

Then **Manoah** prayed to Yahweh. (Judges 13:8a ULT)

Some languages place an affix on the verb that tells something about the subject. In some of those languages, people do not always use noun phrases or pronouns for old participants when they are the subject of the sentence. The marker on the verb gives enough information for the listener to understand who the subject is. (See [Verbs](#).)

Translation Strategies

- (1) If the participant is new, use one of your language's ways of introducing new participants.
- (2) If it is not clear to whom a pronoun refers, use a noun phrase or name.
- (3) If an old participant is referred to by name or a noun phrase, and people wonder if this is another new participant, try using a pronoun instead. If a pronoun is not needed because people would understand it clearly from the context, then leave out the pronoun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the participant is new, use one of your language's ways of introducing new participants.

Then Joseph, who was called Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated as Son of Encouragement), a Levite from Cyprus by birth ... (Acts 4:36-37 ULT) — Starting the sentence with Joseph's name when he has not been introduced yet might be confusing in some languages.

There was a man from Cyprus who was a Levite. His name was Joseph, and he was given the name Barnabas by the apostles (that is, being interpreted, Son of Encouragement). There was a Levite from Cyprus whose name was Joseph. The apostles gave him the name Barnabas, which means Son of encouragement.

- (2) If it is not clear who a pronoun refers to, use a noun phrase or name.

And it happened that when he was praying in a certain place, when he stopped, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1 ULT) — Since this is the first verse in a chapter, readers might wonder who "he" refers to.

It happened when **Jesus** finished praying in a certain place, that one of his disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples."

- (3) If an old participant is referred to by name or a noun phrase, and people wonder if this is another new participant, try using a pronoun instead. If a pronoun is not needed because people would understand it clearly from the context, then leave out the pronoun.

Joseph's master took Joseph and put him in prison, in the place where all the king's prisoners were put, and Joseph stayed there. (Genesis 39:20) — Since Joseph is the main person in the story, some languages might prefer the pronoun.

Joseph's master took **him** and put **him** in prison, in the place where all the king's prisoners were put, and **he** stayed there in the prison.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Pronouns — When to Use Them ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:1](#); [Ruth 1:6](#); [Ruth 1:15](#); [Ruth 2:1](#); [Ruth 2:2](#)

Irregular Use of Tenses

Description

This page answers the question: *How do I translate tenses that are unexpected?*

Normally, languages indicate when an event happens by marking it as past, present, or future (or some subset of those categories) through using different verb tenses. But sometimes speakers use those verb tenses in other ways to draw special attention to what they are saying. This article will discuss three ways that this happens in the Bible.

Past For Future

In the Bible, sometimes the past tense is used to refer to things that will happen in the future. This is a figure of speech that is used in prophecy to show that the event will certainly happen. It is sometimes called the “predictive past” or “prophetic perfect.”

Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of understanding; their honored leaders go hungry, and their common people have nothing to drink. (Isaiah 5:13 ULT)

In the example above, the people of Israel had not yet gone into captivity, but God spoke of their going into captivity as if it had already happened because he had decided that they certainly would go into captivity.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue:

Speakers of languages that do not use the past tense in prophecy to refer to future events may think that these are events that have already happened.

Examples From the Bible

Now Jericho was tightly closed because of the sons of Israel. No one went out and no one came in. Yahweh said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho and its king and its powerful soldiers into your hand.” (Joshua 6:1-2 ULT)

For to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given; and the rule will be on his shoulder. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)

In the examples above, God spoke of things that would happen in the future as if they had already happened.

But even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them, saying, “Look! The Lord came with thousands and thousands of his holy ones.” (Jude 1:14 ULT)

Enoch was speaking of something that would happen far in the future, but he used the past tense when he said, “the Lord came.”

Present For Past

In the Bible, sometimes the present tense is used to refer to events that happened in the past. This is a figure of speech that makes these events more vivid or prominent for the reader. The effect can be to draw the reader into the story because these events are told as though they are happening now. The reader, however, knows that the events happened in the past. This is sometimes called the “historical present.”

Now the mother-in-law of Simon was lying down, being sick with a fever, and immediately they speak to him concerning her. (Mark 1:30 ULT)

In the example above, Mark had been narrating events that happened in the past, using the past tense. But when he came to the part about the disciples speaking to Jesus about Simon's mother-in-law, he changed from past tense to present tense.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue:

Speakers of languages that do not use the present tense to refer to past events may think that these events are happening now or that the Bible translation makes no sense.

Examples From the Bible

And Simon and the ones with him searched for him 37 and found him and say to him, "Everyone is seeking you." 38 And he says to them, "Let us go elsewhere, (Mark 1:36-38 ULT)

As in the above example, the historical present is often used to make direct speech stand out from the narrative.

And he enters into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbaths, having entered into the synagogue, he began to teach. (Mark 1:21 ULT)

As in the above example, the historical present sometimes serves to set the scene for a new set of events. By using the historical present in this way, the writer draws the reader into the scene, and then relates the events using the past tense.

Present For Future

In the Bible, sometimes the present tense is used for a future event. Usually, this is to communicate that the event will happen very soon. Also, like the predictive past, this can communicate that the event is sure to happen or that the speaker is fully committed to making the event happen. This is sometimes called the "imminent future."

And Moses said, "Thus says Yahweh: 'About the middle of the night I am going out in the midst of Egypt, (Exodus 11:4 ULT)

In the example above, Yahweh uses the present tense for something that he will do soon.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue:

Speakers of languages that do not use the present tense to refer to future events may think that these events are happening at the time of speaking or writing or that the Bible translation is confusing or wrong.

Examples From the Bible

For behold me, raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous nation... (Habakkuk 1:6 ULT)

Therefore, remember from where you have fallen and repent and do the first works. But if not, I am coming to you and I will remove your lampstand from its place—if you do not repent. (Revelation 2:5 ULT)

In the examples above, God speaks of a future event as though he is doing it in the present. This is a way of emphasizing the certainty of the event.

Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of understanding; their honored leaders go hungry, and their common people have nothing to drink. (Isaiah 5:13 ULT)

In the example above, the present tense continues the sense of the predictive past, communicating future events that are sure to happen.

Translation Strategies

If the tense that is used in the Literal Translation would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.
- (2) Use the past tense to refer to past events.
- (3) Use the tense that your language commonly uses to communicate the time of the event.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.

For to us a child **has been born**, to us a son **has been given**. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)

For to us a child **will be born**, to us a son **will be given**.

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, **I have delivered** Jericho and its king and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:2 ULT)

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, **I will deliver** Jericho and its king and its powerful soldiers into your hand."

And Moses said, "Thus says Yahweh: 'About the middle of the night **I am going out** in the midst of Egypt, (Exodus 11:4 ULT)

And Moses said, "Thus says Yahweh: 'About the middle of the night **I will go out** in the midst of Egypt,

- (2) Use the past tense to refer to past events.

And Simon and the ones with him searched for him and found him and **say** to him, "Everyone is seeking you." And he **says** to them, "Let us go elsewhere, (Mark 1:36-38 ULT)

And Simon and the ones with him searched for him and found him and **said** to him, "Everyone is seeking you." And he **said** to them, "Let us go elsewhere,

And he **enters** into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbaths, having entered into the synagogue, he began to teach. (Mark 1:21 ULT)

And he **entered** into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbaths, having entered into the synagogue, he began to teach.

- (3) Use the tense that your language commonly uses to communicate the time of the event.

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, **I have delivered** Jericho and its king and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:2 ULT)

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, **I am delivering** Jericho and its king and its powerful soldiers into your hand."

Or:

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, **I am about to deliver** Jericho and its king and its powerful soldiers into your hand."

And Moses said, "Thus says Yahweh: 'About the middle of the night **I am going out** in the midst of Egypt, (Exodus 11:4 ULT)

And Moses said, "Thus says Yahweh: 'About the middle of the night **I will be going out** in the midst of Egypt,

Or:

And Moses said, "Thus says Yahweh: 'About the middle of the night **I shall certainly go out** in the midst of Egypt,

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:4](#)

Kinship

Description

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

Kinship terms refer to those words used to describe people related to one another in familial relationships. These terms vary widely in their specificity from language to language. They range from the (Western) nuclear or immediate family (father-son, husband-wife) out to broad clan relationships in other cultures.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Depending on the language translators may need to use specific terms to designate the accurate kinship relationship. In some languages a different term may be used based on siblings' birth order. In others, the side of the family (father's or mother's), age, marital status, etc. may determine the term used. Different terms may be used based on the gender of the speaker and/or addressee. Translators may need to make sure they know the exact relationship between two related people in the Bible to find the correct term. Sometimes these terms are difficult even for native speakers to remember and translators may need to seek community help in finding the correct term. Another complicating issue is that the Bible may not give enough information about the relationship for translators to determine the correct term in the language being translated into. In this case, translators will have to use a more general term or simply pick a satisfactory term based on the limited information available.

Sometimes terms that seem like kinship terms are used for people who are not necessarily related. For instance, an older person may refer to a younger man or woman as "my son" or "my daughter."

Examples from the Bible

Then Yahweh said to Cain, "Where is Abel **your brother**?" He said, "I do not know. Am I **my brother's** keeper?" (Genesis 4:9 ULT)

Abel was Cain's younger brother.

Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock and said to them, "I see **your father's** attitude toward me has changed, but the God of my father has been with me." (Genesis 31:4-5 ULT)

Jacob is referring here to his father-in-law. In some languages there may be a specific term for a man's father-in-law, however, in this case it is better to retain the form **your father** as Jacob may be using it to distance himself from Laban.

And Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro **his father-in-law**, the priest of Midian. (Exodus 3:1a ULT)

Unlike the previous instance, if your language has a term for a man's father-in-law this is a good place to use it.

And **his sister** stationed herself at a distance to know what would be done to him. (Exodus 2:4 ULT)

From context we know that this was Miriam, Moses's older sister. In some languages this may require a specific term. In others, the term for older sister may be only used when the younger sibling is addressing and/or referring to his or her sister.

Then she and **her daughters-in-law** arose to return from the fields of Moab (Ruth 1:6a ULT)

Ruth & Orpah are Naomi's daughters-in-law.

Then she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has turned back to her people and to her gods." (Ruth 1:15 ULT)

Orpah had been the wife of Ruth's husband's brother. This may be a different term in your language than if she had been Ruth's husband's sister.

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Will you not listen to me, **my daughter**?" (Ruth 2:8a ULT)

Boaz is not Ruth's father; he is simply using the term to address a younger woman.

And behold, **your relative** Elizabeth—she also has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren. (Luke 1:36 ULT)

While the KJV translated this as **cousin**, the term simply means a related woman.

Translation Strategies

- (1) Find out the exact relationship specified and translate using the term your language uses.
- (2) If the text does not specify the relationship as clearly as your language would, either:
 - (a) settle on a more general term.
 - (b) use a specific term if required by your language, choosing the one that is most likely to be correct.

Translation Strategies Applied

This is not an issue in English, so the following illustrations draw on other languages.

In Korean, there are several terms for brother and sister; the use of them depends on the speaker's (or referent's) sex and birth order. Examples are from the Korean Living Bible, found on biblegateway.com

Genesis 30:1 Rachel is jealous of her "eonni," which is the term a woman uses for her older sister.

Genesis 34:31 Simeon and Levi refer to Dinah as "nui," a general term for sister.

Genesis 37:16 Joseph refers to his brothers as "hyeong," which is the term a man uses for his older brother(s).

Genesis 45:12 Joseph refers to Benjamin as "dongsaeng," which roughly means sibling, usually younger.

In Russian, in-law terms are complex. For instance, "nevěstka" is the term for a brother's (or brother-in-law's) wife; a woman uses the same term for her daughter-in-law but her husband would call the same daughter-in-law "snoxá." Examples from the Russian Synodal Version.

Genesis 38:25 Tamar sends a message to her father-in-law, Judah. The term used is "svekor." This is used for a woman's husband's father.

Exodus 3:1 Moses is watching his father-in-law's herd. The term used is "test'." This is used for a man's wife's father.

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Referenced in: [Ruth 2:1](#); [Ruth 2:2](#); [Ruth 2:3](#); [Ruth 2:5](#); [Ruth 3:1](#); [Ruth 3:9](#); [Ruth 3:12](#); [Ruth 3:16](#); [Ruth 4:1](#); [Ruth 4:3](#); [Ruth 4:17](#)

Litotes

Description

Litotes is a figure of speech in which the speaker expresses a strong positive meaning by negating a word or phrase that means the opposite of the meaning that he intends. For example, someone could intend to communicate that something is extremely good by describing it as "not bad." The difference between a litotes and a **double negative** is that a litotes heightens the positive meaning beyond what a plain positive statement would do, and a double negative does not. In the example above, the literal meaning of "not bad," taken as a plain double negative, would be "acceptable" or even "good." But if the speaker intended it as a litotes, then the meaning is "very good" or "extremely good."

This page answers the question: *What is litotes?*

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

Figures of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

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: [Ruth 3:18](#)

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](#).

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Referenced in: [Ruth 1:9](#); [Ruth 1:13](#); [Ruth 1:14](#); [Ruth 1:15](#); [Ruth 1:21](#); [Ruth 2:4](#); [Ruth 2:12](#); [Ruth 2:13](#); [Ruth 3:1](#); [Ruth 3:2](#); [Ruth 4:1](#); [Ruth 4:10](#); [Ruth 4:11](#); [Ruth 4:15](#)

Metonymy

Description

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which an item (either physical or abstract) is called not by its own name, but by the name of something closely associated with it. A metonym is a word or phrase used as a substitute for something that it is associated with.

This page answers the question: *What is a metonymy?*

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

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: [Ruth 1:9](#); [Ruth 1:13](#); [Ruth 1:19](#); [Ruth 2:9](#); [Ruth 2:11](#); [Ruth 2:19](#); [Ruth 3:7](#); [Ruth 3:11](#); [Ruth 4:10](#); [Ruth 4:11](#); [Ruth 4:12](#); [Ruth 4:14](#); [Ruth 4:15](#)

Nominal Adjectives

Description

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

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

The adjective “rich” comes before the word “man” and describes “man.”

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

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

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

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

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

This page answers the question: *How do I translate adjectives that act like nouns?*

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

Parts of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

Blessed are **people who are meek**.

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:8](#); [Ruth 2:20](#); [Ruth 4:5](#); [Ruth 4:10](#)

Oath Formulas

An oath is a solemn promise that someone makes to another person to do something or to solemnly testify that something is true. The oath includes the idea that a bad thing will happen if the person making the oath does not do the thing promised or if what the person says is not true.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate oath formulas into my language?*

Description

There are two types of oath in the Bible. We can call the first type a "Promise" oath, and the second type a "Truth" oath.

Promise Oath

In this type of oath, the person saying it is promising to do something. As a guarantee that the person taking the oath will do what he promises, the person calls on God to witness the oath and to punish him severely if he does not do the thing promised. A complete Promise oath has four parts, but some of them are often left unspoken and only implied: 1. Calling on God to witness the oath and judge the person making it 2. Making the promise (may be implied as the opposite of the violation) 3. Telling what would be a violation of the oath (may be implied as the opposite of the promise) 4. Saying what punishment God would do if the person violates the oath (often implied)

Truth Oath

In this type of oath, the person saying it is affirming that what he is saying is true, and he guarantees that it is true by naming the life of God. Sometimes the person will not name God directly but will instead name something holy that is associated with God, such as the temple. In some situations, a person might name a revered person, such as a king. The implication is that if the person's statement proves to be false, that person will lose any relationship to God or to the revered person. These oaths have three parts, but the third part is implied and not stated: 1. Naming something holy, usually the life of God or of someone who is revered. 2. Making the statement. 3. Implied: The speaker and hearers of the oath understand that the speaker forfeits his relationship to God or to the revered person if his statement is false.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

People in some cultures may not be familiar with the practice of taking oaths, and so they may not understand what the people in the Bible are doing. In many languages, people would not take an oath the way that people did in the Bible, and so they might not recognize that the person is taking an oath. In the Old Testament, people often did not speak one or more parts of the oath, leaving those parts implied. The part that was most often left unspoken was the part that would tell what would happen if they break the oath. People believed that spoken words have power, and that speaking the part about punishment might cause the punishment to happen, so they often left that part to be understood silently. Because of these things, people might think that the person in the Bible is not making a real oath or they may not understand what the verse is talking about at all.

Examples From the Bible

Promise Oath

"I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.' (Genesis 14:22-23 ULT)

In the verse above, Abram describes a symbolic action (raising his hand to Yahweh) to signal that he is taking an oath and calling on Yahweh as witness and judge. He says what would violate his oath (thus promising to do the opposite). Then he leaves out the part that would describe how Yahweh would punish him if he fails to do what he is promising.

May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you. (Ruth 1:17 ULT)

Ruth calls on Yahweh and includes the part about Yahweh punishing her, says what the violation would be (thus promising to do the opposite), but does not say what the punishment would be.

And Saul said, "Thus may God do and thus may he add, for dying you will die, Jonathan." (1 Samuel 14:44 ULT)

Saul takes an oath that Jonathan will die, but does not specifically say whom God would punish, what the punishment would be, or what the person would do that would violate the oath and bring about God's punishment.

Truth Oath

But indeed, the life of Yahweh and the life of yourself, that between me and between death is like a step!" (1 Samuel 20:3)

Here David uses a truth oath to convince Jonathan that Saul does indeed want to kill David. David says this because Jonathan had been trying to assure David that he had nothing to fear from Saul. But Jonathan knows that David holds both Yahweh's and Jonathan's life as sacred, and so this oath convinces Jonathan that David truly believes what he is saying.

The life of your soul, my lord, I {am} the woman having stationed herself with you in this {place} to pray to Yahweh. (1 Samuel 1:26 ULT)

Hannah is speaking to the priest Eli. She demonstrates that she holds the priest's life as sacred by swearing by it that what she is saying is true.

And Elijah said, "The life of Yahweh of armies, before whom I stand, that I will appear before him today." (1 Kings 18:15 ULT)

Elijah uses this oath to convince Obadiah to announce his arrival to Ahab. Obadiah knows that Elijah would never break his relationship to Yahweh.

Combination oath

The life of Pharaoh, if you leave from this {place} without your youngest brother coming here. (Genesis 42:15)

Joseph is speaking to his brothers as an Egyptian official, and so he swears by the life of Pharaoh rather than by the life of the God of the Hebrews. Joseph combines the two types of oaths here by using a conditional "if" statement (part 3 of the "Promise" oath). He leaves unstated the "then" part of the oath which would be either a punishment from Pharaoh (as with a Promise oath) or a breaking of relationship with Pharaoh (as with a "Truth" oath) if this conditional statement proves true.

Translation Strategies

If people who speak your language would recognize the oath as it is in the ULT, consider translating it in its current form. If not, consider using the following strategies.

- (1) Add in the missing parts so that people recognize it as an oath.
- (2) If oaths are unfamiliar, add a short explanation of what an oath is.
- (3) Put the oath into a form that would be natural in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Add in the missing parts so that people recognize it as an oath.

"I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.' (Genesis 14:22-23 ULT)

"I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, **and ask him to punish me severely** if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.'

And Saul said, "Thus may God do and thus may he add, for dying you will die, Jonathan." (1 Samuel 14:44 ULT)

And Saul said, "May God **punish me severely** and may he add **even more punishment if I do not kill you**, for dying you will die, Jonathan."

But indeed, the life of Yahweh and the life of yourself, that between me and between death is like a step! (1 Samuel 20:3)

But indeed, **I swear by** Yahweh's life and **by** the life of yourself that **it is true that** between me and death is like a step!

The life of Pharaoh, if you leave from this {place} without your youngest brother coming here. (Genesis 42:15)

I swear by the life of Pharaoh, if you leave from this {place} without your youngest brother coming here, **may Pharaoh punish me severely**.

- (2) If oaths are unfamiliar, add a short explanation of what an oath is.

May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you. (Ruth 1:17 ULT)

Then Ruth called on Yahweh to enforce her promise: "May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you."

But indeed, the life of Yahweh and the life of yourself, that between me and between death is like a step! (1 Samuel 20:3)

Then David made a statement to Jonathan to convince him that he truly believed that he was in danger: "But indeed, **I forfeit my relationship to** Yahweh and **to you** yourself **if it is not true** that between me and death is like a step!"

- (3) Put the oath into a form that would be natural in your language.

"I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.' (Genesis 14:22-23 ULT)

"I solemnly swear before Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, **that I will not take** from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or from anything that {belongs} to you, **so help me God**, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.'

May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you. (Ruth 1:17 ULT)

May Yahweh **strike me dead right where I stand** if death separates between me and between you.

But indeed, the life of Yahweh and the life of yourself, that between me and between death is like a step! (1 Samuel 20:3)

But indeed, **before** Yahweh and **before you** yourself, **I swear** that between me and death is like a step!

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:17](#); [Ruth 3:13](#)

Parallelism

Description

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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 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: [Ruth 1:21](#); [Ruth 2:12](#); [Ruth 2:19](#); [Ruth 2:20](#); [Ruth 4:11](#); [Ruth 4:13](#); [Ruth 4:17](#)

Politeness

Description

This page answers the question: *How do I translate politeness into my language?*

People say certain things, or say things in a certain way, in order to communicate that they respect the people to whom they are speaking. We can refer to this as speaking politely. The ways of speaking politely are generally agreed on by those who share a culture. People also use polite ways of speaking to avoid offending others. This can be especially important if the person being addressed has an influential or powerful position.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

Every language has ways to communicate politeness to other speakers of that language, but different languages do not communicate politeness in the same ways. A phrase that is polite in one language may be offensive in another language, or it may simply be confusing. Translators need to recognize politeness in the Bible and communicate the same polite meaning using the appropriate form of politeness in the target language.

Examples From the Bible

■ **do not trouble yourself** (Luke 7:6 ULT)

The centurion sent friends to give Jesus this polite message that Jesus should not come to his house.

■ **I ask you, have me excused** (Luke 14:18 ULT)

In this culture, this was a polite formula for declining a social invitation.

■ **May I find favor in your eyes, my lord**, since you have comforted me, and since you have spoken to the heart of **your female servant**. (Ruth 2:13 ULT)

Ruth uses several phrases of politeness as she talks to Boaz. **May I find favor in your eyes** is an idiomatic phrase that communicates that Boaz is in a high position, **my lord** is an honorific form of address, and she refers to herself humbly as **your female servant** even though she is not actually one of his servants.

■ **Please** let a **little** water be brought... Let me also bring a **bit** of bread (Genesis 18:4-5 ULT)

Abraham describes his generosity as something small in order to be polite. This was a way to communicate to his guests that they were not imposing on him at all. Abraham also uses a word translated as "please" to make his request more polite.

■ Then he brought him outside and said, "**Please** look at the heavens and count the stars..." (Genesis 15:5)

In the above example, God is speaking to Abram, inviting him to look at the stars. He also uses the word translated as "please." God has no need to be polite, but this communicates respect for Abram.

Honorifics

A specific category of politeness is the way that people address other people who are important, powerful, or worthy of honor in other ways. We can refer to this form of politeness as using honorific language. Honorific language can be in the form of special titles or, in some languages, special forms of the words used.

■ to the **most excellent** Governor Felix (Acts 23:26 ULT)

The expression **most excellent** was an honorific title by which people addressed Roman government officials.

■ **O king, live forever!** (Daniel 5:10 ULT)

This was the polite and respectful way to address the king before saying anything else to him.

Politeness under other categories

People often use language that is non-standard or figurative to communicate politeness. In these cases, there will be a Translation Note under the category of the figure of speech rather than under the category of politeness. The Note will discuss the issue of the figurative speech and then also mention that this is being used to be polite. For example, the following verses will have Translation Notes under the categories given rather than under politeness.

Metaphor

■ Men, **brothers and fathers**, hear my defense to you now. (Acts 22:1 ULT)

Paul is using the word **brothers** to refer to his fellow Israelites. He is using the word **fathers** to refer either to Jewish leaders who may be present or to Jewish men who are older than he is. In both cases he is speaking respectfully.

Idiom

■ **I beg of you**, about whom is the prophet saying this...? (Acts 8:34 ULT)

The Ethiopian official is using an idiomatic expression as a polite way to introduce a request.

Symbolic action

■ **And having fallen down**, they worshiped him (Matt 2:11 ULT)

The act of kneeling down before someone showed deep respect for the person.

Speaking of oneself in the third person

■ please do not pass by **your servant**. (Gen 18:3 ULT)

Abraham refers to himself as **your servant** here in order to show respect to his guests.

Euphemism

■ And having said this, **he fell asleep**. (Acts 7:60 ULT)

Luke is describing the death of Stephen when he says **he fell asleep**. He is using this polite way of referring to something unpleasant to avoid offending his readers.

Other Uses of the Imperative

■ **You pray to the Lord for me**, so that nothing of which you have spoken may come upon me. (Acts 8:24 ULT)

The verb **pray** is an imperative, but it communicates a polite request rather than a command.

Rhetorical question

| **Lord, are you not concerned that my sister has left me alone to serve?** (Luke 10:40 ULT)

Martha is complaining that Jesus is allowing Mary to sit listening to him when there is so much work to do. But Martha respects Jesus, so she uses the question form to make her complaint more polite.

Translation Strategies

If the phrase used in the ULT would be natural and be a polite expression in your language, consider using it. If not, use the strategy below.

(1) Use a phrase that would be both natural and polite in your language for this situation.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use a phrase that would be both natural and polite in your language for this situation.

| **do not trouble yourself** (Luke 7:6 ULT)

I do not want you to go out of your way

or

Please do not bother

| **I ask you, have me excused** (Luke 14:18 ULT)

Please accept my apology for not being able to attend

| **May I find favor in your eyes, my lord,** since you have comforted me, and since you have spoken to the heart of **your female servant**. (Ruth 2:13 ULT)

You are too kind to me, good sir; you have comforted me and you have spoken to my heart **even though I am not worthy of it.**

| Please let **a little** water be brought... Let me also bring **a bit** of bread (Genesis 18:4-5 ULT)

I have **plenty** of water... I also have **plenty** of food

| **"Please** look at the heavens and count the stars..." (Genesis 15:5)

"Look up at the heavens, **if you will**, and count the stars..."

| **O king, live forever!** (Daniel 5:10 ULT)

Your majesty, **I wish you well!**

| **I beg of you**, about whom is the prophet saying this...? (Acts 8:34 ULT)

Please tell me, about whom is the prophet saying this...?

| **You pray to the Lord for me**, so that nothing of which you have spoken may come upon me. (Acts 8:24 ULT)

Please pray to the Lord for me so that nothing of which you have spoken may come upon me.

or

I ask you to pray to the Lord for me so that nothing of which you have spoken may come upon me.

| **Lord, are you not concerned that my sister has left me alone to serve?** (Luke 10:40 ULT)

Lord, it seems as if you do not care that my sister has left me alone to serve.

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:13](#); [Ruth 3:9](#); [Ruth 3:18](#)

Possession

Description

In English, the grammatical form that commonly indicates possession is also used to indicate a variety of relationships between people and objects or people and other people. In English, that grammatical relationship is shown by using the word “**of**,” by using **an apostrophe and the letter “s”**, or by using a **possessive pronoun**. The following examples are different ways to indicate that my grandfather owns a house.

- the house **of** my grandfather
- my grandfather **'s** house
- **his** house

Possession is used in Hebrew, Greek, and English for a variety of situations. Here are a few common situations that it is used for.

- Ownership — Someone owns something.
- The clothes of me - my clothes — The clothes that I own
- Social Relationship — Someone has some kind of social relationship with another.
- The mother of John — John's mother - the woman who gave birth to John, or the woman who cared for John
- A teacher of Israel - Israel's teacher — a person who teaches Israel
- Association — A particular thing is associated with a particular person, place, or thing.
- The sickness of David - David's sickness — the sickness that David is experiencing
- the fear of the Lord — the fear that is appropriate for a human being to have when relating to the Lord
- Contents — Something has something in it.
- a bag of clothes — a bag that has clothes in it, or a bag that is full of clothes
- Part and whole: One thing is part of another.
- my head — the head that is part of my body
- the roof of a house — the roof that is part of a house

In some languages there is a special form of possession, termed **inalienable possession**. This form of possession is used for things that cannot be removed from you, as opposed to things you could lose. In the examples above, *my head* and *my mother* are examples of inalienable possession (at least in some languages), while *my clothes* or *my teacher* would be alienably possessed. What may be considered alienable vs. inalienable may differ by language. In languages that mark the difference, the expression of inalienable possession and alienable possession will be different.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between two ideas represented by the two nouns when one is in the grammatical relationship of possessing the other.
- Some languages do not use grammatical possession for all of the situations that your source text Bible might use it for.

Examples From the Bible

Ownership — In the example below, the son owned the money.

▮ The younger son ... wasted his wealth by living recklessly. (Luke 15:13b)

Social Relationship — In the example below, the disciples were people who learned from John.

This page answers the question: *What is possession and how can I translate phrases that show it?*

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

Parts of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Then **the disciples of John** came to him. (Matthew 9:14a ULT)

Association — In the example below, the gospel is the message associated with Paul because he preaches it.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, from the seed of David, according to **my gospel**,
(2 Timothy 2:8 ULT)

Material — In the example below, the material used for making the crowns was gold.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

Contents — In the example below, the cup has water in it.

For whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Part of a whole — In the example below, the door was a part of the palace.

But Uriah slept at **the door of the king's palace**. (2 Samuel 11:9a ULT)

Part of a group — In the example below, “us” refers to the whole group and “each one” refers to the individual members.

Now to **each one of us** grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
(Ephesians 4:7 ULT)

Events and Possession

Sometimes one or both of the nouns is an abstract noun that refers to an event or action. In the examples below, the abstract nouns are in **bold** print. These are just some of the relationships that are possible between two nouns when one of them refers to an event.

Subject — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who would do the action named by the first noun. In the example below, **John baptized people**.

The **baptism of John**, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me. (Mark 11:30)

In the example below, **Christ loves us**.

Who will separate us from the **love of Christ**? (Romans 8:35)

Object — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who or what something would happen to. In the example below, **people love money**.

For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10a ULT)

Instrument — Sometimes the word after “of” tells how something would happen. In the example below, God would **punish people by sending enemies to attack them with swords**.

Then be afraid of the sword, because wrath brings **the punishment of the sword**. (Job 19:29a ULT)

Representation — In the example below, John was baptizing people who were repenting of their sins. They were being baptized to show that they were repenting. Their **baptism represented their repentance**.

John came, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching **a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4 ULT)

Strategies for learning what the relationship is between the two nouns

- (1) Read the surrounding verses to see if they help you to understand the relationship between the two nouns.
- (2) Read the verse in the UST. Sometimes it shows the relationship clearly.
- (3) See what the notes say about it.

Translation Strategies

If possession would be a natural way to show a particular relationship between two nouns, consider using it. If it would be strange or hard to understand, consider these.

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.
- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.
- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

"On their heads were **gold crowns**"

- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.

Whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Whoever gives you a **cup that has water in it** to drink ... will not lose his reward.

Wealth is worthless on **the day of wrath**. (Proverbs 11:4a ULT)

Wealth is worthless on **the day when God shows his wrath**.

or:

Wealth is worthless on the **day when God punishes people because of his wrath**.

- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb. (In the example below, there are two possession relationships, "punishment of Yahweh" and "your God.")

Notice that I am not speaking to your children, who have not known or seen **the punishment of Yahweh your God**. (Deuteronomy 11:2a ULT)

Notice that I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen **how Yahweh, the God whom you worship, punished the people of Egypt**.

You will only observe and see the **punishment of the wicked**. (Psalms 91:8 ULT)

You will only observe and see **how Yahweh punishes the wicked**.

You will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. (Acts 2:38b ULT)

You will receive the **Holy Spirit, whom God will give to you**.

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:15](#)

Pronouns

Description

Pronouns are words that people might use instead of using a noun when referring to someone or something. Some examples are "I," "you," "he," "it," "this," "that," "himself," "someone," and others. The personal pronoun is the most common type of pronoun.

This page answers the question: *What are pronouns, and what kinds of pronouns are in some languages?*

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

Parts of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to people or things and show whether the speaker is referring to himself, the person he is speaking to, or someone or something else. The following are kinds of information that personal pronouns may provide. Other types of pronouns may give some of this information, as well.

Person

- First Person — The speaker and possibly others (I, me, we, us)
 - [Exclusive and Inclusive "We"](#)
- Second Person — The person or people that the speaker is talking to and possibly others (you)
 - [Forms of You](#)
- Third Person — Someone or something other than the speaker and those he is talking to (he, she, it, they)

Number

- Singular — one (I, you, he, she, it)
- Plural — more than one (we, you, they)
 - [Singular Pronouns that Refer to Groups](#)
- Dual — two (Some languages have pronouns specifically for two people or two things.)

Gender

- Masculine — he
- Feminine — she
- Neuter — it

Relationship to other words in the sentence

- Subject of the verb: I, you, he, she, it, we, they
- Object of the verb or preposition: me, you, him, her, it, us, them
- Possessor with a noun: my, your, his, her, its, our, their
- Possessor without a noun: mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs

Other Types of pronouns

Reflexive Pronouns refer to another noun or pronoun in the same sentence: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves.

- John saw **himself** in the mirror. The word "himself" refers to John.

Interrogative Pronouns are used to make a question that needs more than just a yes or no for an answer: what, which, who, whom, whose.

- **Who** built the house?

Relative Pronouns mark a relative clause. The relative pronouns, who, whom, whose, which and that give more information about a noun in the main part of the sentence. Sometimes, the relative adverbs when and where can also be used as relative pronouns.

- I saw the house **that John built**. The clause “that John built” tells which house I saw.
- I saw the man **who built the house**. The clause “who built the house” tells which man I saw.

Demonstrative Pronouns are used to draw attention to someone or something and to show distance from the speaker or something else. The demonstrative pronouns are: this, these, that, and those.

- Have you seen **this** here?
- Who is **that** over there?

Indefinite pronouns are used when no particular noun is being referred to. The indefinite pronouns are: any, anyone, someone, anything, something, and some. Sometimes a personal pronoun is used in a generic way to do this: you, they, he or it.

- He does not want to talk to **anyone**.
- **Someone** fixed it, but I do not know who.
- **They** say that **you** should not wake a sleeping dog.

In the last example, “they” and “you” just refer to people in general.

”

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:18](#); [Ruth 2:9](#); [Ruth 2:20](#); [Ruth 2:22](#); [Ruth 3:1](#)

Quotes within Quotes

Description

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

This page answers the question: *What is a quote within a quote, and how can I help the readers understand who is saying what?*

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

Direct and Indirect Quotations ([UTA PDF](#))

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

When there is a quote within a quote, the listener needs to know who the pronouns refer to. For example: if a quote that is inside a quote has the word “I,” the listener needs to know whether “I” refers to the speaker of the inner quote or the outer quote.

Some languages make this clear by using different kinds of quotes when there are quotes within quotes.

They may use direct quotes for some and indirect quotes for others.

Some languages do not use indirect quotes.

Examples From the Bible

A quotation with only one layer

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

Quotations with two layers

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

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

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

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

A quotation with three layers

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

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

A quotation with four layers

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quote Markings [\(UTA PDF\)](#)

Next we recommend you learn about:

Quote Markings [\(UTA PDF\)](#)

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:7](#); [Ruth 2:21](#); [Ruth 3:17](#)

Reduplication

This is a placeholder for an article to be written about reduplication in the biblical text, such as infinitive-absolute + indicative or other repeated words.

This page answers the question: *What is reduplication?*

Description

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Examples From the Bible

Begin, possess, to possess his land (Deut 2:31 ULT)

Translation Strategies

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:11](#)

Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a question that a speaker asks when he is more interested in expressing his attitude about something than in getting information about it. Speakers use rhetorical questions to express deep emotion or to encourage hearers to think deeply about something. The Bible contains many rhetorical questions, often to express surprise, to rebuke or scold the hearer, or to teach. Speakers of some languages use rhetorical questions for other purposes as well.

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

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

Figures of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Sentence Types ([UTA PDF](#))

Description

A rhetorical question is a question that strongly expresses the speaker's attitude toward something. Often the speaker is not looking for information at all. Or, if he is asking for information, it is not usually the information that the question appears to ask for. The speaker is more interested in expressing his attitude than in getting information.

But those who stood by said, “**Are you insulting the high priest of God?**”(Acts 23:4 ULT)

The people who asked Paul this question were not asking if he was insulting God's high priest. Rather, they used this question to accuse Paul of insulting the high priest.

The Bible contains many rhetorical questions. These rhetorical questions might be used for the purposes: of expressing attitudes or feelings, rebuking people, teaching something by reminding people of something they know and encouraging them to apply it to something new, or introducing something they want to talk about.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use rhetorical questions; for them a question is always a request for information.
- Some languages use rhetorical questions, but for purposes that are different or more limited than in the Bible.
- Because of these differences between languages, some readers might misunderstand the purpose of a rhetorical question in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

Do you not still rule the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7b ULT)

Jezebel used the question above **to remind** King Ahab of something he already knew: he still ruled the kingdom of Israel. The rhetorical question made her point more strongly than if she had merely stated it, because it forced Ahab to admit the point himself. She did this in order **to rebuke** him for being unwilling to take over a poor man's property. She was implying that, since he was the king of Israel, he had the power to take the man's property.

Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

God used the question above **to remind** his people of something they already knew: a young woman would never forget her jewelry or a bride forget her veils. He then **rebuked** his people for forgetting him who is so much greater than those things.

But you, why do you judge your brother? And you also, why do you despise your brother? (Romans 14:10 ULT)

Paul used these rhetorical questions **to rebuke** the Romans for doing what they should not do.

Why did I not die when I came out from the womb? (Job 3:11a ULT)

Job used the question above **to show deep emotion**. This rhetorical question expresses how sad he was that he did not die as soon as he was born. He wished that he had not lived.

And how has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? (Luke 1:43 ULT)

Elizabeth used the question above **to show how surprised and happy she was** that the mother of her Lord came to her.

Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

Jesus used the question above **to remind** the people of something they already knew: a good father would never give his son something bad to eat. By introducing this point, Jesus could go on **to teach them** about God with his next rhetorical question:

Therefore, if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? (Matthew 7:11 ULT)

Jesus used this question **to teach** the people in an emphatic way that God gives good things to those who ask him.

What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed that a man took and threw into his garden ... (Luke 13:18b-19a ULT)

Jesus used the question above **to introduce what he was going to talk about**. He was about to compare the kingdom of God to something. In this case, he compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed.

Translation Strategies

In order to translate a rhetorical question accurately, first be sure that the question you are translating truly is a rhetorical question and is not an information question. Ask yourself, "Does the person asking the question already know the answer to the question?" If so, it is a rhetorical question. Or, if no one answers the question, did the person who asked it expect to receive an answer? If not, it is a rhetorical question.

When you are sure that the question is rhetorical, then be sure that you understand the purpose for the rhetorical question. Is it to encourage or rebuke or shame the hearer? Is it to bring up a new topic? Is it to express surprise or other emotion? Is it to do something else?

When you know the purpose of the rhetorical question, then think of the most natural way to express that purpose in the target language. It might be as a question, or a statement, or an exclamation.

If using the rhetorical question would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing so. If not, here are other options:

- (1) Add the answer after the question.
- (2) Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.
- (3) Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.
- (4) Change the form of the question so that it communicates in your language what the original speaker communicated in his.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Add the answer after the question.

Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? **Of course not!** Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number!

Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? **None of you would do that!**

(2) Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.

What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed. (Luke 13:18-19a ULT)

This is what the kingdom of God is like. It is like a mustard seed ...

Are you insulting the high priest of God? (Acts 23:4b ULT) (Acts 23:4 ULT)

You should not insult God's high priest!

Why did I not die when I came out from the womb? (Job 3:11a ULT)

I wish I had died when I came out from the womb!

And how has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (Luke 1:43 ULT)

How wonderful it is that the mother of my Lord has come to me!

(3) Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.

Do you not still rule the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7b ULT)

You still rule the kingdom of Israel, **do you not?**

(4) Change the form of the question so that it communicates in your language what the original speaker communicated in his.

Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

If your son asks you for a loaf of bread, **would you give him a stone?**

Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

What virgin would forget her jewelry, and what bride would forget her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number!

But you, **why do you judge your brother?** And you also, **why do you despise your brother?** (Romans 14:10 ULT)

Do you think it is good to judge your brother? Do you think it is good to despise your brother?

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:11](#); [Ruth 1:12](#); [Ruth 1:13](#); [Ruth 1:19](#); [Ruth 1:21](#); [Ruth 2:8](#); [Ruth 2:9](#); [Ruth 3:1](#); [Ruth 3:2](#)

Symbolic Action

Description

A symbolic action is something that someone does in order to express a certain idea. For example, in some cultures people nod their heads up and down to mean “yes” or turn their heads from side to side to mean “no.” Symbolic actions do not mean the same things in all cultures. In the Bible, sometimes people perform symbolic actions and sometimes they only refer to the symbolic action.

This page answers the question: *What is a symbolic action and how do I translate it?*

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

Translate Unknowns ([UTA PDF](#))

Examples of symbolic actions

- In some cultures people shake hands when they meet to show that they are willing to be friendly.
- In some cultures people bow when they meet to show respect to each other.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

An action may have a meaning in one culture and a different meaning or no meaning at all in another culture. For example, in some cultures raising the eyebrows means “I am surprised” or “What did you say?” In other cultures it means “yes.”

In the Bible, people did things that had certain meanings in their culture. When we read the Bible, we might not understand what someone meant if we interpret the action based on what it means in our own culture today.

You (the translator) need to understand what people in the Bible meant when they used symbolic actions. If an action does not mean the same thing in your own culture, then you need to figure out how to translate what the action meant.

Examples From the Bible

And behold, a man came whose name was Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And **falling at the feet of Jesus**, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: He did this to show great respect to Jesus.

Look, I am standing at the door and am knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: When people wanted someone to welcome them into their home, they stood at the door and knocked on it.

Translation Strategies

If people would correctly understand what a symbolic action meant to the people in the Bible, consider using it. If not, here are some strategies for translating it.

- (1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.
- (2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.
- (3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning. Do this only in poetry, parables, and sermons. Do not do this when there actually was a person who did a specific action.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Jairus fell down at Jesus' feet in order to show that he greatly respected him.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Look, I stand at the door and knock on it, asking you to let me in.

(2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Jairus showed Jesus great respect.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Look, I stand at the door and ask you to let me in.

(3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT) — Since Jairus actually did this, you should not substitute an action from your own culture.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT) — Jesus was not standing at a real door. Rather he was speaking about wanting to have a relationship with people. So in cultures where it is polite to clear one's throat when wanting to be let into a house, you could use that.

Look, I stand at the door and clear my throat.

"

Referenced in: [Ruth 2:10](#); [Ruth 3:4](#); [Ruth 4:16](#)

Synecdoche

Description

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a speaker uses a part of something to refer to the whole thing, or uses the whole to refer to a part.

■ **My soul** magnifies the Lord. (Luke 1:46b ULT)

Mary was very happy about what the Lord was doing, so she said “my soul,” which means the inner, emotional part of herself, to refer to her whole self.

■ So **the Pharisees** said to him, “Look, why are they doing that which is not lawful?” (Mark 2:24a ULT)

The Pharisees who were standing there did not all say the same words at the same time. Instead, it is more likely that one man representing the group said those words.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some readers may not recognize the synecdoche and thus misunderstand the words as a literal statement.
- Some readers may realize that they are not to understand the words literally, but they may not know what the meaning is.

Example From the Bible

■ Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

“My hands” is a synecdoche for the whole person because clearly the arms and the rest of the body and the mind were also involved in the person’s accomplishments. The hands are chosen to represent the person because they are the parts of the body most directly involved in the work.

Translation Strategies

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

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

■ “**My soul** magnifies the Lord.” (Luke 1:46b ULT)

■ “**I** magnify the Lord.”

So **the Pharisees** said to him ... (Mark 2:24a ULT)

■ **A representative of the Pharisees** said to him ...

Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

■ I looked on all the deeds that **I** had accomplished

This page answers the question: *What is a synecdoche, and how can I translate such a thing into my language?*

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

Figures of Speech ([UTA PDF](#))

Metonymy ([UTA PDF](#))

Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies ([UTA PDF](#))

Next we recommend you learn about:

Metonymy ([UTA PDF](#))

Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:6](#); [Ruth 4:5](#); [Ruth 4:9](#)

Textual Variants

Description

Thousands of years ago, people wrote the books of the Bible. Other people then copied them by hand and translated them. They did this work very carefully, and over the years many people made thousands of copies. However, people who looked at them later saw that there were small differences between them. Some copiers accidentally left out some words, or some mistook one word for another that looked like it. Occasionally, they added words or even whole sentences, either by accident or because they wanted to explain something. Modern Bibles are translations of the old copies. Some modern Bibles include some of these sentences that were added. In the ULT, these added sentences are usually written in footnotes.

This page answers the question: *Why does the ULT have missing or added verses, and should I translate them?*

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

Choosing a Source Text ([UTA PDF](#))

Original Manuscripts ([UTA PDF](#))

Bible scholars have read many old copies and compared them with each other. For each place in the Bible where there was a difference, they have figured out which wordings are most likely correct. The translators of the ULT based the ULT on wordings that scholars say are most likely correct. Because people who use the ULT may have access to Bibles that are based on other copies, the ULT translators have sometimes included information about some of the differences between them, either in the ULT footnotes or in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

Translators are encouraged to translate the text in the ULT and to write about added sentences in footnotes, as is done in the ULT. However, if the local church really wants those sentences to be included in the main text, translators may put them in the text and include a footnote about them.

Examples From the Bible

Matthew 18:10-11 ULT has a footnote about verse 11.

¹⁰ See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven their angels always look on the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ ^[1]

^[1] Many authorities, some ancient, insert v. 11: **For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.**

John 7:53-8:11 is not in the best earliest manuscripts. It has been included in the ULT, but it is marked off with square brackets ([]) at the beginning and end, and there is a footnote after verse 11.

53 [Then everyone went to his own house ... 11 She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."] ^[2]

^[2] Some ancient manuscripts include John 7:53-8:11

Translation Strategies

When there is a textual variant, you may choose to follow the ULT or another version that you have access to.

- (1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.
- (2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The translation strategies are applied to Mark 7:14-16 ULT, which has a footnote about verse 16.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man. ¹⁶ If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts do not include verse 16.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Chapter and Verse Numbers ([UTA PDF](#))

Original Manuscripts ([UTA PDF](#))

Terms to Know ([UTA PDF](#))

The Original and Source Languages ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 3:15](#)

Translate Unknowns

While working to translate the Bible, you (the translator) might find yourself asking: “How do I translate words like lion, fig tree, mountain, priest, or temple when people in my culture have never seen these things and we do not have a word for them?”

This page answers the question: *How can I translate ideas that my readers are not familiar with?*

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Description

Unknowns are things that occur in the source text that are not known to the people of your culture. The unfoldingWord® Translation Words pages and the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes will help you understand what they are. After you understand them, you will need to find ways to refer to those things so that people who read your translation will understand what they are.

They said to him, “We have nothing here except five loaves of **bread** and two fish.” (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

Bread is a particular food made by mixing finely crushed grains with oil, and then cooking the mixture so that it is dry. (Grains are the seeds of a kind of grass.) In some cultures people do not have bread and do not know what it is.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the things that are in the Bible because those things are not part of their own culture.
- Readers may have difficulty understanding a text if they do not know some of the things that are mentioned in it.

Translation Principles

- Use words that are already part of your language if possible.
- Keep expressions short if possible.
- Represent God’s commands and historical facts accurately.

Examples From the Bible

So I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals**. (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

Jackals are wild animals like dogs that live in only a few parts of the world. So they are not known in many places.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous **wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

If wolves do not live where the translation will be read, the readers may not understand that they are fierce, wild animals like dogs that attack and eat sheep.

They offered him wine mixed with **myrrh**, but he did not drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT)

People may not know what myrrh is and that it was used as a medicine.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

Some languages have terms for things that give light, like the sun and fire, but they have no general term for lights.

Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT)

People in many parts of the world have not seen snow, but they may have seen it in pictures.

Translation Strategies

Here are ways you might translate a term that is not known in your language:

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.
- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.
- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.
- (4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.
- (5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly they are very hungry and dangerous animals**.

"Ravenous wolves" is part of a metaphor here, so the reader needs to know that they are very dangerous to sheep in order to understand this metaphor. (If sheep are also unknown, then you will need to also use one of the translation strategies to translate sheep, or change the metaphor to something else, using a translation strategy for metaphors. See [Translating Metaphors](#).)

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked grain seeds** and two fish.

- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.

Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT) This verse is not about snow. It uses snow in a figure of speech to help people understand how white something will be.

Your sins ... will be white like **milk**.

Your sins ... will be white like **the moon**.

- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **myrrh**. But he refused to drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT) — People may understand better what myrrh is if it is used with the general word "medicine."

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **a medicine called myrrh**. But he refused to drink it.

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT) —
People may understand better what bread is if it is used with a phrase that tells what it is made
of (seeds) and how it is prepared (crushed and baked).

We have nothing here except five loaves of **baked crushed seed bread**
and two fish.

(4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals** (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **wild dogs**

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked food** and two fish.

(5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

to him who made **the sun and the moon**

Next we recommend you learn about:

Copy or Borrow Words ([UTA PDF](#))

How to Translate Names ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Ruth 3:3](#); [Ruth 3:15](#)

Unusual Uses of the Plural

The biblical languages sometimes use plural forms to refer to single objects, ideas, or people.

This page answers the question: *What are some unusual uses of the plural and how can I translate them?*

Description

Using a plural form to refer to something singular is done to show an intensified feeling about the object, idea, or person, or to show that an object or idea is extraordinary in some way. Also, sometimes a person refers to himself or herself with a plural pronoun. If the person is a king or a leader in a high position, this is to show that the person is very important and represents many people. If the person is writing a letter, such as Paul in the New Testament, this is to do the opposite. It is to avoid referring directly to himself, to avoid any sense that he is boasting or drawing attention to himself.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use plural forms to refer to single objects, ideas, or people. In these languages, doing so would be both wrong and confusing. Instead, they need to use a singular form and express any intended intensification in another way.

Examples From the Bible

■ The tents of robbers prosper, and securities {are} to the provokers of God (Job 12:6 ULT)

Job is using the plural form **securities** to indicate that these provokers of God experience security to a supreme extent.

■ Now you had cast me deep into the heart of the seas (Jonah 2:3 ULT)

Jonah refers to the sea using the plural **seas** to intensify the idea of either the sea's vastness or activity.

■ The letter that you sent to **us** has been carefully read aloud before me. (Ezra 4:18 ULT)

Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, refers to himself as **us** in response to a letter sent to him.

■ ...through whom [Jesus] **we** received grace and apostleship for obedience of faith among all the Gentiles (Romans 1:5 ULT)

Since this letter is from Paul alone, it is likely that he is using the plural **we** to refer to himself.

Translation Strategies

If a plural form would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, consider these strategies.

- (1) Use a singular form instead of the plural.
- (2) If the plural is used to intensify the meaning, use a singular form with another word that intensifies it such as "very" or "great" or "many."
- (3) If the plural is used to intensify or emphasize the meaning, use one of your language's ways of doing that.

Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a singular form instead of the plural.

■ The letter that you sent to **us** has been carefully read aloud before me. (Ezra 4:18 ULT)

The letter that you sent to **me** has been carefully read aloud before me.

■ ...through whom [Jesus] **we** received grace and apostleship for obedience of faith among all the Gentiles (Romans 1:5 ULT)

...through whom [Jesus] **I** received grace and apostleship for obedience of faith among all the Gentiles

(2) If the plural is used to intensify or emphasize the meaning, use a singular form with another word that intensifies it such as “very” or “great” or “many.”

■ The tents of robbers prosper, and **securities {are}** to the provokers of God (Job 12:6 ULT)

The tents of robbers prosper, and **great security {is}** to the provokers of God

■ Now you had cast me deep into the heart of the **seas** (Jonah 2:3 ULT)

Now you had cast me deep into the heart of the **great sea**

(3) If the plural is used to intensify or emphasize the meaning, use one of your language’s ways of doing that.

■ The tents of robbers prosper, and **securities {are}** to the provokers of God (Job 12:6 ULT)

The tents of robbers prosper, and the provokers of God **enjoy complete security**

■ Now you had cast me deep into the heart of the **seas** (Jonah 2:3 ULT)

Now you had cast me deep into the heart of the **raging sea**

”

Referenced in: [Ruth 1:15](#)



unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 85

covenant faithfulness, covenant loyalty, covenant love

Definition:

In biblical times, the term translated as “covenant faithfulness” was used to describe the kind of faithfulness, loyalty, kindness, and love that was both expected and demonstrated between people who were closely related to one another, either by marriage or by blood. This same term is used often in the Bible to describe the way God relates to his people, especially his commitment to fulfill the promises that he made to them.

- The way this term is translated can depend on how each of the individual terms “covenant” and “faithfulness” are translated.
- Other ways to translate this term might include: “faithful love;” “loyal, committed love;” or “loving dependability.”

(See also: [covenant](#), [faithful](#), [grace](#), [Israel](#), [people of God](#), [promise](#))

Bible References:

- Ezra 3:11
- Numbers 14:18

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2617

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Referenced in: [Introduction to Ruth](#)

faithful, faithfulness, trustworthy

Definition:

To be “faithful” to God means to consistently live according to God’s teachings. It means to be loyal to him by obeying him. The state or condition of being faithful is “faithfulness.”

- A person who is faithful can be trusted to always keep his promises and to always fulfill his responsibilities to other people.
- A faithful person perseveres in doing a task, even when it is long and difficult.
- Faithfulness to God is the consistent practice of doing what God wants us to do.

Translation Suggestions:

- In many contexts, “faithful” can be translated as “loyal” or “dedicated” or “dependable.”
- In other contexts, “faithful” can be translated by a word or phrase that means “continuing to believe” or “persevering in believing and obeying God.”
- Ways that “faithfulness” could be translated could include “persevering in believing” or “loyalty” or “trustworthiness” or “believing and obeying God.”

(See also: [believe](#), [faith](#), [believe](#))

Bible References:

- Genesis 24:49
- Leviticus 26:40
- Numbers 12:7
- Joshua 2:14
- Judges 2:16-17
- 1 Samuel 2:9
- Psalm 12:1
- Proverbs 11:12-13
- Isaiah 1:26
- Jeremiah 9:7-9
- Hosea 5:7
- Luke 12:46
- Luke 16:10
- Colossians 1:7
- 1 Thessalonians 5:24
- 3 John 1:5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **8:5** Even in prison, Joseph remained **faithful** to God, and God blessed him.
- **14:12** Even so, God was still **faithful** to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- **15:13** The people promised to remain **faithful** to God and follow his laws.
- **17:9** David ruled with justice and **faithfulness** for many years, and God blessed him. However, toward the end of his life he sinned terribly against God.
- **35:12** “The older son said to his father, ‘All these years I have worked **faithfully** for you!’”
- **49:17** But God is **faithful** and says that if you confess your sins, he will forgive you.
- **50:4** “If you remain **faithful** to me to the end, then God will save you.”

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0529, H0530, H0539, H0540, H0571, H0898, H2181, H4603, H4604, H4820, G05690, G05710, G41030

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Referenced in: [Introduction to Ruth](#)

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