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unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Malachi

Introduction to Malachi

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of Malachi

1:1 Title 1:2–5 Yahweh will punish the wicked: Edom 1:6–14 Judeans not bringing acceptable sacrifices 2:1–9 Priests must teach and apply the law faithfully 2:10–16 Yahweh is concerned for justice: no divorce 2:17–3:5 Yahweh is concerned for justice and will punish evildoers 3:6–12 Judeans not bringing proper tithes 3:13–15 Yahweh will punish the wicked, despite what Judeans are saying 3:16–4:6 Yahweh will bless and protect those who fear him

The overall structure of the book follows a pattern called “chiasm,” which Hebrew writers considered to be particularly elegant in poetry and literature. There are six main parts to this structure. The chiasm pattern is ABCCBA. In terms of theme, the first and sixth parts are found in (1:2–5 and 3:13–15), the second and fifth parts match (1:6–14 and 3:6–12), and the third and fourth parts match (2:10–16 and 2:17–3:5). There is also an excursus, a special message to the priests (2:1–9), and an epilogue telling how the people responded to the message of the book and what Yahweh promised them (3:16–4:6).

What is the book of Malachi about?

The book of Malachi contains prophecies that address the Jews who had returned to Judah from exile in Babylon. At that time, the Jews were discouraged even though they had finished building a new temple. The wonderful things that previous prophets had promised for Judah had not yet happened. The Persian Empire still ruled over them. As a result, they no longer were concerned about the law or worshiping Yahweh. These prophecies rebuke the Judeans for not living as the law taught and for not bringing proper tithes and sacrifices. But the prophecies also assure the Judeans that Yahweh will ultimately do everything that he promised to do.

Who wrote the book of Malachi?

The description in the book title (1:1) could either be translated “the word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of Malachi” or “the word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of my messenger.” The last expression in that sentence also occurs in 3:1, where the context indicates that it should be translated as “my messenger.” However, the expression could well be the name of the man in the book title. That man would be the prophet who delivered these messages on behalf of Yahweh. However, we do not know anything else about this man—where he lived, what family he came from, etc. Translating the expression as a name is the most common interpretation, and that is the interpretation that the ULT and these notes follow. If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, you may wish to follow the interpretation that it uses. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to follow the same interpretation as the ULT.

How should the title of this book be translated?

This book traditionally has been titled “Malachi” or “The Book of Malachi.” Translators may decide to call it something like “The Sayings of Malachi” or “The Messages that Malachi Brought.”

Part 2: Religious and Cultural Concepts

The “day of Yahweh”

The book of Malachi speaks about the “day of Yahweh” in 3:2–5 and 3:17–4:6. It also calls it “the day that is coming” and “the day of his coming,” and Yahweh calls it “the day that I am preparing.” All of these are references to the

time when Yahweh will come and judge people. He would remove those who have wickedly sinned and bless those who have trusted in him. (See: **day of the Lord, day of Yahweh (p.172)**)

Part 3: Translation Issues

“But you say”

In each of the six thematic sections of the book, the prophet makes a statement that challenges the people and gets their attention. Its meaning is not immediately clear. The prophet then anticipates how the people will respond. He introduces their likely response with the phrase “But you say” (1:2, 1:6, 1:7, 1:13, 2:14, 2:17, 3:7, 3:8, 3:13). After saying how he expects they would respond, he then explains what his provocative statement meant. This was a common practice of Jewish public speakers in this time period (and also in New Testament times). The phrase “But you say” occurs throughout the book as Malachi anticipates and answers objections. It would be helpful to translate the phrase consistently so that your readers can appreciate the method he is using to challenge the Judeans.

Yahweh of Armies

This is an important title of God that is used more than 20 times throughout the book of Malachi. It reminds the listeners of the great power that Yahweh has to judge and punish all nations. Be sure to translate it consistently throughout the book so that your readers can appreciate the emphasis that Malachi places on it. (See: **Yahweh of hosts, God of hosts, host of heaven, host of the heavens, Lord of hosts (p.173)**)

Malachi 1

Malachi 1 General Notes

Structure and Formatting

1:1 Title

1:2–5 Yahweh will punish the wicked: Edom

1:6–14 Judeans not bringing acceptable sacrifices

Malachi 1:1

The burden of the word of Yahweh

The editor of the book is speaking as if the **word of Yahweh** were a **burden** that Malachi was carrying. This is likely a reference to the serious nature of what Yahweh told Malachi to say. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [The serious word from Yahweh] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

the word of Yahweh

The editor is using the word **word** by association to mean what Yahweh said by using words. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [what Yahweh said] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

to Israel

Since Malachi is referring to a group of people, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form of **Israel**. Alternate translation: [to the Israelites] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.83)**)

by the hand of

The author is using one part of Malachi, his **hand**, to mean all of him in the act of bringing Yahweh's message to the Israelites. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your culture or plain language. Alternate translation: [through] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

Malachi

These notes follow the interpretation that the word **Malachi** is the name of a man. See the further discussion in the General Introduction to Malachi. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.110)**)

Malachi 1:2

I have loved you,” says Yahweh

In your translation, use a natural way of introducing direct quotations in your language. Alternate translation: [Yahweh says, ‘I have loved you’] (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.150)**)

you

The word **you** is plural here because Yahweh is addressing the Israelites as a group, so use the plural form in your translation if your language marks that distinction. The words “you,” “your,” and “yourselves” are usually plural in this book when they refer to the Israelites. These notes will indicate any exceptions. The word “you” is always singular when it refers to Yahweh. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.106)**)

But you say

Malachi is probably not quoting an actual response from the Judeans. Rather, he is anticipating an objection, stating it, and then answering it. See the further discussion in the General Introduction to Malachi. Alternate translation: [Now you may object] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

Was} not Esau a brother to Jacob?” the declaration of Yahweh. “Yet I loved Jacob

If it would be more natural in your language, you could change the order of these phrases so that the speaker, **Yahweh**, is identified before we read the words which he speaks. Alternate translation: [Yahweh declares, “Was not Esau a brother to Jacob? Yet I loved Jacob”] (See: **Information Structure (p.120)**)

Was} not Esau a brother to Jacob

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [Now Esau was Jacob’s brother] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

Was} not Esau a brother to Jacob

Yahweh is using the names **Esau** and **Jacob** by association to mean their descendants. Alternate translation: [Are the Edomites not a related people group to you Israelites?] or [Now the Edomites are a related people group to you Israelites] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

the declaration of Yahweh

This phrase indicates that this is a direct quotation from Yahweh. In your translation, use a natural way of introducing direct quotations in your language. Alternate translation: [Yahweh declares] (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.150)**)

Yet I loved Jacob

Yahweh is referring to the Israelites as a group by using the name of their ancestor, **Jacob**. Alternate translation: [Yet I loved you Israelites] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.83)**)

וְאֵהָ בְּאַתְיָ־יַעֲקֹב: וְאַתְיָ־עֵשׂ וְשֵׁנִי אֶתִי

Here the author uses a poetic device called a chiasm, which Hebrew writers often used in poetry and literature. The outer phrases **I loved** and **I hated** parallel each other and the inner words, **Jacob** and **Esau** parallel each other. So the pattern is ABBA. If it is possible in your language you should try to retain this order. (See: **Poetry (p.141)**)

Malachi 1:3

but Esau I hated

The word translated as **hated** does not always indicate a strong antipathy or loathing. In a comparison such as this one, it can mean “loved less” or “favored less.” If it would help your readers, you could indicate that explicitly. Alternate translation: [but I have not favored Esau or his descendants, the Edomites] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

a desolation

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **desolation**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [a desolate place] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

for the jackals of

A **jackal** is a wild dog that lives in the desert. If your readers would not be familiar with what a jackal is, in your translation you could use the name of a similar animal that your readers would recognize, or you could use a general expression. Alternate translation: [desert scavengers] (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.166)**)

Malachi 1:4

Though Edom says

The word **Edom** is another name for “Esau.” Yahweh uses the word **Edom** by association to mean Esau’s descendants. If it would be helpful to your readers you could state this plainly. Alternate translation: [Though the Edomites say] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

We are beaten down

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: [Our enemies have beaten us down] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

And they will call them ‘the territory of wickedness’ and ‘the people whom Yahweh abhors forever

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there are not quotations within a quotation. Alternate translation: [And people will say that they are a territory where wicked people live and that they are a people whom Yahweh abhors forever] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.152)**)

And they will call them

Here, **they** is an indefinite pronoun that does not have a specific referent in the immediate context. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this with a different expression that does not use an indefinite pronoun, as modeled by the UST. (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.148)**)

the territory of wickedness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **wickedness**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [the wicked territory] or [the territory where wicked people live] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

Malachi 1:5

And your eyes will see, and you yourselves will say, 'Great is Yahweh beyond the border of Israel

The words in this verse could: (1) be a continuation of Yahweh's words that began in the previous verse. If you treat this as a quotation from Yahweh, it may be more natural in your language not to have a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: [And your eyes will see, and you yourselves will say that Yahweh is great beyond the border of Israel] (2) the words of Malachi. If you choose this option, you will need to add closing quotes at the end of the previous verse or whatever means your language uses to end a quotation, and use whatever punctuation your language requires to indicate that Malachi is speaking. Alternate translation: [And your eyes will see, and you yourselves will say, "Great is Yahweh beyond the border of Israel"] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p. 152)**)

And your eyes will see

Yahweh is using one part of the Judeans, their **eyes**, to represent all of them in the act of seeing. The emphasis is on their eyewitness experience. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [And you will see for yourselves] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

And your eyes will see, and you yourselves will say, 'Great is Yahweh beyond the border of Israel

It may be more natural in your language to have Yahweh speak of himself in the first person rather than in the third person. Alternate translation: [And your eyes will see, and you yourselves will say that I am great beyond the border of Israel!] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.104)**)

Malachi 1:6

So if I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [Since I am a father, you should honor me. And since I am a master, you should fear me] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

my name. & your name

Yahweh is using the word **name** by association to mean his reputation and authority. Alternate translation: [my reputation ... your reputation] or [my authority ... your authority] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

Malachi 1:7

defiled food

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: [food that people have made unfit for sacrifice] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

But you say, 'In what have we defiled you?' In your saying, 'The table of Yahweh, it is despised

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there are not quotations within a quotation. Alternate translation: [But you ask how you have defiled me. You defile me by saying that you can despise the table of Yahweh] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.152)**)

The table of Yahweh, it is despised

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: [One may despise the table of Yahweh] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

The table of Yahweh

Yahweh is speaking as if the altar on which the priests offered sacrifices to him were a **table** at which he ate food. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [The altar of Yahweh] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Malachi 1:8

And when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and the sick, is it not evil

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [When you present blind animals for sacrifice, that is evil! And when you present lame and sick animals, that is also evil!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

the blind & the lame and the sick

Yahweh is not referring to specific blind, lame, or sick animals. He means animals with these conditions in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [blind animals ... lame and sick animals] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.108)**)

Present it

The pronoun **it** refers to the blind, lame, and sick animals. It may be more natural in your language to use a plural expression. Alternate translation: [Present these animals] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.148)**)

to your governor. Will he accept you & your face

The words **you** and **your** are singular here because Yahweh is addressing the priests as a collective group. This suits the context, since that is how they were ruled by their **governor**. It may be natural for you to use the singular form in your translation if your language marks that distinction. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.106)**)

Will he accept you or lift up your face

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [He certainly will not accept you or lift up your face!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

Will he accept you or lift up your face

The terms **accept you** and **lift up your face** mean similar things. Yahweh is using the two terms together for emphasis. If it would be clearer for your readers, you could express the emphasis with a single phrase. Alternate translation: [He certainly will not show you any favor at all!] (See: **Doublet (p.95)**)

or lift up your face

This is an expression that people of this culture would commonly use to mean “show favor.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [or show you favor] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

Malachi 1:9

And now

The word the ULT translated as **And now** is an expression that was used in messages of this time to introduce important points. If your language has a comparable expression that it uses for this same purpose, you can use it in your translation. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.88)**)

the face of God, that he may be gracious to us

Malachi attributes this quotation to Yahweh, but it is something that Yahweh told him to say to the priests. So you could translate it with Malachi as the speaker. However, if you translate it with Yahweh as the speaker, he would be speaking about himself in the third person. If it would be more natural in your language, you could translate it in the first person. Alternate translation: [my face, that I may be gracious to you] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.104)**)

the face of God

Yahweh is using one part of himself, his **face**, to mean all of him in the act of looking with favor on someone who was praying to him. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [God] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

the face of God

Malachi is probably using the term **God** here to contrast with the mention of “the governor” in the previous verse. The implication is that if people would not offer inferior gifts to a human being, they should certainly not offer them to God. So here it would be appropriate to use your language’s term for the true God who created the world rather than using the name Yahweh. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.110)**)

that he may be gracious to us

Malachi is using the pronoun **us** to refer to himself and his listeners, so use the inclusive form of that word if your language marks that distinction. (If you are treating this as a direct quotation from Yahweh, you may use the plural form of “you.”) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.102)**)

This has been from your hand

The pronoun **This** refers to the unacceptable sacrifices. It may be helpful to clarify the referent for your readers. Alternate translation: [These unacceptable sacrifices have been from your hand] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.148)**)

from your hand

Malachi is using one part of the priests’ bodies, the **hand**, to mean all of themselves in the act of offering sacrifices. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [from you] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

from your hand

Since Malachi is referring to a group of people, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form of **hand**. Alternate translation: [from your hands] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.83)**)

Will he lift up your faces

See how you translated the similar expression in [1:8](#). (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

Will he lift up your faces

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [He certainly will not lift your faces!] or [He will certainly not show you favor!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

Malachi 1:10

Who even among you will shut the doors, that you might not kindle {fire} on my altar in vain

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [I wish one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not kindle useless fires on my altar!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

the doors

Yahweh assumes that his listeners will know that by **the doors** he means the doors of the temple. You could say that explicitly if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [the doors of the temple] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

an offering from your hand

Since Yahweh is referring to a group of people, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form of **hand**. Alternate translation: [offerings from your hands] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.83)**)

from your hand

Yahweh is using one part of the priests' bodies, the **hand**, to mean all of themselves in the act of offering sacrifices. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [that you give] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

Malachi 1:11

from the rising of the sun and unto its setting

Yahweh is using the **rising** and **setting** of the **sun** by association to mean the east and the west. Alternate translation: [from the east to the west] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

from the rising of the sun and unto its setting

Yahweh is speaking of two extremes in order to include them and everything in between. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [everywhere in the world] (See: **Merism (p.122)**)

my name {will be} great & my name {will be} great

Yahweh is using the word **name** by association to mean his reputation. See how you translated the same expression in [1:6](#). Alternate translation: [my reputation will be great ... my reputation will be great] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

my name {will be} great

The Hebrew text leaves out a verb in this phrase. Many languages require a verb to make this phrase complete. If it would be helpful in your language, you could supply the verb from the context. The verb that needs to be supplied could be: (1) future tense, "will be." (2) present tense, "is." Alternate translation: [my name is great] (See: **Ellipsis (p. 97)**)

to my name

Yahweh is using one part of himself, his **name**, to mean all of him. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [to me] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

Malachi 1:12

But you are profaning it

Here, the pronoun **it** refers to Yahweh's name or reputation. It may be helpful to clarify this for your readers. Alternate translation: [But you are profaning my name] or [But you are making my reputation no more than ordinary] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.148)**)

But you are profaning it in your saying, 'The table of the Lord, it {is} defiled, and its fruit, its food, is despised

If 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: [But you are profaning it when you say that my table is defiled, and its fruit, its food, is despised] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.152)**)

The table of the Lord

See how you translated the same expression in [1:7](#). Alternate translation: [The altar of the Lord] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

the Lord

In the same phrase in [1:7](#), the name "Yahweh" is used. Here a title, **the Lord**, is used instead. It may be that in the earlier instance Yahweh is speaking of himself in the third person, while in this instance Yahweh is quoting what the priests would say. (In order not to misuse his name, Jews would use this title instead.) Some versions of the Bible use their representation of the divine name here, since that is what the priests meant. Other versions use the title **Lord** to reflect this Jewish practice and the original text of the book. 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: **How to Translate Names (p.110)**)

it {is} defiled

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: [it is not holy] or [it is nothing special] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

and its fruit

Yahweh is speaking as if the altar were a tree that produced **fruit**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [what we get from it] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

its food

Yahweh assumes that his listeners will know that by **its food** he means the food allowance the priests receive from the altar. You could say that explicitly if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [our food allowance] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

is despised

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: [is contemptible] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

Malachi 1:13

But you say, 'Behold, what a weariness

If 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: [But you say that it is a weariness] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.152)**)

Behold

The priests are speaking as if they wanted their listeners to **Behold** or look at something. They are using this term to focus their listeners' attention on what they are about to say. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

what a weariness

The priests are using a phrase that expresses a strong feeling of tiredness or boredom. There may be an equivalent word or phrase in your language that you can use in your translation to convey this same feeling. You could also state what the priests were feeling. Alternate translation: [what drudgery] or [we are tired of doing this] (See: **Exclamations (p.100)**)

And you puff at it

In this culture, to **puff** at something, blowing a small breath at it, was a symbolic action that showed contempt. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could express this in terms of an action that has the same significance in your culture. You could also state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [And you sniff at it] or [And you show contempt for it] (See: **Symbolic Action (p.162)**)

the stolen and the lame and the sick

Yahweh is not referring to specific **stolen**, **lame**, or **sick** animals. He means animals that have been **stolen** or are **lame** or **sick** in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using plural forms. Alternate translation: [stolen animals, lame animals, and sick animals] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.108)**)

the stolen

The word the ULT translates as **the stolen** could refer to: (1) animals that have been stolen. Alternate translation: [animals that are stolen] (2) animals that have been attacked and as a result are mutilated or torn. Alternate translation: [the torn] or [the injured]

the stolen

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [animals that you have obtained by theft] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

Should I accept this from your hand

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [I will certainly not accept this from you!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

Malachi 1:14

But cursed {be} the deceiver if a male is in his flock and he vows {it}, but he sacrifices the blemished to the Lord

Yahweh is describing one event before describing another event that would precede it. In your translation, you may wish to relate these events in the order in which they would happen. Alternate translation: [But if someone has a male in his flock and he vows it, but he sacrifices the blemished to the Lord, then that deceiver will be cursed] (See: **Order of Events (p.134)**)

But cursed {be}

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: [But I will curse] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

if a male is in his flock

Yahweh assumes that his listeners will know that by **a male**, he means a healthy, unblemished male animal. You could say that explicitly if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [if a healthy, unblemished male is in his flock] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

the blemished

Yahweh is not referring to a specific **blemished** animal. He means blemished animals in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [blemished animals] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.108)**)

to the Lord. & says Yahweh of Armies

Yahweh is speaking about himself in the third person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate these in the first person. Alternate translation: [to me ... says, I, Yahweh of Armies] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.104)**)

and my name is feared among the nations

Yahweh is using one part of himself, his **name**, to mean all of him in the act of being feared. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [and I am feared among the nations because of my reputation] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

Malachi 2

Malachi 2 General Notes

Structure and Formatting

2:1–9 Priests must teach and apply the law faithfully

2:10–16 Yahweh is concerned for justice: no divorce

2:17–3:5 Yahweh is concerned for justice and will punish evildoers

Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

“My covenant was with him, life and peace, and I gave them to him {for} fear” (2:5)

Here Yahweh seems to be alluding implicitly to what he said in [Numbers 25:12–13](#), that he was making a **covenant** of **peace** establishing Phineas (the son of the first high priest, Aaron) and his descendants in the priesthood permanently. Yahweh did this because Phineas zealously opposed the worship of foreign gods. That is what Yahweh means here by “I gave them to him for fear.” He is saying, in other words, “because he worshiped me exclusively and devotedly.” Yahweh was punishing the Israelites for this idol-worship with a plague that was killing many of them, but he ended the plague because of what Phineas did. So this was a covenant of **peace** (Yahweh was no longer hostile to the Israelites). It was also a covenant of **life** (Yahweh was no longer punishing the Israelites with death). The word **life** may also reflect that this was a permanent covenant that would not end. The notes to [2:5](#) suggest ways to translate these statements.

Translation Issues

And did he not make one (2:15a)

Here are two views Bible scholars have regarding the correct interpretation of these words. (1) The word **one** refers to the close connection a husband and wife have. Alternate translation: [And did not God make you one with your wife?] (2) The word **one** refers to God. Alternate translation: [And did not the one God make you]

and a remnant of spirit {was} to him? (2:15b)

Here are two views, among many, that Bible scholars have regarding the correct interpretation of these words. (1) These words mean that a husband and wife are united in body and spirit. Alternate translation: [God made you to become united with your wife in body and spirit] (2) These words mean that the bodies and spirits of a husband and wife belong to God. Alternate translation: [and you and your wife belong to God]

“and one {who} covers over his garment with violence” (2:16)

Here are three views Bible scholars have regarding the correct interpretation of these words. (1) it means that husband and wife Malachi is speaking as if **violence** were a substance with which a person could cover a **garment**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. The idea of complete covering conveys emphasis. Alternate translation: [and one who acts very violently] (2) The word **violence** refers to harsh actions that could include actions other than divorce. Alternate translation: [and one who acts violently] (3) The word

violence refers to violent or cruel actions which a person conceals. Alternate translation: [and one who conceals their violence]

Malachi 2:1

And now

See how you translated the same expression in [1:9](#). (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.88)**)

Malachi 2:2

you will not listen

In contexts such as this, the word translated as **listen** has the specific sense of complying with what someone has said. Alternate translation: [you will not obey] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

you will not set {it} upon the heart & you are not setting {this} upon the heart

This is an expression that people of this culture would commonly use to mean to take something seriously or to pay attention to it. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [you will not take it seriously ... you are not taking this seriously] or [you will not pay attention to it ... you are not paying attention to this] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

to give glory to my name

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **glory**, you could express the same idea with a or in some other way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [to glorify my name] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

to my name

Yahweh is using one part of himself, his **name**, to mean all of him. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [to me] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

then I will send a curse upon you

Yahweh is speaking as if a **curse** were an object that he could **send**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [then I will curse you] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

and I will curse your blessings

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **blessings**, you could express the same idea in another way. This term could: (1) refer to the blessings that the priests spoke to the Israelites. Alternate translation: [and I will make ineffective what you say to bless the Israelites] (2) have the sense of “gift,” the portion of the people’s tithes, atonement money, and sacrifices that the priests received. Alternate translation: [and I will reduce what the people bring, so that you will receive very few gifts] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

I have cursed it

Since the pronoun **it** refers back to **blessings**, it may be more natural in your language to use a plural form. Alternate translation: [I have cursed them] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.148)**)

Malachi 2:3

Behold me, rebuking

Behold me is an expression that people of this culture would commonly use to mean that they were about to do something. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [Now I am about to rebuke] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

rebuking the seed {that is} to you

The author is speaking of **seed** as if it were a living thing that he could rebuke. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [making your crops fail] (See: **Personification (p.139)**)

and I will spread dung on your faces

Yahweh is speaking as if he would **spread dung** on the priests' faces. This is a vivid way of saying that he will humiliate them. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [I will humiliate you terribly] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

the dung of your festivals

Yahweh is using the word **dung** by association to mean the entrails of the animals that were sacrificed during festivals. Alternate translation: [the entrails of the animals you sacrifice during festivals] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

and one will take you away with it

Here, **one** is an indefinite pronoun that does not have a specific referent in the immediate context. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this with a different expression that does not use an indefinite pronoun. Alternate translation: [and you will be taken away with it] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.148)**)

Malachi 2:4

I have sent this commandment to you

Yahweh is speaking as if his **commandment** were an object that he could have **sent**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [I have given you this commandment] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

for my covenant to be with Levi

Yahweh means implicitly that he has given this commandment so that his **covenant** with **Levi** will continue. He says in [3:3](#) that he will “purify the sons of Levi” so that they will once again perform their duties “in righteousness.” You could indicate the meaning here explicitly if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [so that my covenant with Levi will continue] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

Levi

Yahweh is using the name **Levi** by association to mean the priests who descended from that man and who served in the tabernacle and temple in subsequent generations. Alternate translation: [the descendants of Levi who became priests] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

Malachi 2:5

My covenant was with him, life and peace

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas of **life** and **peace**, you could express the same idea in another way. See the further discussion in the General Notes to this chapter. Alternate translation: [I made a covenant with him that made conditions peaceful and allowed people to live] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

was with him, & to him {& and he feared me, & he was dismayed

Since Yahweh is referring to a group of people, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form. Alternate translation: [was with them ... to them ... and they feared me ... they were dismayed] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.83)**)

and he feared me, and before my name he was dismayed

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine them. Alternate translation: [and he had great reverence for me and my reputation] (See: **Parallelism (p.136)**)

my name

Yahweh is using one part of himself, his **name**, to mean all of himself. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [me] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

Malachi 2:6

in his mouth, & on his lips. & he walked & he turned

Since Yahweh is referring to a group of people, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form. Alternate translation: [in the mouths of the earlier priests ... on their lips ... they walked ... they turned] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.83)**)

The instruction of truth was in his mouth

Yahweh is using the word **mouth** by association to mean what the priests said. Alternate translation: [He spoke the instruction of truth] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

The instruction of truth was in his mouth

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **truth**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [He taught the people true things] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

and iniquity was not found on his lips

The people of this culture commonly said that something **was ... found** to mean that it existed. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [and there was no iniquity on his lips] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

and iniquity was not found on his lips

Yahweh is using the word **lips** by association to mean what the priests said. Alternate translation: [and there was no iniquity in what he said] or [and there was no iniquity found in what he said] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

and iniquity was not found on his lips

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **iniquity**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [and he did not say things that led people to do what was wrong] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

In peace and in uprightness

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas of **peace** and **uprightness**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [Peacefully and righteously] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

he walked with me

Yahweh is speaking of how a person lives as if that were a path that he would **walk** along. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. You could also use plain language. Alternate translation: [he lived as I want people to live] or [he lived in fellowship with me] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

and he turned many from iniquity

Yahweh is speaking as if **iniquity** were a place from which people could be **turned** away. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [and he influenced many to stop committing iniquity] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

from iniquity

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **iniquity**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [from doing what is wrong] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

Malachi 2:7

the lips of a priest should guard knowledge

Yahweh is using one part of a priest, his **lips**, to mean all of him in the act of speaking. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [a priest, through what he says, should give people better knowledge of how to obey Yahweh] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

should guard knowledge

Yahweh is speaking as if **knowledge** were something that one could **guard** or protect. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [should preserve and promote knowledge] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

should guard knowledge

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **knowledge**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [should help people to know how to obey Yahweh] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

they should seek

The pronoun **they** refers to people in general. It may be helpful to clarify this for your readers. Alternate translation: [people should seek] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.148)**)

and they should seek instruction

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **instruction**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [and they should seek to be instructed] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

from his mouth

Yahweh is using the word **mouth** by association to mean what the priest says. Alternate translation: [by what he says] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

is} the messenger of Yahweh of Armies

Yahweh is speaking about himself in the third person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this in the first person. Alternate translation: [is the messenger of me, Yahweh of Armies] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.104)**)

Malachi 2:8

But you yourselves have turned from the way

See how you translated the similar image in [2:6](#). Alternate translation: [But you yourselves have stopped living as I want people to live] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

You have caused many to stumble

Yahweh is speaking as if the priests had caused people to **stumble** or trip and fall. This image represents leading people to sin. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [You have led many people to sin] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

by {your} instruction

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **instruction**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [by what you have taught them] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

You have corrupted

Yahweh is speaking as if his **covenant** with the priests descended from Levi were something that they had **corrupted**, that is, physically spoiled and made useless, like the crops eaten by pests described with the same term in [3:11](#). If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [You have failed to fulfill the purpose of] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Levi

See how you translated the same expression in [2:4](#). Alternate translation: [the descendants of Levi who became priests] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

Malachi 2:9

and {are} lifting faces

See how you translated the similar expression in [1:8](#). Alternate translation: [and you are showing favoritism] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

regarding the instruction

Yahweh assumes that the priests will know that in this instance, the expression **the instruction** implicitly means the law of Moses and how the priests have been applying it in individual cases. (Elsewhere in the chapter, the term has a more general meaning.) You could say that explicitly if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [regarding how you apply the law of Moses] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 80)**)

Malachi 2:10

Is} not one father to all of us? Did not one God create us

Malachi is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate these questions as statements or as exclamations. Alternate translation: [We all have one father; one God created us!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

Is} not one father to all of us? Did not one God create us

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine them. However, since the first uses an image and the second explains the image, you might keep both phrases in your translation and show how the second explains the first. Alternate translation: [The same God created all of us. And so it is as if we all had the same father] (See: **Parallelism (p.136)**)

Why do we deal treacherously, a man against his brother, to profane the covenant of our fathers

Malachi is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [We should not deal treacherously, a man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

a man against his brother

This is an expression that people of this culture would commonly use to mean that people were acting against others of their own community. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [people against others of their own community] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

our fathers

Malachi is speaking of the ancestors of the Israelites as if they were the **fathers** of the current generation. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [our forefathers] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Malachi 2:11

Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine them. Alternate translation: [The people of Judah are doing treacherous things in Israel and in Jerusalem] (See: **Parallelism (p.136)**)

Judah has dealt treacherously, & Judah has profaned

Since Malachi is referring to a group of people, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form. Alternate translation: [The people of Judah have dealt treacherously ... The people of Judah have profaned] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.83)**)

and an abomination has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem

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 people have done an abomination in Israel and in Jerusalem] or [and the people have committed an abomination in Israel and in Jerusalem] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

and has married the daughter of a foreign god

Malachi is speaking as if foreign gods had **daughters** that the people of Judah could **marry**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. This could mean: (1) that the Judeans have allied themselves closely with foreign gods as their worshipers, as if they had made a marriage alliance the way kingdoms did. Alternate translation: [and has worshiped foreign gods] (2) that Judean men have married foreign women, and this has led them to worship foreign gods. Alternate translation: [and Judean men have married foreign women and begun to worship their gods] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Malachi 2:12

May Yahweh cut off from the tents of Jacob

Malachi is describing the people of Israel by association with their ancestor **Jacob**, who was also known as Israel. Alternate translation: [May Yahweh cut off from the tents of the people of Israel] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

May Yahweh cut off

The expression **cut off** is one that people of this culture would commonly use to mean to “remove.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [May Yahweh remove] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

from the tents of Jacob

Malachi is using the word **tents** by association to mean the community of **Israel**. Alternate translation: [from the community of Israel] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

the man

Here the masculine term **man** has a generic sense that includes both men and women. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could use language in your translation that is clearly inclusive of both men and women. Alternate translation: [anyone] (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.169)**)

the one being awake and the one answering

Malachi is speaking of two extremes in order to include them and everything in between. He is alluding to a watchman guarding a city at night (**the one being awake**) and someone approaching the city who is responding to the challenge, “Who is there?” (**the one answering**). If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [no matter who he is] (See: **Merism (p.122)**)

Malachi 2:13

covering the altar of Yahweh {with} tears

Malachi is making an overstatement for emphasis. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the emphasis in a different way. Alternate translation: [weeping profusely at the altar of Yahweh] (See: **Hyperbole (p. 114)**)

turning to the offering or taking {it} with favor {from} your hand

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Malachi uses them together to emphasize how Yahweh is rejecting the offerings. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine these phrases. Alternate translation: [accepting your offerings favorably] (See: **Doublet (p.95)**)

turning to the offering

The phrase **turning to** is an expression that people of this culture would commonly use to mean “to pay attention to” or “to accept something.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [accepting the offering] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

from} your hand

Malachi is using one part of the people, their **hand**, to mean all of them in the act of offering sacrifices. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [from you] or [that you give] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

Malachi 2:14

Yahweh is a witness between you and between the wife of your youth

In this culture, when people made promises to one another, they often did this with witnesses watching. The role of those witnesses included holding the people to their promises. The Judean men had made covenant promises to their wives when they married them. Malachi assumes that those men will know that when he refers to Yahweh as a **witness**, he means that Yahweh is holding them to those promises. Yahweh is doing that by showing his disfavor through not accepting their offerings. You could indicate this explicitly in your translation if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [Because Yahweh is enforcing the covenant promises you made to the wife of your youth] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

between you & your youth, {& you yourself have dealt treacherously, & was} your companion & your covenant

Except for the first occurrence of the the word **you**, the words **you**, **your**, and **yourself** are singular in this verse because, even though Malachi is speaking to the Judeans as a group, he is addressing an individual situation. So use singular forms in your translation if your language marks that distinction. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p. 106)**)

the wife of your youth

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **youth**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [the wife you married when you were young] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

Malachi 2:15

And did he not make one, and a remnant of spirit {was} to him

Malachi is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. See the General Notes to this chapter for a discussion of this sentence. Alternate translation: [After all, he made one, and a remnant of spirit was to him!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

and a remnant of spirit {was} to him

The pronoun **him** refers back to the pronoun **one**, meaning the husband and the wife. It may be more natural in your language to use a plural pronoun. See the General Notes to this chapter for a discussion of this clause. Alternate translation: [and a remnant of spirit was to them] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.148)**)

And why one? {He was} seeking seed of God

Malachi is not asking the question **And why one?** to get information. Rather, he is asking and then answering his own question. This was a common practice of Jewish public speakers in this time period (and also in New Testament times). Alternate translation: [And I will tell you why he made one: he was seeking seed of God] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

seed of God

Malachi is using this possessive form to mean offspring that would be faithful to God. It may be helpful to clarify this for your readers. Alternate translation: [offspring that would be faithful to God] (See: **Possession (p.144)**)

So guard yourselves in your spirit

Malachi is speaking as if a person's **spirit** were a physical place where they could be **guarded**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [So be careful about your attitudes] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Malachi 2:16

and one {who} covers over his garment with violence

For a discussion of the phrase **covers his garment with violence** and suggestions for how to translate it, see the General Notes to this chapter. (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

So guard yourselves in your spirit

See how you translated this in the previous verse. (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Malachi 2:17

with your words

Yahweh is using the term **words** by association to mean what the people are saying. Alternate translation: [by what you are saying] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

the doers of evil

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **evil**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [the people who do evil things] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

in the eyes of Yahweh

Malachi is using the word **eyes** by association to mean sight. Sight, by association, represents judgment and perspective. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [in Yahweh's perspective] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

Where {is} the God of justice

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **justice**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [Where is the God who judges fairly?] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

Where {is} the God of justice

The people are using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [God is not punishing people who do not act justly] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

Malachi 3

Malachi 3 General Notes

Structure and Formatting

2:17–3:5 Yahweh is concerned for justice and will punish evildoers

3:6–12 Judeans are not bringing proper tithes

3:13–15 Yahweh will punish the wicked, despite what Judeans are saying

3:16–4:6 Yahweh will bless and protect those who fear him

Malachi 3:1

Behold me, sending

Behold me is an expression that people of this culture would commonly use to mean that they were about to do something. See how you translated the similar expression in [2:3](#). Alternate translation: [Now I am about to send] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

and he will prepare the way to my face

Yahweh is using the word **face** to mean his presence by association with the way people can see the face of someone who is present. Alternate translation: [and he will prepare the way for me to be present among you] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

and he will prepare the way to my face

Yahweh is speaking of his coming as if it were a journey for which a **way** needed to be prepared. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [and he will get things ready for my coming] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

behold

Yahweh uses this word to get the people's attention. See how you translated a similar use of this word in [1:13](#). Alternate translation: [pay attention] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Malachi 3:2

But who {will be} enduring the day of his coming? And who {will be} the one standing in his appearing? For he {will be} like the fire of a refiner and like the soap of launderers

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: [He will be like the fire of a refiner and like the soap of launderers. So who will be able to endure the day of his coming? And who will be able to stand when he appears?] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.86)**)

But who {will be} enduring the day of his coming? And who {will be} the one standing in his appearing

Yahweh is using the question form for emphasis. If a speaker of your language would not use the question form for that purpose, you could translate this as a statement or as an exclamation. Alternate translation: [No one will be able to endure the day of his coming! No one will be able to stand when he appears!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p. 155)**)

But who {will be} enduring the day of his coming? And who {will be} the one standing in his appearing

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The second emphasizes the meaning of the first by repeating the same idea with different words. Hebrew poetry was based on this kind of repetition, and it would be good to show this to your readers by including both phrases in your translation rather than combining them. It may be clearer in your language to 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: [No one will be able to endure the day of his coming! Indeed, no one will be able to stand when he appears!] (See: **Parallelism (p.136)**)

will be} the one standing

Yahweh is using the image of **standing** to speak of a person being declared innocent. The idea is that if he were declared guilty, that would be like a weight too heavy for the person to carry, and the person would sink down under it. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [will be declared innocent] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

he {will be} like the fire of a refiner and like the soap of launderers

The point of this comparison is that just as fire refines metal and soap cleans clothes, so the messenger will purify the people, that is, he will help them forsake the sins they have been committing. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [just as fire refines metal and soap cleans clothes, he will purify people by helping them stop sinning] (See: **Simile (p.159)**)

Malachi 3:3

And he will sit refining and purifying silver

Yahweh is speaking as if the messenger were going to be a metalworker who was **refining** and **purifying** precious metals. Since he expresses this same image as a comparison in the next clause, you may wish to present it as a comparison here as well. Alternate translation: [Yes, in that way he will be like someone who sits refining and purifying silver] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

the sons of Levi

Yahweh is speaking as if these priests were the **sons** of their ancestor **Levi**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the descendants of Levi who are priests] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

and refine them like gold and like silver

The point of this comparison is that just as gold and silver are refined to remove impurities, so the messenger will purify the people. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [and he will purify the people from sin just as gold and silver are refined to remove impurities from them] (See: **Simile (p.159)**)

Malachi 3:4

the offering of Judah and Jerusalem

Since Yahweh is referring to a group of people, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form. Alternate translation: [the offerings of the people of Judah and Jerusalem] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.83)**)

as {in} the days of old and as {in} former years

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine these phrases. Alternate translation: [as in the past] (See: **Doublet (p.95)**)

Malachi 3:5

against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the ones swearing to a lie, and against the ones oppressing the wage of the hired worker, the widow, and the orphan, and the ones turning aside the foreigner, and they do not fear me

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: [against those who, because they do not fear me, are sorcerers or adulterers or swear to a lie or oppress the wage of the hired worker, the widow, and the orphan or turn aside the foreigner] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.86)**)

for judgment

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **judgment**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [as a judge] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

And I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the ones swearing to a lie, and against the ones oppressing the wage of the hired worker, the widow, and the orphan, and the ones turning aside the foreigner

Yahweh is using the idea of being a **witness** to represent the entire process of judging and punishing. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [And I will declare people guilty and punish them for what they have done wrong, including sorcerers, adulterers, those who swear to a lie, those who oppress the wage of the hired worker, the widow, and the orphan, and those who turn aside the foreigner] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

and against the ones oppressing the wage of

Yahweh is speaking of **wage** as if it were a person who could be oppressed. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [and against those who do not pay fair wages to] (See: **Personification (p.139)**)

the hired worker, the widow, and the orphan, & the foreigner

Here, **the hired worker** and **the widow** and **the orphan** and **the foreigner** represent hired workers, widows, orphans, and foreigners in general, not a specific **hired worker** or **widow** or **orphan** or **foreigner**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use more natural expressions. Alternate translation: [hired workers, widows, orphans ... foreigners] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.108)**)

and the ones turning aside the foreigner

Yahweh is speaking of denying justice to foreigners as if people who did that were **turning** them **aside** from a road they were walking on and needed to stay on. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [and those who deny justice to foreigners] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Malachi 3:6

For I, Yahweh, do not change, so you, sons of Jacob, have not come to an end

If it would be clearer in your language, you could use a positive expression to translate the double negatives **do not change** and **have not come to an end**. Alternate translation: [It is only because I, Yahweh, have remained the same that you, sons of Jacob, are still a people group] (See: **Double Negatives (p.92)**)

do not change

Yahweh assumes that the Judeans will understand that when he says that he does **not change**, he means that he always keeps his promises. He promised Abraham that he would bless his descendants, and so he is still taking care of them, even though they have been disobedient. You could say that explicitly if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [always keep my promises] or [intend to keep my promise to Abraham to bless his descendants] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

sons of Jacob

Yahweh is speaking of the Israelites as if they were the **sons** of their ancestor Jacob. See how you translated the similar expression in [3:3](#). Alternate translation: [descendants of Jacob] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Malachi 3:7

your fathers

Yahweh is speaking of the ancestors of the Israelites as if they were the literal **fathers** of the current generation. Alternate translation: [forefathers] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept {them

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. Yahweh uses them together to emphasize how the people have disobeyed him. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine these phrases. Alternate translation: [you have completely disobeyed my statutes] (See: **Doublet (p.95)**)

you have turned aside from my statutes

Yahweh is speaking of disobeying his **statutes** as if that were turning **aside** from a path on which one needed to walk. Alternate translation: [you have disobeyed my statutes] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

But you say, 'In what shall we return

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: [But you ask how you should return] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.152)**)

Malachi 3:8

Will a human rob God? Yet you {are} robbing me

Yahweh is not asking the question **Will a human rob God?** to get information. Rather, he is asking and then answering his own question. See how you translated the similar instance in [2:15](#). Alternate translation: [It does not seem that a human would dare to rob God, yet you are robbing me] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.155)**)

But you say, 'In what have we robbed you

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: [But you ask how you have robbed me] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.152)**)

In} the tithe and the contribution

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: [You have robbed me in the tithe and the contribution] (See: **Ellipsis (p.97)**)

Malachi 3:9

With a curse you {are} cursed, for you {are} robbing me

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: [Because you are robbing me, you are cursed with a curse] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.86)**)

With a curse you {are} cursed

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: [I have cursed you with a curse] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

With a curse you {are} cursed

For emphasis, Yahweh is using a construction in which a verb and its object come from the same root. You may be able to use the same construction in your language to express the meaning here. Alternatively, your language may have another way of showing the emphasis. Alternate translation: [You are solemnly cursed] or [I have solemnly cursed you] (See: **Poetry (p.141)**)

the nation, all of it

The pronoun **it** refers to the nation of Israel and specifically to the Judeans of that nationality whom Yahweh is addressing. Since Yahweh is addressing them directly, it may be more natural in your language to use the pronoun "you." Alternate translation: [the nation, all of you] or [every one of you Israelites] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.148)**)

Malachi 3:10

the house of treasure

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **treasure**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [the temple treasury] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

food in my house

Yahweh is speaking of the temple as if it were his **house**. Alternate translation: [provision for the priests who serve in my temple] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

if I will not open for you the windows of the heavens and pour out for you a blessing

Yahweh is speaking of giving blessings as if he were opening windows in the sky and pouring them out. Alternate translation: [if I will not give you abundant blessings] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

a blessing

Yahweh assumes that the people will understand that by **a blessing** he means abundant crops. You could say that explicitly if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [abundant crops] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

until there is no sufficiency

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **sufficiency**, you could express the same idea in another way. Yahweh is not saying that there will not be sufficient crops; he means that there will be so many crops that the storehouses of the Judeans will not be sufficient to contain them. Alternate translation: [until you no longer have sufficient room to contain it] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

Malachi 3:11

And I will rebuke the devourer for you

Yahweh is not speaking about a specific **devourer**, that is, not about a specific insect or animal that would eat the Judeans' crops. He means such pests in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [And I will rebuke the devourers for you] or [And I will rebuke the pests that would eat your crops] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.108)**)

And I will rebuke the devourer for you

Yahweh is speaking of pests as if they were a person he could **rebuke**. Alternate translation: [And I will keep pests from eating your crops] (See: **Personification (p.139)**)

the fruit of the ground

Yahweh is speaking of crops as if they were the **fruit** of the ground. Alternate translation: [the crops that grow from the ground] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

And the vine in the field will not be barren for you

Yahweh is speaking of vines as if they were women who could be **barren** or unable to have children. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [And your vines will steadily produce grapes] (See: **Personification (p.139)**)

Malachi 3:12

a land of delight

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **delight**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [a land that delights people] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

Malachi 3:13

Your words have been strong against me

Yahweh is using the term **words** by association to mean what the people have been saying. Alternate translation: [You have been speaking strongly against me] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

But you say, 'What have we spoken {among ourselves} against you

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: [But you ask what you have spoken among yourselves against me] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.152)**)

Malachi 3:14

You have said, 'Serving God {is} worthless. And what profit, that we have kept his charge and that we have walked mournfully to the face of Yahweh of Armies

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: [You have said that it is worthless to serve God, and you have asked how it has profited you that you have kept his charge and that you have walked mournfully to the face of Yahweh of Armies] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.152)**)

we have walked

Yahweh is speaking of how the people have lived as if they had **walked** on a path. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [we have lived] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

to the face of Yahweh of Armies

The people are using the word **face** to mean presence by association with the way people can see the face of someone who is present. Alternate translation: [in the presence of Yahweh of Armies] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

Malachi 3:15

So now we ourselves {are} blessing the arrogant. Even doers of wickedness are built up; they even test God and escape

If you decided to translate the previous verse so that there would not be a quotation within a quotation, you can do the same thing here. Alternate translation: [You have said that you yourselves are blessing the arrogant. You say that even doers of wickedness are built up, they even test God and escape] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.152)**)

doers of wickedness are built up

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: [doers of wickedness gain in stature] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

doers of wickedness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **wickedness**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [people who do wicked things] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

Malachi 3:16

a man with his neighbor

This is an expression that people of this culture would commonly use to describe people speaking with one another. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [discussing things with one another] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

And Yahweh paid attention and heard

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The author uses them together to emphasize how closely Yahweh listened. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine these phrases. Alternate translation: [And Yahweh paid close attention as they spoke] (See: **Doublet (p.95)**)

And a book of remembrance was written

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 those people wrote a book of remembrance] (See: **Active or Passive (p.77)**)

to his face

The author is using the word **face** to mean presence by association with the way people can see the face of someone who is present. Alternate translation: [in his presence] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

for the ones fearing Yahweh and for the ones esteeming his name

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine them. Alternate translation: [for the ones who feared Yahweh and esteemed his name] (See: **Parallelism (p.136)**)

and for the ones esteeming his name

The author is using the word **name** to represent Yahweh's reputation. Alternate translation: [and for the ones who were concerned for the honor of his reputation] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

Malachi 3:17

And they will be to me,” says Yahweh of Armies, “a special possession

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas of **possession**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [“And I will possess them” says Yahweh of Armies, “in a special way”] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

on the day that I {am} preparing

Yahweh speaks as if he is **preparing** a **day**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [at the time when I act, as I am now preparing to do] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

just as

The point of this comparison is that **just as** a father tenderly cares for his son who serves him, so Yahweh will tenderly care for those who serve him. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [in the same way that] (See: **Simile (p.159)**)

Malachi 3:18

And you will return and see

This is an expression that people of this culture would commonly use to mean to seeing something again. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [And you will see once again] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

And you will return and see

Yahweh assumes that the people will understand that by **see**, he means acknowledge. You could say that explicitly if it would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [And once again you will acknowledge] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.80)**)

between the righteous and to the wicked

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: [that there is a difference between the righteous and the wicked] (See: **Ellipsis (p.97)**)

between the righteous and to the wicked, between the one serving God and to {one} who does not serve him

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine them. Alternate translation: [between the righteous, who serve God, and the wicked, who do not serve him] (See: **Parallelism (p.136)**)

the righteous and to the wicked

Yahweh is using the adjectives **righteous** and **wicked** as nouns to mean certain kinds of people. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate these adjectives with equivalent phrases. Alternate translation: [righteous people and wicked people] (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.132)**)

Malachi 4

Malachi 4 General Notes

Structure and Formatting

3:16–4:6 Yahweh will bless and protect those who fear him

Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

“I am sending to you Elijah the prophet” (4:5)

While Malachi’s listeners and later generations of Jews may have expected this prophecy to be fulfilled by the return of Elijah himself, Jesus explained that it was fulfilled through the life and witness of John the Baptist ([Matthew 17:10–13](#)).

Malachi 4:1

behold

Yahweh is speaking as if he wanted his listeners to **behold** or look at something. He is using this term to focus his listeners' attention on what he is about to say. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

burning like an oven, when all of the arrogant and all of the doers of wickedness will be stubble

Yahweh is speaking of the day of judgment as if it were an **oven** that would be **burning** people. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express this image as a comparison. Alternate translation: [when I will destroy all of the arrogant people and all of the doers of wickedness as if they were stubble being burned in an oven] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

all of the arrogant

Yahweh is using the adjective **arrogant** as a noun to mean a certain kind of person. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this adjective with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: [all arrogant people] (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.132)**)

and all of the doers of wickedness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **wickedness**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [all of the people who do wicked things] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.75)**)

when all of the arrogant and all of the doers of wickedness will be stubble

Yahweh is speaking of wicked people as if they were **stubble** that his judgment would **kindle** and burn up. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express this image as a comparison. Alternate translation: [when all of the arrogant and all of the doers of wickedness will be completely destroyed, as if they were stubble that was burned up] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

to them root or branch

Yahweh is speaking of two extremes in order to include them and everything in between. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [any part of them remaining] (See: **Merism (p.122)**)

Malachi 4:2

But for you fearers of my name, the sun of righteousness will rise

Yahweh is speaking as if **righteousness** were the **sun** and that it would **rise** over the **fearers** of his **name**. He means that he will establish his righteous rule so that those who obey him are vindicated, honored, and blessed. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express this image as a comparison. Alternate translation: [But when I establish my righteous rule, you who fear my name will be honored as if the sun were shining brightly on you] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

fearers of my name

Yahweh is using his **name** to represent all of him. Alternate translation: [who fear me] (See: **Synecdoche (p.164)**)

and healing {will be} upon its wings

Yahweh is speaking as if the **sun** had **wings**. He is using the image to speak of the arrival of the sun, which represents the effects of his establishing his reign. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [and it will bring healing to you] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

And you will go out and skip

Yahweh is speaking as if the people would be so happy that they would **go out** and **skip**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [And you will be very joyful] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

like calves of the stall

The point of this comparison is that just as calves that have been kept in a stall are very playful when they are let out, so the people will act very joyfully. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [and feel as playful as calves that have been let out of their stall] (See: **Simile (p.159)**)

Malachi 4:3

And you will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: [The wicked will be like ashes under the soles of your feet, so you will trample them] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.86)**)

And you will trample the wicked

Yahweh is speaking of the people's victory over the wicked as if they would **trample** them. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [And you will be triumphant over the wicked] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

the wicked

Yahweh is using the adjective **wicked** as a noun to mean a certain kind of person. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this adjective with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: [wicked people] (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.132)**)

for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet

Yahweh is speaking of the complete defeat of the wicked as if they literally become **ashes** under the people's feet. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [for you will defeat them completely] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

on the day that I {am} preparing

See how you translated this expression in [3:17](#). Alternate translation: [at the time when I act, as I am now preparing to do] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

Malachi 4:4

Remember

Yahweh is using the word **Remember** to mean obey by association with the way people need to remember something in order to obey it. Alternate translation: [Obey] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

the statutes and the judgments

Yahweh is speaking of two types of laws in order to include them and all other types of laws. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [including all of its laws] (See: **Merism (p.122)**)

Malachi 4:5

Behold

See how you translated this expression in [4:1](#). Alternate translation (ending with a period): [Pay attention to what I am about to say] (See: **Metaphor (p.124)**)

to the face of the coming of

Malachi is using the phrase **to the face** to represent what is in front of someone or something. Here, the thing is a **day** that is described as though it were a person who is **coming**, so what is in front of the day is there before the day arrives. Therefore, **to the face of the coming of** means “before the coming of” the day. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [before the coming of] (See: **Metonymy (p.130)**)

the great and fearsome day of Yahweh

Yahweh is speaking about himself in the third person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this in the first person. Alternate translation: [my great and fearsome day] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p. 104)**)

Malachi 4:6

And he will turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers

Here the masculine terms **fathers** and **sons** have a generic sense that includes both men and women. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could use language in your translation that is clearly inclusive of both men and women. Alternate translation: [And he will turn the heart of parents to their children and the heart of children to their parents] (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.169)**)

And he will turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers

This is an expression that people of this culture would commonly use to mean “to reconcile people to one another.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [And he will reconcile fathers to their sons] (See: **Idiom (p.118)**)

and the heart of the sons to their fathers

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: [and he will turn the heart of the sons to their fathers] (See: **Ellipsis (p.97)**)

the heart of & and the heart of

Since Yahweh is referring to a group of people, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form of **heart**. Alternate translation: [the hearts of ... and the hearts of] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.83)**)



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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: [Malachi 1:3](#); [Malachi 1:4](#); [Malachi 2:2](#); [Malachi 2:5](#); [Malachi 2:6](#); [Malachi 2:7](#); [Malachi 2:8](#); [Malachi 2:14](#); [Malachi 2:17](#); [Malachi 3:5](#); [Malachi 3:10](#); [Malachi 3:12](#); [Malachi 3:15](#); [Malachi 3:17](#); [Malachi 4:1](#)

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: [Malachi 1:4](#); [Malachi 1:7](#); [Malachi 1:12](#); [Malachi 1:13](#); [Malachi 1:14](#); [Malachi 2:11](#); [Malachi 3:9](#); [Malachi 3:15](#); [Malachi 3:16](#)

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: [Malachi 1:2](#); [Malachi 1:3](#); [Malachi 1:10](#); [Malachi 1:12](#); [Malachi 1:14](#); [Malachi 2:2](#); [Malachi 2:4](#); [Malachi 2:9](#); [Malachi 2:14](#); [Malachi 3:6](#); [Malachi 3:10](#); [Malachi 3:18](#)

Collective Nouns

Description

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

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

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

Reason This is a Translation Issue

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

The source language may have a collective noun for a group that the target language does not and vice-versa. You may have to translate a collective noun with a plural noun in your language, or you may need to translate a plural noun with a collective noun in your language.

Subject-verb agreement. Different languages or dialects may have different rules about using singular or plural verbs with collective nouns. Examples (from Wikipedia):

a singular noun with a singular verb: The team *is* in the dressing room.

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

Pronoun agreement. Similar to the previous, care needs to be taken to use the correct pronoun plurality and possibly gender or noun class to agree with the number/gender/class of the noun used. See the biblical examples below.

Clarity of referent. Especially if there is a mismatch in your translation between the verb and noun or pronoun concerning any of the factors above, readers may be confused about who or what is being referenced.

Examples from the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"

Referenced in: [Malachi 1:1](#); [Malachi 1:2](#); [Malachi 1:9](#); [Malachi 1:10](#); [Malachi 2:5](#); [Malachi 2:6](#); [Malachi 2:11](#); [Malachi 3:4](#); [Malachi 4:6](#)

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: [Malachi 3:2](#); [Malachi 3:5](#); [Malachi 3:9](#); [Malachi 4:3](#)

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: [Malachi 1:9](#); [Malachi 2:1](#)

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 **unpunished**. (Proverbs 11:21a ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

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

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

Examples From the Bible

The Greek of John 15:5 says:

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

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

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

or:

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

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

This means "in order to be fruitful."

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

This means "a prophet is honored."

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

This means "I want you to be knowledgeable."

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

or:

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

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

...ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία **οὐ μὴ** παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου (Matthew 5:18)

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

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

or:

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Malachi 3:6](#)

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: [Malachi 1:8](#); [Malachi 2:13](#); [Malachi 3:4](#); [Malachi 3:7](#); [Malachi 3:16](#)

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: [Malachi 1:11](#); [Malachi 3:8](#); [Malachi 3:18](#); [Malachi 4:6](#)

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: [Malachi 1:13](#)

Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

Description

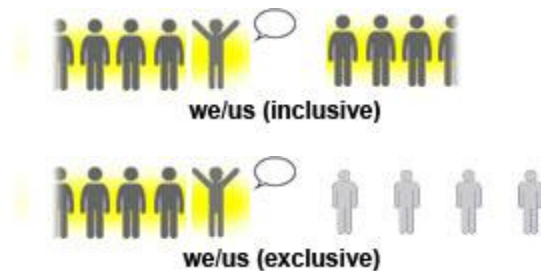
Some languages have more than one form of "we": an inclusive form that means "I and you" and an exclusive form that means "I and someone else but not you." The exclusive form excludes the person being spoken to. The inclusive form includes the person being spoken to and possibly others. This is also true for "us," "our," "ours," and "ourselves." Some languages have inclusive 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: [Malachi 1:9](#)

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: [Malachi 1:5](#); [Malachi 1:9](#); [Malachi 1:14](#); [Malachi 2:7](#); [Malachi 4:5](#)

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: [Malachi 1:2](#); [Malachi 1:8](#); [Malachi 2:14](#)

Generic Noun Phrases

Description

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

"People curse **a man** who refuses to sell grain."

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

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

"People curse **any man** who refuses to sell grain."

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

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

"People curse **men** who refuse to sell grain"

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

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

"People curse **whoever** refuses to sell grain."

Next we recommend you learn about:

When Masculine Words Include Women ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Malachi 1:8](#); [Malachi 1:13](#); [Malachi 1:14](#); [Malachi 3:5](#); [Malachi 3:11](#)

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: [Malachi 1:1](#); [Malachi 1:9](#); [Malachi 1:12](#)

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.

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Referenced in: [Malachi 2:13](#)

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: [Malachi 1:8](#); [Malachi 1:9](#); [Malachi 2:2](#); [Malachi 2:3](#); [Malachi 2:6](#); [Malachi 2:9](#); [Malachi 2:10](#); [Malachi 2:12](#); [Malachi 2:13](#); [Malachi 3:1](#); [Malachi 3:16](#); [Malachi 3:18](#); [Malachi 4:6](#)

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: [Malachi 1:2](#)

Merism

Definition

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

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

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

This page answers the question: *What does the word merism mean and how can I translate phrases that have it?*

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

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

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

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

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

Reason This is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"

Referenced in: [Malachi 1:11](#); [Malachi 2:12](#); [Malachi 4:1](#); [Malachi 4:4](#)

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: [Malachi 1:1](#); [Malachi 1:7](#); [Malachi 1:12](#); [Malachi 1:13](#); [Malachi 2:2](#); [Malachi 2:3](#); [Malachi 2:4](#); [Malachi 2:6](#); [Malachi 2:7](#); [Malachi 2:8](#); [Malachi 2:10](#); [Malachi 2:11](#); [Malachi 2:15](#); [Malachi 2:16](#); [Malachi 3:1](#); [Malachi 3:2](#); [Malachi 3:3](#); [Malachi 3:5](#); [Malachi 3:6](#); [Malachi 3:7](#); [Malachi 3:10](#); [Malachi 3:11](#); [Malachi 3:14](#); [Malachi 3:17](#); [Malachi 4:1](#); [Malachi 4:2](#); [Malachi 4:3](#); [Malachi 4:5](#)

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: [Malachi 1:1](#); [Malachi 1:2](#); [Malachi 1:4](#); [Malachi 1:6](#); [Malachi 1:11](#); [Malachi 2:3](#); [Malachi 2:4](#); [Malachi 2:6](#); [Malachi 2:7](#); [Malachi 2:8](#); [Malachi 2:12](#); [Malachi 2:17](#); [Malachi 3:1](#); [Malachi 3:13](#); [Malachi 3:14](#); [Malachi 3:16](#); [Malachi 4:4](#); [Malachi 4:5](#)

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: [Malachi 3:18](#); [Malachi 4:1](#); [Malachi 4:3](#)

Order of Events

Description

In the Bible, events are not always told in the order in which they occurred. Sometimes the author wanted to discuss something that happened at an earlier time than the event that he just talked about. This can be confusing to the reader.

This page answers the question: *Why are some events not listed in the order they happened, and how do I translate them?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers might think that the events happened in the order that they are told. It is important to help them understand the correct order of events.

Examples From the Bible

He even added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. Now it came about, when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. (Luke 3:20-21 ULT)

This could sound like John baptized Jesus after John was locked up in prison, but John baptized Jesus before John was locked up in prison.

Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh followed after them. But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

This could sound like Joshua gave the order not to shout after the army had already started their march, but he had given that order before they started marching.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

This sounds like a person must first open the scroll and then break its seals, but the seals that lock the scroll must be broken before the scroll can be unrolled.

Translation Strategies

- (1) If your language uses phrases or time words to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using one of them.
- (2) If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that. (See the section on "Aspect" of [Verbs](#).)
- (3) If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occurred, consider reordering the events so they are in that order. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6). (See [Verse Bridges](#).)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If your language uses phrases, time words or tenses to show that an event happened before the one just mentioned, consider using one of them.

20 he even added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. Now it came about, when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. (Luke 3:20-21 ULT)

20 But then Herod ... had John locked up in prison. 21 **Before John was put in prison**, while all the people were being baptized by John, Jesus also was baptized.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

Who is worthy to open the scroll **after** breaking its seals?

(2) If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that.

Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

8 Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets 10 But Joshua **had commanded** the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout."

(3) If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occur, consider reordering the events. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6).

8 Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

8,10 Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout." Then just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets...

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

Background Information ([UTA PDF](#))

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

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

Verse Bridges ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Malachi 1:14](#)

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.

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](#))

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

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, Israel.

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

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

Yahweh truly sees everything a person does.

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

You have certainly made him to rule over everything that you have created.

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

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

All you have done is lie to me.

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

Yahweh sees absolutely everything that a person does.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Personification ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Malachi 2:5](#); [Malachi 2:10](#); [Malachi 2:11](#); [Malachi 3:2](#); [Malachi 3:16](#); [Malachi 3:18](#)

Personification

Description

Personification is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of something as if it could do things that animals or people can do. People often do this because it makes it easier to talk about things that we cannot see:

Such as wisdom:

Does not Wisdom call out? (Proverbs 8:1a ULT)

Or sin:

Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT)

People also use personification because it is sometimes easier to talk about people's relationships with non-human things such as wealth as if they were relationships between people.

You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

In each case, the purpose of the personification is to highlight a certain characteristic of the non-human thing. As in metaphor, the reader needs to think of the way that the thing is like a certain kind of person.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use personification.
- Some languages use personification only in certain situations.

Examples From the Bible

You cannot **serve** God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

Jesus speaks of wealth as if it were a master whom people might serve. Loving money and basing one's decisions on it is like serving it as a slave would serve his master.

Does not Wisdom **call** out? Does not Understanding **raise her voice**? (Proverbs 8:1 ULT)

The author speaks of wisdom and understanding as if they were woman who calls out to teach people. This means that they are not something hidden, but something obvious that people should pay attention to.

Translation Strategies

If the personification would be understood clearly, consider using it. If it would not be understood, here are some other ways for translating it.

- (1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.
- (2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as "like" or "as" to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.
- (3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

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

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.

Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — God speaks of sin as if it were a wild animal that is waiting for the chance to attack. This shows how dangerous sin is. An additional phrase can be added to make this danger clear.

Sin is at your door, **waiting to attack you**.

(2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as “like” or “as” to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.

Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — This can be translated with the word “as.”

Sin is crouching at the door, **just as a wild animal does as it waits to attack a person..**

(3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

Even the **winds and the sea obey him**. (Matthew 8:27b ULT) — The men speak of the “wind and the sea” as if they are able to hear and obey Jesus, just as people can. This could also be translated without the idea of obedience by speaking of Jesus controlling them.

He even **controls the winds and the sea**.

NOTE: We have broadened our definition of “personification” to include “zoomorphism” (speaking of other things as if they had animal characteristics) and “anthropomorphism” (speaking of non-human things as if they had human characteristics) because the translation strategies for them are the same.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Apostrophe ([UTA PDF](#))

Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Malachi 2:3](#); [Malachi 3:5](#); [Malachi 3:11](#)

Poetry

Description

Poetry is one of the ways that people use the words and sounds of their language to make their speech and writing more beautiful and to express strong emotion. Through poetry, people can communicate deeper emotion than they can through simple non-poetic forms. Poetry gives more weight and elegance to statements of truth, such as proverbs, and is also easier to remember than ordinary speech.

This page answers the question: *What is poetry and how do I translate it into my language?*

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

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

In poetry we commonly find:

- many figures of speech such as [Apostrophe](#)
- arrangements of clauses into particular patterns such as:
 - parallel lines (See [Parallelism](#))
 - acrostics (beginning lines with successive letters of the alphabet)
 - chiasms (in which the first line relates to the last line, the second to the next-to-last line, etc.):

You should not give what is holy to the dogs,
and should not throw your pearls in front of the pigs.
Otherwise they will trample them under their feet,
and having turned, they might tear you to pieces. (Matt 7:6 ULT)

- repetition of some or all of a line:

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. (Psalm 148:2-3 ULT)

- lines of similar length:

Listen to my call to you,
Yahweh; think about my groanings.
Listen to the sound of my call, my King and my God,
for it is to you that I pray. (Psalm 5:1-2 ULT)

- the same sound used at the end or at the beginning of two or more lines:

"Twinkle, twinkle little **star**. How I wonder what you **are**." (from an English rhyme)

- the same sound repeated many times:

"Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater" (from an English rhyme)

- The same root word used as both a verb and as a noun:

Your old men will **dream dreams** (Joel 2:28 ULT)

Yahweh,...**light lightning** and scatter them (Psalm 144:5-6 ULT)

We also find:

- old words and expressions
- dramatic imagery
- different use of grammar — including:
 - incomplete sentences
 - lack of connective words

Some places to look for poetry in your language

Songs, particularly old songs or songs used in children's games

Religious ceremony or chants of priests or witch doctors

Prayers, blessings, and curses

Old legends

Elegant or fancy speech

Elegant or fancy speech is similar to poetry in that it uses beautiful language, but it does not use all of the language's features of poetry, and it does not use them as much as poetry does. Popular speakers in the language often use elegant speech, and this is probably the easiest source of text to study to find out what makes speech elegant in your language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

- Different languages use poetry for different things. If a poetic form would not communicate the same meaning in your language, you may need to write it without the poetry.
- Different languages use different poetic devices. A poetic device that conveys elegance or emotion in a biblical language may be confusing or misunderstood in another language.
- In some languages, using poetry for a particular part of the Bible would make it much more powerful.

Examples From the Bible

The Bible uses poetry for songs, teaching, and prophecy. Almost all of the books of the Old Testament have poetry in them and many of the books are completely made up of poetry.

... for you saw my affliction; you knew the distress of my soul. (Psalm 31:7b ULT)

This example of [Parallelism](#) has two lines that mean the same thing.

Yahweh, judge the nations; vindicate me, Yahweh, because I am righteous and innocent, Most High. (Psalm 7:8 ULT)

This example of parallelism shows the contrast between what David wants God to do to him and what he wants God to do to the unrighteous nations. (See [Parallelism](#).)

Keep your servant also from arrogant sins; let them not rule over me. (Psalm 19:13a ULT)

This example of personification speaks of sins as if they could rule over a person. (See [Personification](#).)

Oh, give thanks to Yahweh; for he is good,
for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.

Oh, give thanks to the God of gods,

for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords,

for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.

(Psalm 136:1-3 ULT)

This example repeats the phrases “give thanks” and “his covenant faithfulness endures forever.”

Translation Strategies

If the style of poetry that is used in the source text would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other ways of translating it.

- (1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry.
- (2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.
- (3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

If you use poetry it may be more beautiful.

If you use ordinary speech it may be more clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of mockers. But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2 ULT)

The following are examples of how people might translate Psalm 1:1-2.

- (1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry. (The style in this example has words that sound similar at the end of each line.)

“Happy is the person not encouraged **to sin**, Disrespect for God he will not **begin**, To those who laugh at God he is **no kin**. God is his constant **delight**, He does what God says **is right**, He thinks of it all day **and night**.”

- (2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.

This is the kind of person who is truly blessed: the one who does not follow the advice of wicked people nor stop along the road to speak with sinners nor join the gathering of those who mock God. Rather, he takes great joy in Yahweh’s law, and he meditates on it day and night.

- (3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

The people who do not listen to the advice of bad people are really happy. They do not spend time with people who continually do evil things or join with those who do not respect God. Instead, they love to obey Yahweh’s law, and they think about it all the time.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Symbolic Language ([UTA PDF](#))

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

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](#))

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.

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: [Malachi 2:15](#)

Pronouns — When to Use Them

Description

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

This page answers the question: *How do I decide whether or not to use a pronoun?*

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

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

[Sentence Structure \(UTA PDF\)](#)

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

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

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

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

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

This may be translated as:

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

"

Referenced in: [Malachi 1:4](#); [Malachi 1:8](#); [Malachi 1:9](#); [Malachi 1:12](#); [Malachi 2:2](#); [Malachi 2:3](#); [Malachi 2:7](#); [Malachi 2:15](#); [Malachi 3:9](#)

Quotations and Quote Margins

Description

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

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

The quote margins are bolded below.

- **She said**, “The food is ready. Come and eat.”
- “The food is ready. Come and eat,” **she said**.
- “The food is ready,” **she said**. “Come and eat.”

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

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

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

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

Quote margin before the quote

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

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

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

Quote margin after the quote

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

Quote margin between two parts of the quote

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

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

Translation Strategies

- (1) Decide where to put the quote margin.
- (2) Decide whether to use one or two words meaning "said."

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Decide where to put the quote margin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

Direct and Indirect Quotations ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Malachi 1:2](#)

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: [Malachi 1:4](#); [Malachi 1:5](#); [Malachi 1:7](#); [Malachi 1:12](#); [Malachi 1:13](#); [Malachi 3:7](#); [Malachi 3:8](#); [Malachi 3:13](#); [Malachi 3:14](#); [Malachi 3:15](#)

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: [Malachi 1:2](#); [Malachi 1:6](#); [Malachi 1:8](#); [Malachi 1:9](#); [Malachi 1:10](#); [Malachi 1:13](#); [Malachi 2:10](#); [Malachi 2:15](#); [Malachi 2:17](#); [Malachi 3:2](#); [Malachi 3:8](#)

Simile

Description

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Purposes of Simile

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

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — This compares the danger that Jesus' disciples would be in with the danger that sheep are in when they are surrounded by wolves.

See, I send **you out among wicked people** and you will be in danger from them **as sheep are in danger when they are among wolves**.

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

For the word of God is living and active and **more powerful than a very sharp two-edged sword**.

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

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — If people do not know what sheep and wolves are, or that wolves kill and eat sheep, you could use some other animal that kills another.

See, I send you out **as chickens in the midst of wild dogs**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to gather your children together, **as a mother closely watches over her infants**, but you refused!

If you have faith **as a grain of mustard** ... (Matthew 17:20)

If you have faith even as small **as a tiny seed**,

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

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT)

See, I send you out among **people who will want to harm you**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

Metaphor ([UTA PDF](#))

Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Malachi 3:2](#); [Malachi 3:3](#); [Malachi 3:17](#); [Malachi 4:2](#)

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: [Malachi 1:13](#)

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: [Malachi 1:1](#); [Malachi 1:5](#); [Malachi 1:9](#); [Malachi 1:10](#); [Malachi 1:11](#); [Malachi 1:14](#); [Malachi 2:2](#); [Malachi 2:5](#); [Malachi 2:7](#); [Malachi 2:13](#); [Malachi 3:5](#); [Malachi 4:2](#)

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: [Malachi 1:3](#)

When Masculine Words Include Women

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

Description

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

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

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

This page answers the question: *How do I translate “brother” or “he” when it could refer to anyone, male or female?*

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

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

[Generic Noun Phrases \(UTA PDF\)](#)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Translation Principles

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Use a noun that can be used for both men and women.
- (2) Use a word that refers to men and a word that refers to women.
- (3) Use pronouns that can be used for both men and women.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

The wise **man** dies just like the fool dies. (Ecclesiastes 2:16b ULT)

“The wise **person** dies just like the fool dies.” “Wise **people** die just like fools die.”

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

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

“For we do not want you to be uninformed, **brothers and sisters**, about the troubles that happened to us in Asia.”

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

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

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

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

”

Referenced in: [Malachi 2:12](#); [Malachi 4:6](#)



unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 85

day of the Lord, day of Yahweh

Description:

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

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

Translation Suggestions:

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

(See also: [day](#), [judgment day](#), [Lord](#), [resurrection](#), [Yahweh](#))

Bible References:

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

Word Data:

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

”

Referenced in: [Introduction to Malachi](#)

Yahweh of hosts, God of hosts, host of heaven, host of the heavens, Lord of hosts

Definition:

The terms “Yahweh of hosts” and “God of hosts” are titles that express God’s authority over the thousands of angels who obey him.

- The term “host” or “hosts” is a word that refers to a large number of something, such as an army of people or the massive number of stars. It can also refer to all the many spirit beings, including evil spirits. The context makes it clear what is being referred to.
- Phrases similar to “host of the heavens” refer to all the stars, planets and other heavenly bodies.
- In the New Testament, the phrase, “Lord of hosts” means the same as “Yahweh of hosts” but it cannot be translated that way since the Hebrew word “Yahweh” is not used in the New Testament.

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate “Yahweh of hosts” could include, “Yahweh, who rules all the angels” or “Yahweh, the ruler over armies of angels” or “Yahweh, the ruler of all creation.”
- The phrase “of hosts” in the terms “God of hosts” and “Lord of hosts” would be translated the same way as in the phrase “Yahweh of hosts” above.
- Certain churches do not accept the literal term “Yahweh” and prefer to use the capitalized word, “LORD” instead, following the tradition of many Bible versions. For these churches, a translation of the term “LORD of hosts” would be used in the Old Testament for “Yahweh of hosts.”

(See also: [angel](#), [authority](#), [God](#), [lord](#), [Lord](#), [Lord Yahweh Yahweh](#))

Bible References:

- Zechariah 13:2

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0430, H3068, H6635, G29620, G45190

”

Referenced in: [Introduction to Malachi](#)

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