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Joel

Version 86

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unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Joel

Introduction to Joel

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of Joel

1:1–20 Joel describes the effects of the locust attack and calls the people to mourn 2:1–11 Joel depicts the locust swarm as an army and the attack as the “day of Yahweh” 2:12–17 Joel and Yahweh call the people of Judah to repentance 2:18–27 Yahweh promises to have mercy on his people and restore them 2:28–32 Yahweh says that in the future he will pour out his Spirit 3:1–21 Yahweh declares that he will judge the nations

What is the book of Joel about?

The main idea in the book of Joel is how the people of Judah should understand the spiritual significance of an unprecedented locust attack. The prophet Joel told them to understand it as an expression of the “day of Yahweh,” the occasion on which Yahweh would judge people and punish them for disobedience or reward them for obedience. Joel did not mean that the end of the world had come, but that the people should recognize that Yahweh was acting in judgment as he would at the end of the world. As the book progresses, Joel moves from his spiritual interpretation of the current locust plague to talking about the actual end of the world and final judgment. The apostles of Jesus understood some of Joel’s prophecies to have been fulfilled in their own day. In Acts 2:17 and 2:21, Peter quoted Joel 2:28 and 2:32, where Yahweh says, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” and “everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved.”

How should the title of this book be translated?

The traditional title of this book is “The Book of Joel” or just “Joel.” Translators may also call it the “The Message from Joel” or “The Sayings of Joel.”

Who wrote the book of Joel?

This book contains the prophecies of an Israelite named Joel. The title of the book states that he was the “son of Pethuel,” but it gives no further information about him. The book also does not tell when Joel prophesied.

Part 2: Religious and Cultural Concepts

The locust attack

Locust attacks occurred often in the ancient Near East. Certain kinds of grasshoppers would come in countless numbers. There would be so many that they would darken the sky like a black cloud that blocked the sunlight. They often came after a long period of no rain. They came down on whatever crops were surviving in the fields and stripped them bare, eating all their leaves. The locusts could not be stopped, and they caused terrible damage. There are various names for locusts in the original language of the Old Testament. It is uncertain whether these refer to different kinds of locusts or to the same kind of locust in different stages of growth. For this reason, versions of the Bible differ in how they translate these terms. See the note to 1:4 for a suggestion of how you might do this in your translation.

Part 3: Translation Issues

Representing the poetry of the book of Joel in your translation

The poetry in the book of Joel consists almost entirely of paired phrases that both mean basically the same thing. The second phrase emphasizes the meaning of the first phrase by repeating the same idea in 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. For example, in 1:2, you might say, “Hear this, you elders! Yes, listen, all of the dwellers of the land!” In 1:5, you might say, “Wake up, drunkards, and weep! Indeed, wail, all of the drinkers of wine.” (See:

Parallelism (p.164))

Litanies

In two places in the book, 1:4 and 2:9, Joel uses a repetitive series of similarly structured sentences for emphasis. This repetitive style of speaking or writing is called a “litany.” While in each case these brief litanies consist of two lines of poetry, in your translation you may wish to represent them as separate, shorter lines, as illustrated here. This would show the rhetorical device that Joel is employing. (See: **Litany (p.148))**

1:4 The residue of the cutting locust,

the swarming locust has eaten,

and the residue of the swarming locust,

the hopping locust has eaten,

and the residue of the hopping locust,

the destroying locust has eaten.

2:9 Upon the city they rush,

on the wall they run,

into the houses they climb,

through the windows they enter like thieves.

Speakers describe results before giving reasons

Throughout their speeches in the book, both Joel and Yahweh typically describe a result before giving the reason for it. If it would be more natural in your language, in all or some of these cases, you could reverse the order and first present the phrase or clause that gives the reason, and then present the phrase or clause that gives the result. For example, in 1:17, instead of saying, “The storehouses are desolate, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up,” you could say, “Because the grain has dried up, the storehouses are desolate, the granaries have been broken down.” In 2:21, rather than saying, “Do not fear, land! Be glad and rejoice, for Yahweh has been great in doing,” you could say, “Yahweh has been great in doing! So do not fear, land. Be glad and rejoice.” (See:

Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.103))

Travel descriptions marked for change in elevation

In several places in the book (1:6, 3:2, 3:9, 3:11, 3:12), the ULT includes the terms “up” or “down” in descriptions of travel. That shows how Hebrew marked such descriptions for changes in elevation. If your language does not do that, you could use expressions without “up” and “down.” For example, in 1:6, you could use “a nation has come against my land” rather than “a nation has come up against my land.” (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

Joel 1

Joel 1 Chapter Introduction

Structure and Formatting

In this chapter, Joel describes the effects of the locust attack and calls the people to mourn.

Because it is poetry, after the book title in [1:1](#), the ULT sets the lines of this chapter farther to the right on the page than its usual text.

Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

Locusts

This book starts very dramatically with the imagery of the locusts and the devastation that they produce. Five different kinds of locusts appear to come, and they progressively destroy the vegetation, including the crops, vineyards, and even the trees. It was common for farmers in the ancient Near East to experience large locust swarms that would come and eat all the crops in their fields. Translators should translate simply, presenting the scenes of locusts as Joel describes them.

Translation Issues in This Chapter

“House” meaning “temple”

Several times in this chapter ([1:9](#), [1:13](#), [1:14](#), [1:16](#)), Joel uses the term “house” to mean Yahweh’s “temple.” He speaks of this temple as if it were a house in which God lived, since God’s presence was there. (See: **Metaphor** (p. 154))

Joel 1:1

Pethuel

The word **Pethuel** is the name of a man. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.133)**)

The word of Yahweh that was

This is a common expression of this culture that means that Yahweh spoke a message to Joel. If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use a comparable expression from your language that does have that meaning, or you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [The message that Yahweh spoke] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

Joel 1:2

Hear this, you elders, and listen, all of the dwellers of the land

See the discussion in the introduction to Joel of how Hebrew poetry consisted of paired phrases that meant basically the same thing. Decide as a translation team how you will represent this poetry in your translation throughout the book of Joel. Alternate translation: [Hear this, you elders! Yes, listen, all of the dwellers of the land!] (See: **Parallelism (p.164)**)

Has this been in your days or in the days of your fathers

Joel 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: [This has not happened in your days or in the days of your fathers!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.184)**)

in your days or in the days of

Joel is using the term **days** to mean a period of time by association with the way days make up longer periods of time. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [in your time or in the time of] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

your fathers

Joel is not referring to the literal **fathers** of the Israelites whom he is addressing. He is using that term to mean their ancestors. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [your ancestors] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Joel 1:3

and your sons to their sons, and their sons to the generation after

Joel is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need to be complete. You could supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: [and let your sons recount about it to their sons, and let their sons recount about it to the generation after] (See: **Ellipsis (p.115)**)

to your sons, and your sons to their sons, and their sons

Here the masculine term **sons** has a generic sense that includes both male and female children. 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: [to your children, and your children to their children, and their children] (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.200)**)

Recount about it to your sons, and your sons

The imperative **Recount** and the word **your** are plural here because Joel is addressing the “elders” and “dwellers” mentioned in the previous verse. So use plural forms in your translation if your language marks that distinction. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.124)**)

Joel 1:4

The residue of the cutting locust, the swarming locust has eaten, and the residue of the swarming locust, the hopping locust has eaten, and the residue of the hopping locust, the destroying locust has eaten

Joel is not referring to specific locusts of these types. He means locusts of these types in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using plural forms. Alternate translation: [The residue of the cutting locusts, swarming locusts have eaten, and the residue of the swarming locusts, hopping locusts have eaten, and the residue of the hopping locusts, destroying locusts have eaten] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

The residue of the cutting locust, the swarming locust has eaten, and the residue of the swarming locust, the hopping locust has eaten, and the residue of the hopping locust, the destroying locust has eaten

In the introduction to Joel, see the discussion of the litany form and how you might format this verse in your translation to show that Joel is using that form. (See: **Litany (p.148)**)

The residue of the cutting locust, the swarming locust has eaten, and the residue of the swarming locust, the hopping locust has eaten, and the residue of the hopping locust, the destroying locust has eaten

The terms **cutting**, **swarming**, **hopping**, and **destroying** describe different kinds of locusts. Interpreters are not certain specifically what kinds of locusts these were. You may wish to use more general expressions in your translation. Alternate translation: [The residue of one kind of locust, another kind of locust has eaten, and the residue of that kind of locust, yet another kind of locust has eaten, and the residue of that kind of locust, still another kind of locust has eaten] (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.197)**)

Joel 1:5

Wake up, drunkards, and weep! And wail, all of the drinkers of wine, upon the sweet wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth

See the discussion in the introduction to Joel of places such as this where the speaker describes a result before giving the reason for it. 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 sweet wine has been cut off from your mouth, so wail upon it, all of the drinkers of wine] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.103)**)

it has been cut off from your mouth

This is an expression that means that something is no longer available. Your language may have a comparable expression that you could use in your translation. Alternate translation: [it is no longer available for you to drink] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

from your mouth

Since Joel is referring to a group of people, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form of **mouth**. Alternate translation: [from your mouths] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.100)**)

it has been cut off from your mouth

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [the locusts have cut it off from your mouth] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

Joel 1:6

For

Joel is using the word **For** to introduce the reason for what he described in the previous verse. Alternate translation: [This has happened because] (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.105)**)

a nation has come up against my land

See the discussion in the introduction to Joel of travel descriptions marked for change in elevation. Alternate translation: [a nation has come against my land] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

a nation

Joel is speaking as if this locust swarm were literally a **nation**, meaning, in this context, an “army.” If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [a great swarm of locusts] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

my land

Since Joel and the people he is addressing live in the same land, it may be more natural in your language to say “our” instead of **my**. Alternate translation: [our land] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

and without number

Joel 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: [and in huge numbers] (See: **Hyperbole (p.137)**)

Its teeth {are} the teeth of a lion, and the fangs of a lioness {are} to it

Joel is describing the locusts as if they literally had the teeth of lions and lionesses. He means that they have strong teeth that can chew even the toughest of plants. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [Like a lion or lioness, these locusts have strong teeth that powerfully grind and chew] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Its teeth {are} the teeth of a lion, and the fangs of a lioness {are} to it

These two phrases, **Its teeth {are} the teeth of a lion, and the fangs of a lioness {are} to it**, mean similar things. Joel is using repetition to emphasize the idea that the phrases express. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could combine the phrases and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: [Its teeth are as strong and sharp as the teeth of a lion] or [Its teeth, like the teeth of a lion, can tear through anything] (See: **Parallelism (p.164)**)

and the fangs of a lioness {are} to it

Joel is using a particular possessive form here. A different kind of possessive form may be more natural in your language. Alternate translation: [and it has the fangs of a lioness] (See: **Possession (p.169)**)

Joel 1:7

It has made my vine into a waste and my fig tree into splinters

Since Joel and the people whom he is addressing eat the same crops, it may be more natural in your language to say “our” instead of **my**. Alternate translation: [It has made our vines into a waste and our fig trees into splinters] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

It has made my vine into a waste

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **waste**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [It has wasted my vine] or [It has ruined my vine] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

Stripping, it has stripped it

Joel is repeating the verb “strip” in order to intensify the idea that it expresses. If your language can repeat words for intensification, it would be appropriate to do that here in your translation. If not, your language may have another way of expressing the emphasis. Alternate translation: [It has stripped it completely] (See: **Reduplication (p.182)**)

and thrown {it} away

Joel is speaking as if the locusts had literally **thrown ... away** the vegetation they had finished eating. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [spit it out] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

its branches have become white

Joel is using the term **have become white** to mean that the branches have been stripped of their bark, by association with the way the wood underneath the bark is white in color. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [its branches have been stripped of their bark] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

Joel 1:8

Mourn

The imperative **Mourn** is feminine singular because Joel is telling the community to mourn as it would as if it were a young woman whose fiancé had died. It may be more natural in your language to use a plural imperative. (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

like a virgin dressed in sackcloth for the husband of her youth

The point of this comparison is that just as a virgin dresses in sackcloth to express her grief, so the Israelites should mourn to express their grief. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [like a virgin dressed in sackcloth to express her grief for the husband of her youth] (See: **Simile (p. 188)**)

like a virgin dressed in sackcloth

To wear **sackcloth**, which is clothing made of rough, uncomfortable fabric, is a symbolic action that expresses grief. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could explain the significance of this action. Alternate translation: [like a virgin dressed in sackcloth to express her grief] (See: **Symbolic Action (p.191)**)

like a virgin dressed in sackcloth

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: [like a virgin who has dressed herself in sackcloth] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

the husband of her youth

Joel assumes that his listeners will know that by **the husband of her youth**, he means the fiancé to whom a young woman was betrothed. The word **virgin** indicates that this woman was not yet married, but in this culture, engagement was tantamount to marriage and a fiancé was considered a **husband**. You could express this relationship with your own culture's characteristic terms if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [the fiancé of her youth] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

the husband of her 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 man she became engaged to while she was young] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

Joel 1:9

The grain offering and the drink offering have been cut off

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [The locusts have cut off the grain offering and the drink offering] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

have been cut off from the house of

The phrase **have been cut off** is an expression that means that something is no longer available. Your language may have a comparable expression that you could use in your translation. Alternate translation: [are no longer available for the house] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

from the house of Yahweh

As the introduction to this chapter discusses, here and often in this chapter, Joel is using the word **house** to mean "temple." Alternate translation: [from the temple of Yahweh] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Joel 1:10

The field has been destroyed; the ground mourns, for the grain has been destroyed

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [The locusts have destroyed the field, the ground mourns, for the locusts have destroyed the grain] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

The field has been destroyed; & has been destroyed

Joel is not referring to a specific **field**. He means fields in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [The fields have been destroyed] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

the ground mourns

Joel is speaking of **the ground** as if it were a living thing that could **mourn** because it was bare of crops. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the ground is bare] (See: **Personification (p.167)**)

the new wine dries up

Joel is speaking as if the **new wine** the Israelites would have gotten from this harvest had literally dried up. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the new wine disappears as if it had evaporated] or [the new wine runs out] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

the oil is made weak

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [the oil has become weak] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

the oil is made weak

Here Joel is speaking of the supply of **oil** as if it had been strong and now was **weak**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the supply of oil is low] or [the oil runs out] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Joel 1:11

the field

Joel is not referring to a specific **field**. He means fields in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [the fields] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

Joel 1:12

The vine has dried up and the fig tree has been made weak. The pomegranate tree, also the palm tree and the apple tree

Joel is not referring to a specific **vine**, **fig tree**, **pomegranate tree**, **palm tree**, or **apple tree**. He is talking about these kinds of trees in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using plural forms. Alternate translation: [The vines have dried up and the fig trees have been made weak. The pomegranate trees, also the palm trees and the apple trees] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

has been made weak

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: [has become weak] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

and the fig tree has been made weak

Here Joel is speaking of **the fig tree** as if it had been strong and now was **weak**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the fig tree is withered] or [the fig tree is dying] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

all of the trees of the field have dried up

Joel 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: [trees of the field of every kind have dried up] (See: **Hyperbole (p.137)**)

joy has dried up from the sons of man

Joel is speaking of **joy** as if it were a liquid that had literally **dried up**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [people no longer feel joyful] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

the sons of man

Here the masculine terms **sons** and **man** 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: [human beings] (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.200)**)

Joel 1:13

Dress

Joel assumes that his listeners will know that by **Dress**, he means “Dress in sackcloth.” You could say that explicitly if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [Dress in sackcloth] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

lodge in sackcloth

To **lodge in sackcloth** is a symbolic action that expresses deep mourning and repentance. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could explain the significance of this action. Alternate translation: [spend the night wearing sackcloth to show your deep sorrow and repentance] (See: **Symbolic Action (p.191)**)

the grain offering and the drink offering have been withheld

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [the locusts have taken away the grain offering and the drink offering] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

my God

Since Joel and the people he is addressing worship the same God, it may be more natural in your language to say “our” instead of **my**. Languages that mark the distinction should use the inclusive form of “our.” Alternate translation: [our God] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

your God

Since Joel and the people whom he is addressing worship the same God, it may be more natural in your language to say “our” instead of **your**. Languages that mark the distinction should use the inclusive form of “our.” Alternate translation: [our God] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

Joel 1:14

Consecrate a fast

A **fast** is a time of going without eating. In this context, not eating would be a symbolic action to express sorrow for the sins that had caused Yahweh to punish the Israelites. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could explain the significance of this action. Alternate translation: [Consecrate a fast to show your sorrow for your sin] (See: **Symbolic Action (p.191)**)

your God

Since Joel and the people he is addressing worship the same God, it may be more natural in your language to say “our” instead of **your**. Languages that mark the distinction should use the inclusive form of “our.” Alternate translation: [our God] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

Joel 1:15

Alas for the day

Joel is using this phrase as an exclamation to express a strong feeling. There may be an equivalent phrase in your language that you could use in your translation to convey this strong feeling. If not, you could say what Joel was feeling. Alternate translation: [Oh, what a terrible day] or [What a distressing day] (See: **Exclamations (p.118)**)

Alas for the day

Joel is using the term **day** to mean “this particular time of trouble,” by association with the way a day is a specific period of time. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [Alas for this time] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

the day of Yahweh

Joel is using the term **day** to mean the time when Yahweh will judge and punish his enemies, by association with the way days make up specific periods of time. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the time when Yahweh will judge and punish his enemies] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

and as destruction from Shaddai it will come

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **destruction**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [when Shaddai will destroy many things] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

from Shaddai

The word **Shaddai** is another name for God. Some versions choose to translate the name as “the Almighty,” as in the UST. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.133)**)

Joel 1:16

Has not food been cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God

Joel 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: [Food has been cut off before our eyes, and joy and gladness from the house of our God!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.184)**)

Has not food been cut off before our eyes

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: [Have not the locusts cut off food before our eyes] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

before our eyes

Joel is using the term **eyes** to mean sight, by association with the way eyes are used for seeing. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [from our sight] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

joy and gladness from the house of our God

Joel is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You could supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: [and have not joy and gladness been cut off from the house of our God] (See: **Ellipsis (p.115)**)

joy and gladness

The terms **joy** and **gladness** mean similar things. Joel 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: [all celebration] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

Joel 1:17

the granaries have been broken 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: [the granaries have broken down] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

the grain has dried up

Joel is speaking of **grain** as if it were a liquid that had **dried up**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the grain has disappeared as if it had evaporated] or [the supply of grain has run out] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Joel 1:18

How the beast groans

Joel is using this phrase as an exclamation to express a strong feeling. There may be an equivalent phrase in your language that you could use in your translation to convey this strong feeling. If not, you could say what Joel was feeling. Alternate translation: [Listen to the animals' pitiful cries] or [How sad to hear the beasts groan] (See: **Exclamations (p.118)**)

How the beast groans

Joel is not referring to a specific **beast**. He means beasts in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [How the beasts groan] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

The herds of cattle are perplexed

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [The locusts have perplexed the herds of cattle] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

the flocks of sheep are punished

Joel is speaking of the sheep dying from hunger as if they were literally being punished. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the flocks of sheep die from hunger, perishing as if they were being punished] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

the flocks of sheep are punished

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [the locusts have punished the flocks of sheep] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

Joel 1:19

To you, Yahweh, I cry

Joel is appealing to God here, so use the form of “you” that speakers of your language would use to address God. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Formal or Informal (p.122)**)

for fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness

Joel is speaking of the locusts’ destruction as if it were literally a fire consuming the **pastures**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [and the locusts have eaten up the grass in the pastures of the wilderness] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

and the flame has burned all of the trees of the field

Joel is not referring to a specific **flame** or **field**. He means flames and fields in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using plural forms. Alternate translation: [and flames have burned all of the trees of the fields] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

and the flame has burned all of the trees of the field

Joel is speaking of the locusts’ destruction as if it were literally a flame burning the **trees**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [yes, the locusts have eaten all of the leaves and bark from the trees of the field] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Joel 1:20

for you

By **you**, Joel means Yahweh, so use the same form of “you” as you used in the previous verse. (See: **Forms of ‘You’** — **Formal or Informal (p.122)**)

and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness

See how you translated this similar expression in [1:19](#). (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Joel 2

Joel 2 Chapter Introduction

Structure and Formatting

2:1–11 Joel depicts the locust swarm as an army and the attack as the “day of Yahweh” 2:12–17 Joel and Yahweh call the people of Judah to repentance 2:18–27 Yahweh promises to have mercy on his people and restore them 2:28–32 Yahweh says that in the future he will pour out his Spirit

The ULT sets the lines of this chapter farther to the right on the page than its usual text because it is poetry.

Translation Issues in This Chapter

“Face” meaning “in front of”

Several times in this chapter (2:3, 2:6, 2:10, 2:11, 2:31), phrases with the word **face** mean “in front of” or “before,” by association with the way people can see what is in front of or before their faces. (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

Textual Issues in This Chapter

In 2:7, the traditional Hebrew text reads “they do not pledge their paths.” The ULT follows that reading. Some ancient versions suggest that the original reading may have been “they do not turn from their paths.” 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.

In 2:17, the traditional Hebrew text reads “for the nations to rule over them.” The ULT follows that reading. The consonantal text also permits the reading “for them to become a byword to the nations.” Several modern versions of the Bible follow that reading. 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.

Joel 2:1

Blow the shofar in Zion, and shout on the mountain of my holiness

Joel assumes that his listeners will know that he wants them to do the things he describes in order to sound an alarm. You could say that explicitly if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [Blow the shofar in Zion, and shout on the mountain of my holiness in order to sound an alarm] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

the shofar

A **shofar** is a trumpet made from a ram's horn. If your readers would not be familiar with what a shofar is, in your translation you could use the name of a similar thing that your readers would recognize, or you could use a general expression. Alternate translation: [a trumpet] or [a ram's horn] (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.197)**)

the shofar

The phrase **the shofar** refers to shofars in general, not to any particular shofar. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a more natural expression. Alternate translation: [a shofar] or [shofars] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

on the mountain of my holiness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **holiness**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [on my holy mountain] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

Let & tremble

Joel assumes that his listeners will know that by **tremble** he means to tremble in fear or awe. You could say that explicitly if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [tremble in fear] or [tremble in awe] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

the day of Yahweh

See how you translated the same expression in [1:15](#). (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

Joel 2:2

a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness

Joel is using the term **day** to mean a period of time, by association with the way days make up specific periods of time. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [a time of darkness and gloom, a time of clouds and thick darkness] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

darkness and gloom

The terms **darkness** and **gloom** mean similar things. Joel 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: [deep darkness] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

clouds and thick darkness

The terms **clouds** and **thick darkness** mean similar things. Joel 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: [very dark clouds] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

Like the dawn being spread upon the mountains

The point of this comparison is that just as the dawn spreads in a steady and unstoppable way across the mountains, so the army of locusts spreads in the same way across the land. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [Like the dawn spreading in a steady and unstoppable way upon the mountains] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

Like the dawn being spread upon the mountains

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: [Like the dawn spreading upon the mountains] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

Like the dawn

Joel is using the term **dawn** by association to mean the light that appears at dawn. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [like the light of dawn] or [like the early morning sunlight] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

a great and mighty people

Joel 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: [a great and mighty people is coming] (See: **Ellipsis (p.115)**)

a great and mighty people

The terms **great** and **mighty** mean similar things. Joel 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: [a very strong people] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

Like it there has not been from antiquity, and after it there will not be again to years of generation and generation

Joel 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: [It is worse than anything that has happened in living memory, and nothing like it will happen again for many generations] (See: **Hyperbole (p.137)**)

to years of generation and generation

This is an expression that means “for a very long time.” Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [for many generations to come] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

Joel 2:3

A fire is devouring to its face, and behind it a flame is burning. To its face the land is like the garden of Eden, but behind it {is} a wilderness of desolation, and indeed, {there} is no escape from it

The pronouns **its** and **it** refer to the locust swarm, described in the previous verse as a “people,” that is, an “army.” It may be more natural in your language to use plural pronouns. Alternate translation: [A fire is devouring in front of them, and behind them a flame is burning. In front of them the land is like the garden of Eden, but behind them is a wilderness of desolation, and indeed there is no escape from them] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p. 175)**)

A fire is devouring to its face, and behind it a flame is burning

Joel is speaking of the locusts’ destruction as if it were literally a **fire** consuming everything in front of it and leaving **burning** land behind. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [The locusts eat up the vegetation in front of them as if they were a fire consuming it, and after they have passed, the land looks as if a flame has burned it] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

A fire is devouring to its face

See the discussion in the introduction to this chapter of how several phrases with the word **face** mean “in front of.” Alternate translation: [A fire is devouring in front of it] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

To its face the land is like the garden of Eden

The point of this comparison is that just as the garden of Eden was very lush, so the land of Israel ahead of the locust invasion is lush. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [To its face the land is lush, like the garden of Eden] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

is} a wilderness of 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: [is a desolate wilderness] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

and indeed, {there} is no escape from it

Joel 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: [and indeed, it is extremely difficult to escape from it] (See: **Hyperbole (p.137)**)

there} is no escape from it

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **escape**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [no one can escape from it] or [no one can get away from it] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p. 90)**)

Joel 2:4

Like the appearance of horses {is} its appearance

The point of this comparison is that just like war horses, the locusts appear to be strong and fearless. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [Like the appearance of strong, fearless war horses is their appearance] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

Like the appearance of & is} its appearance

Since the locust swarm is described in [verse 2](#) as a “people” or “army,” it may be more natural in your language to use a plural pronoun. Alternate translation: [is their appearance] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

and like steeds, thus they run

The point of this comparison is that just as galloping steeds travel very quickly and seem to be flying as they are running, so the locusts travels quickly as it flies. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [and like galloping steeds that seem almost to be flying, thus they fly] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

Joel 2:5

Like the sound of chariots, they leap on the tops of the hills

The point of this comparison is that just as chariots make a loud, rumbling noise, so the locusts make a loud noise as they move across the land. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [Making a loud sound like that of chariots, they leap on the tops of the hills] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

like the sound of a flame of fire devouring stubble

The point of this comparison is that just as a fire makes a crackling sound as it quickly consumes dry stubble, so the locusts make a similar sound as they quickly consume the vegetation. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [making a crackling sound like a flame of fire devouring stubble] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

like a mighty people arrayed {for} war

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: [like a mighty people who have arrayed themselves for war] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

like a mighty people arrayed {for} war

Joel is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You could supply these words from earlier in the sentence if it would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: [like the sound of a mighty people arrayed for war] (See: **Ellipsis (p.115)**)

like a mighty people arrayed {for} war

The point of this comparison is that just as a mighty army gives a loud shout once it is arrayed for war, so the locusts are making a loud and terrifying noise. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [making a loud, terrifying sound as a mighty people does when it is arrayed for war] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

Joel 2:6

writhe

Joel assumes that his listeners will know that by **writhe** he means to writhe in agony or fear. You could say that explicitly if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [twist and contort in agony] or [squirm in fear] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

gather beauty

Joel is using the term **beauty** to mean paleness by association with the way pale skin was considered beautiful in that culture. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [become pale] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

Joel 2:7

They run like warriors

The point of this comparison is that the locusts rush forward irresistibly, just as warriors do. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [They rush forward, unstoppable, like mighty warriors] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

like men of war, they climb the wall

The point of this comparison is that just as men of war skillfully scale walls in battle, so the locusts surmount obstacles without difficulty. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [like men of war, they swarm over walls without difficulty] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

like men of war

Joel is using this possessive form to describe **men** who take part in **war**. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [warriors] (See: **Possession (p.169)**)

the wall

Joel is not referring to a specific **wall**. He means walls in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [the walls] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

And & a man in his ways

In this context, **man** means “each one” and **ways** refers to the ways that a locust is traveling. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [each one in its direction] or [each one according to its pattern] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

and they do not pledge their paths

Joel is speaking of the locusts staying on their paths as if those paths were literally something they could give in pledge. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [they do not part from their paths] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

and they do not pledge their paths

See the discussion in the introduction to this chapter of an alternate reading for this phrase. Alternate translation: [and they do not turn from their paths] (See: **Textual Variants (p.195)**)

Joel 2:8

And a man does not crowd his brother

Here, **man** means “each one” and **brother** means “another one.” This expression describes how the locusts move in an orderly manner. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation.

Alternate translation: [And they do not crowd each other] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

they walk, a man in his road

As in the previous clause, **man** means “each one” and **road** refers to the direction of travel. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [they move, each one in its own path] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

Among the weapons they fall, and they do not break off

This could mean: (1) Alternate translation: [They jump in among the weapons without breaking ranks] or (2)

Alternate translation: [Even though weapons may kill some of them, the swarm keeps coming] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

Joel 2:9

**Upon the city they rush; on the wall they run; into the houses they climb;
through the windows they enter like thieves**

See the discussion in the introduction to Joel of the litany form and how you might format this verse in your translation to show that Joel is using litany. (See: **Litany (p.148)**)

through the windows they enter like thieves

The point of this comparison is that just as thieves enter unexpectedly and undetected through windows, so the locusts get into homes in ways that people do not anticipate and so, cannot prevent. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this point explicitly. Alternate translation: [they get into homes in unexpected ways, just as thieves sneak in through windows] (See: **Simile (p.188)**)

Joel 2:10

The earth shakes to their face, the heavens tremble

Joel is speaking as if the locust swarm were so powerful that it was causing the **earth** to shake and the **heavens** to **tremble**. He means that the locusts make such a loud sound and cause such vibration that it seems like this is happening. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [They make such a loud sound and cause such vibration that it is as if the earth is shaking and the heavens are trembling] (See: **Hyperbole (p.137)**)

the sun and the moon become dark

Joel is speaking as if **the sun and the moon** had literally become **dark**. He means that the locust swarm is blocking their light. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the locust swarm blocks the light of the sun and moon] (See: **Hyperbole (p.137)**)

and the stars withdraw their brightness

Joel is speaking of **the stars** as if they were living things that could **withdraw their brightness**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the light of the stars is no longer visible] (See: **Personification (p.167)**)

Joel 2:11

his voice

Joel is using the term **voice** to mean Yahweh's commands, by association with the way authorities use their voices to give commands. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [his commands] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

is} his camp

Joel is using the term **camp** to mean Yahweh's army, by association with the way armies stay in camps. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [is his army] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

his word

Joel is using the term **word** to mean Yahweh's orders, by association with the way people use words to give orders or instructions. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [his commands] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

For the day of Yahweh is great and very fearful, and who will endure it

Joel 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: [For the day of Yahweh is great and very fearful, and very few will endure it!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.184)**)

the day of Yahweh

See how you translated the same expression in [1:15](#). (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

Joel 2:12

Yet even now,” the declaration of Yahweh, return to me

The phrase **the declaration of Yahweh** indicates that this is a direct quotation from Yahweh. You may wish to indicate that in your translation using a natural way of introducing direct quotations in your language. Alternate translation: [Yahweh declares, “Yet even now, return to me] (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.177)**)

return

The imperative **return** is plural here because Yahweh is addressing the people of Judah. For the same reason, the imperatives and the word “your” are plural in [verses 13–16](#), in which Joel is speaking. So use plural forms in your translation if your language marks that distinction. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.124)**)

return to me with all of your heart

Here, Yahweh is speaking of people repenting of their sin as a **return** to him, and he is speaking of their **heart** to represent their thoughts and motives. You may have a similar way to talk about these things, or you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [sincerely repent of disobeying me in your thoughts and motives] or [come back to me in genuine and complete repentance] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

your heart

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: [your hearts] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.100)**)

Joel 2:13

And tear your heart and not your garments

Joel is speaking as if people could literally tear their hearts. He is using the contrast with tearing garments, which was a literal sign of mourning, to emphasize internal repentance. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [And do not only tear your garments; repent in your hearts] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

And tear your heart and not your garments, and return to Yahweh your God

Some versions end the quotation that begins in [verse 12](#) after this sentence instead of at the end of [verse 12](#). If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, you may wish to follow the quotation boundaries that it has. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to use the same boundaries as the ULT. (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.111)**)

long of nostrils

Here, **long of nostrils** is an idiom meaning that the person is slow to get angry. If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, use an idiom from your language that does have that meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [long-tempered] or [slow to become angry] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

and great of kindness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **kindness**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [and very kind] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

Joel 2:14

Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave a blessing after him

Joel 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: [For all anyone knows, he may turn and relent and leave a blessing after him] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.184)**)

He may turn and relent

The terms **turn** and **relent** mean similar things. Joel 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 may indeed change his mind] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

and leave a blessing

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **blessing**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [and leave something to bless you] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

your God

Since Joel and the people he is addressing worship the same God, it may be more natural in your language to say “our” instead of **your**. Languages that mark the distinction should use the inclusive form of “our.” Alternate translation: [our God] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

Joel 2:15

a fast

Joel assumes that his readers will understand that the purpose of **a fast** was to show repentance for sin. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [a fast to show your repentance] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

consecrate a fast, call an assembly

If it would be more natural in your language, you could mention calling the assembly and then telling the people to fast. Alternate translation: [call an assembly, consecrate a fast] (See: **Information Structure (p.143)**)

Joel 2:16

assemble the elders, gather the children and the ones sucking the breasts

Joel is speaking of two things in order to mean those two extremes and everything in between. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [assemble people of all ages] (See: **Merism (p.152)**)

May the bridegroom come out from his chamber and the bride from her room

Joel means implicitly that while newlyweds are ordinarily excused from public duties, this is an exceptional circumstance that calls for even their attendance. Alternate translation: [Even newly married men and women should come to the assembly under these exceptional circumstances] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

Joel 2:17

between the porch and the altar

Joel is speaking of these two things that are at the far extremes of the courtyard of the temple in order to refer to them and to everything in between them. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [throughout the entire court of the priests] (See: **Merism (p. 152)**)

and do not give your inheritance to reproach

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **reproach**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [and do not let other nations reproach your inheritance] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

your inheritance

Joel is speaking of the Israelites as if they were literally something that Yahweh had inherited. Joel means that the Israelites are the people whom Yahweh has chosen. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the people whom you have chosen] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

for the nations to rule over them

See the discussion in the introduction to this chapter of an alternate reading for this phrase. Alternate translation: [for the nations to use a proverb against them] or [for them to become a byword to the nations] (See: **Textual Variants (p.195)**)

Why should they say among the peoples, Where {is} their God

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: [Why should the peoples ask where our God is?] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.179)**)

Why should they say

Here, **they** is an indefinite pronoun that refers to people in general. 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: [Why should it be said] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

Why should they say among the peoples

Joel 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: [Do not allow the peoples to say] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.184)**)

Where {is} their God

This example of mockery is also 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: [Their God does not care about them] or [Their God must be far away!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p. 184)**)

Joel 2:18

Then Yahweh was jealous for his land, and he had pity on his people

Joel is using the past tense to describe something that is going to happen in the future, after the people repent. He may be doing this to show that the event will certainly happen. Alternatively, there may have been a gap of time between the writing of [verse 17](#) and [verse 18](#), and in that time, the people repented. If it would be clearer in your language, you could use the future tense in your translation of these two verses and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: [Then Yahweh will be jealous for his land, and he will have pity on his people] (See: **Predictive Past (p.173)**)

for his land

Joel is using the term **land** by association to mean the people living on the land. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [for his people] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

Joel 2:19

And Yahweh answered and said

Joel continues using the past tense here to describe something that is going to happen in the future, after the people repent. Alternatively, the people already repented and so Joel tells Yahweh's response here. If you chose to use the future tense in [verse 18](#), then you should also do so here. Alternate translation: [Then Yahweh will answer and say] (See: **Predictive Past (p.173)**)

And Yahweh answered and said

This phrase expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **answered** tells for what purpose Yahweh **said** this. Alternate translation: [And Yahweh replied] (See: **Hendiadys (p.130)**)

Behold me, sending to you grain and new wine and oil

This verse begins a direct quotation from Yahweh. You may wish to indicate that in your translation, using a natural way of introducing direct quotations in your language. Alternate translation: [saying, "Behold me, sending to you grain and new wine and oil"] (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.177)**)

Behold me, sending

The expression **Behold me** doing something means "I am going to do" what is described. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [I am going to send] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

with it

Yahweh is using the pronoun **it** to refer to what he will send to the Israelites. But since he lists **grain, wine, and oil**, it may be more natural in your language to use a plural pronoun. Alternate translation: [of them] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

and I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **reproach**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [and I will no longer make the nations reproach you] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

Joel 2:20

the northerner

Yahweh is using the term **northerner** to refer to an invading army of some kind, by association with the direction from which invasions often came. It seems that this term is purposely vague so that it can refer to the current locust invasion as well as to a future military invasion on “the day of Yahweh” ([verse 11](#)). If possible, use a term that could refer to both. Alternate translation: [the invaders] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

a land of dryness and desolation

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas of **dryness** and **desolation**, you could express the same ideas in another way. Alternate translation: [a dry and desolate land] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

a land of dryness and desolation

The terms **dryness** and **desolation** 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: [a completely barren land] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

into & his face into the eastern sea and his back into the western sea

Yahweh is speaking of the invading army or locust swarm as if it were a living thing that had a **face** and a **back**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the invaders at the front of the group will fall into the eastern sea and die, and the invaders at the back of the group will fall into the western sea and die] (See: **Personification (p.167)**)

into & his face into the eastern sea and his back into the western sea

Yahweh is speaking to the Judeans from the perspective of their own culture and location. By **eastern sea**, he means the Dead Sea, and by **western sea**, he means the Mediterranean Sea. You could say that explicitly if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [his face into the Dead Sea and his back into the Mediterranean Sea] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

And his stench will rise, and his odor will rise

These two phrases mean 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. However, if this might be unclear in your language, you could connect the phrases with a word other than **and** in order to show that the second phrase is repeating the first one, not saying something additional. Alternatively, you could combine the phrases and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: [And his stench will rise, yes, his odor will rise] (See: **Parallelism (p.164)**)

he has been great in doing

This expression means “he has in some way done more than would be expected.” The implication is that the locust swarm has perhaps destroyed more crops than it ordinarily would, or that the army that will invade will be more destructive than usual. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [he has caused excessive destruction] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

for he has been great in doing

Some versions end the quotation that begins in [verse 19](#) before this clause. Other versions end that quotation after this clause. Some other versions do not end that quotation in this verse, so that it continues through [3:8](#). If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, you may wish to follow the quotation boundaries that it has. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to use the same boundaries as the ULT. (See:

Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.111))

Joel 2:21

Do not fear, land! Be glad and rejoice

Joel is speaking to the **land** as if it were a person who could hear him. He is doing this to show in a strong way how he feels about what Yahweh will do for the land. Joel is actually speaking to the people who can hear him. If your readers might not understand this kind of figurative speech, you could translate what Joel is saying as if he were speaking directly to the Judeans. Alternate translation: [You Judeans should not be afraid because of what has happened to the land. Be glad and rejoice] (See: **Apostrophe (p.95)**)

Be glad and rejoice

The terms **glad** and **rejoice** mean similar things. Joel 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: [Celebrate with great joy] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

Yahweh has been great in doing

Joel is using the past tense to describe something that is going to happen in the future in order to show that the event will certainly happen. If it would be clearer in your language, you could use the future tense. Alternate translation: [Yahweh will be great in doing] (See: **Predictive Past (p.173)**)

Yahweh has been great in doing

Unlike the use in the previous verse, here this expression means “he has done more good things for us than we would have imagined.” Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [Yahweh has done wonderful things] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

Joel 2:22

Do not fear, beasts of the field

Joel is once again speaking to the **beasts of the field** as if they were people who could hear him. He is doing this to show his Judean listeners in a strong way how he feels about what Yahweh will do for them by restoring the pastures and the trees. If your readers might not understand this kind of figurative speech, you could translate what Joel is saying as if he were speaking directly to the Judeans. Alternate translation: [You Judeans should also not be afraid of what will happen to the beasts of the field] (See: **Apostrophe (p.95)**)

the pastures of the wilderness have sprouted, for the tree has borne its fruit, the fig tree and the vine have yielded their strength

Joel is using the past tense to describe something that is going to happen in the future in order to show that the event will certainly happen. If it would be clearer in your language, you could use the future tense. Alternate translation: [the pastures of the wilderness will sprout, for the tree will bear its fruit, the fig tree and the vine will yield their strength] (See: **Predictive Past (p.173)**)

the tree has borne its fruit, the fig tree and the vine have yielded their strength

Joel is not referring to a specific **tree**, **fig tree**, or **vine**. He is referring to these plants in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using plural forms. Alternate translation: [the trees have borne their fruit, the fig trees and the vines have yielded their strength] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

their strength

Joel is using the term **strength** to mean the harvest, by association with the way the land has the capacity to produce crops. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [their harvest] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

Joel 2:23

And & sons of Zion

Joel is speaking as if **Zion**, meaning Jerusalem, were literally the mother of the people who lived in that city. Alternate translation: [residents of Zion] or [citizens of Jerusalem] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

your God

Since Joel and the people whom he is addressing worship the same God, it may be more natural in your language to say “our” instead of **your**. Languages that mark the distinction should use the inclusive form of “our.” Alternate translation: [our God] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

he has given to you the early rain for vindication and has brought down the shower to you

Joel is using the past tense to describe something that is going to happen in the future in order to show that the event will certainly happen. If it would be clearer in your language, you could use the future tense. Alternate translation: [he will give to you the early rain for vindication and will bring down the shower to you] (See: **Predictive Past (p.173)**)

for vindication

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **vindication**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [to vindicate you] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

the shower

Joel is not referring to a specific **shower**. He means showers in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [showers] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

the early rain and the late rain

Joel is speaking from the perspective of his own culture and location. By **early rain** he means the fall rains, and by **late rain** he means the spring rains. You could say that explicitly if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [the fall rains and the spring rains] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

in the first

Joel is speaking from the perspective of his own culture. By **in the first**, he could mean either (1) Alternate translation: [as at first] or [as before] or (2) Alternate translation: [in the first month of the year] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

Joel 2:24

and the vats will overflow {with} new wine and oil

Joel 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: [and the vats will be very full of new wine and oil] (See:

Hyperbole (p.137))

Joel 2:25

And I will restore to you the years

This verse begins a direct quotation from Yahweh. You may wish to indicate that in your translation, using a natural way of introducing direct quotations in your language. Alternate translation: [Then Yahweh said, “And I will restore to you the years] (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.177)**)

the years

Yahweh is using the term **years** by association to mean the crops produced in those years. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the crops] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

my great army

Yahweh is speaking of the locust swarm as if it were literally his **army**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the great swarm] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Joel 2:26

And eating, you will eat

Yahweh is repeating the verb “eat” in order to intensify the idea that it expresses. If your language can repeat words for intensification, it would be appropriate to do that here in your translation. If not, your language may have another way of expressing the emphasis. Alternate translation: [And you will eat abundantly] (See: **Reduplication (p.182)**)

the name of Yahweh your God

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 name. I am Yahweh your God] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.120)**)

the name of

Yahweh is using the term **name** to mean character or reputation, by association with the way a name represents a person’s identity. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the character] or [the reputation] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

who has done with you working wondrously

It might seem that the expression **who has done with you, working wondrously** contains extra information that would be unnatural to express in your language. If so, you can shorten it. Alternate translation: [who has done wondrously with you] or [who has done wonderful things for you] (See: **Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit (p.150)**)

and forever my people will not feel shame

The word translated as **forever** means “to indefinite futurity.” Alternate translation: [and for as long as anyone can imagine, my people will not feel shame] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

Joel 2:27

Israel

While it is not known precisely where or when Joel prophesied, he appears to have lived in the southern kingdom of Judah before the exile or in the province of Judah (Judea) after the exile. So the term **Israel** probably does not mean the northern kingdom of Israel. It seems to be a reference to the people of Judah as Israelites. Alternate translation: [the people of Israel] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

and forever my people will not feel shame

The word translated as **forever** means “to indefinite futurity.” Alternate translation: [and for as long as anyone can imagine, my people will not feel shame] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

Joel 2:28

And it will happen after this

Yahweh is using this phrase to introduce a new event in the story that he goes on to describe. Use a word, phrase, or other method in your language that is natural for introducing a new event. (See: **Introduction of a New Event (p.145)**)

I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh

Yahweh is speaking as if he would literally pour out his Spirit like a liquid. He means that he will give his Spirit generously. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [I will generously give my Spirit to very many people] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

on all flesh

Yahweh is using the term **flesh** to mean people, by association with the way human bodies are made of flesh. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [on very many people] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

on all flesh

Yahweh says **all** here as a generalization for emphasis. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a different way to express the emphasis. Alternate translation: [on very many people] (See: **Hyperbole (p.137)**)

and your sons and your daughters will prophesy

Yahweh is speaking of the two major components of something in order to mean everything it includes. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [all of your children will prophesy] (See: **Merism (p.152)**)

your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions

Yahweh is speaking of two things in order to refer to them and everything in between. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [your men of all ages will see prophetic images] (See: **Merism (p.152)**)

dreams

Joel assumes that his listeners will know that by **dreams** he means dreams with prophetic significance. You could say that explicitly if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [dreams with prophetic significance] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

Joel 2:29

And even on male servants and on female servants

Yahweh is speaking of two things in order to mean them and everything in between. This verse continues the thought of the previous verse, that the Spirit will come to a great variety of people. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [Yes, even on people of low social status and of both genders] (See: **Merism (p.152)**)

in those days

Yahweh is using the term **days** to mean a period of time, by association with the way days make up longer periods of time. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [at that time] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

I will pour out my Spirit

See how you translated this in [2:28](#). (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Joel 2:30

And I will give wonders

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **wonders**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [I will do wonderful things] or [I will do amazing things] (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.90))

Joel 2:31

The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood

Yahweh is speaking as if the sun and moon would literally turn into darkness and blood. He means that they will appear as they do during eclipses. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [The sun and the moon will appear as they do during eclipses] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [The sun will become darkness and the moon will become blood] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

and the moon into blood

Yahweh is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: [and the moon will be turned into blood] (See: **Ellipsis (p.115)**)

to the face of the coming of the great and terrible day of Yahweh

Here, **to the face of** is an idiom that means “before.” If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have that meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [before the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

the great and terrible 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 terrible day] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.120)**)

the great and terrible day of Yahweh

See how you translated the similar expression in [1:15](#). (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

Joel 2:32

And it will be

Yahweh is using this phrase to introduce a new or special event in the story that he goes on to describe. Use a word, phrase, or other method in your language that is natural for introducing a new or special event. Alternate translation: [And not only that] (See: **Introduction of a New Event (p.145)**)

everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved. & Yahweh

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: [Yahweh will save everyone who calls on his name] (See: **Active or Passive (p.92)**)

on the name of Yahweh & Yahweh

Yahweh is using one aspect of Yahweh, his **name**, to represent all of Yahweh. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express this meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [on Yahweh] (See: **Synecdoche (p.193)**)

on the name of Yahweh & 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 name] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.120)**)

For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be escape

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **escape**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem Yahweh will provide a way for people to escape] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem

The terms **Mount Zion** and **Jerusalem** 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: [in the holy city of Jerusalem] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

just as Yahweh has said

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: [as I have said] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.120)**)

Yahweh & and among the survivors whom Yahweh {is} calling

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 there will be escape among the survivors whom Yahweh is calling] (See: **Ellipsis (p.115)**)

Yahweh & whom Yahweh {is} calling

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: [whom I am calling] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.120)**)

Joel 3

Joel 3 Chapter Introduction

Structure and Formatting

In this chapter, Yahweh declares that he will judge the nations

The ULT sets the lines of this chapter farther to the right on the page than its usual text because it is poetry.

Textual Issues in This Chapter

In [3:1](#), Jewish scribes instructed synagogue readers to say “restore the fortunes” when they got to the phrase in this verse that the ULT translates as “return the captivity.” That suggests that the original reading may have been “restore the fortunes.” Some modern versions follow that reading. 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.

In [3:21](#), the traditional Hebrew text reads “I will acquit their blood ... I have not acquitted.” The ULT follows that reading. Some ancient versions suggest that the original reading may have been “I will avenge their blood ... I have not avenged.” Some modern versions follow that reading. 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.

Joel 3:1

For behold, in those days and at that time

This verse continues a direct quotation from Yahweh. You may wish to indicate that in your translation, using a natural way of continuing direct quotations in your language. Alternate translation: [Yahweh also said, “For behold, in those days and at that time] (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.177)**)

For behold

Yahweh is using the term **behold** to focus his listeners’ attention on what he is about to say. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [Now look] or [Now listen] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

in those days and at that time

The expressions **in those days** and **at that time** mean similar things. Yahweh is using the two expressions together for emphasis. If it would be clearer for your readers, you could express the emphasis with a single phrase. Alternate translation: [when that wonderful time comes] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

when I return the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **captivity**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

when I return the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem

See the discussion in the introduction to this chapter of an alternate reading for this phrase. Alternate translation: [when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem] (See: **Textual Variants (p.195)**)

Joel 3:2

the Valley of Jehoshaphat

The word **Jehoshaphat** is the name of a valley. In your translation, you could spell it the way it sounds in your language, as the ULT does, or you could use a word or phrase from your language that expresses the meaning of this name, which is “Yahweh judges.” Alternate translation: [the Valley of Yahweh-Judges] (See: **Copy or Borrow Words** (p.109))

my people and my inheritance, Israel

This phrase expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **inheritance** tells what kind of **people** the Israelites are to Yahweh. In this context, the word **inheritance** refers to a portion that someone would choose for himself. Alternate translation: [my chosen people, Israel] (See: **Hendiadys** (p.130))

and they divided up my land

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 because they divided up my land] (See: **Ellipsis** (p.115))

Joel 3:3

the lot

Yahweh is not referring to a specific **lot**. He means “lots” in general. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [lots] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

and they traded a boy for a prostitute, and they sold a girl

The words **a boy**, **a prostitute**, and **a girl** represent these people in general, not one particular boy or prostitute or girl. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a more natural expression. Alternate translation: [and they traded boys for prostitutes, and they sold girls] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

Joel 3:4

And indeed, what {are} you to me, Tyre, Sidon, and all of the regions of Philistia? Are you repaying a recompense to me? & you

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: [And indeed, you have nothing to hold against me, Tyre, Sidon, and all of the regions of Philistia! There is no recompense that you need to pay back to me!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.184)**)

what {are} you to me

This is an expression that a person in this culture would commonly use to ask another person why he was treating him with hostility. Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. You could also use plain language. Alternate translation: [what do you have against me] or [why are you treating me with hostility] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

Are you repaying a recompense to me? And if you are recompensing me

Yahweh is speaking as if the nations were literally paying him back for something bad that he had done to them. He is asking if they have a grudge against him that they are carrying out. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [Do you have some grudge against me that you are carrying out? And if you are carrying out a grudge against me] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

swiftly, speedily

The terms **swiftly** and **speedily** 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: [very quickly] (See: **Doublet (p.113)**)

I will return your recompense upon your head

Yahweh is using one part of a person, his **head**, to mean the entire person. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express this meaning with a more general term. Alternate translation: [I will turn your recompense onto you] or [I will directly pay you back] (See: **Synecdoche (p.193)**)

upon your head

Since Yahweh is referring to multiple nations, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form of **head**. Alternate translation: [onto your heads] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.100)**)

Joel 3:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Joel 3:6

And & the sons of Judah and the sons of Jerusalem

See how you translated the term **sons** in [2:23](#). Alternate translation: [the people who lived in the province of Judah and the city of Jerusalem] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

to the sons of Javan

Here the word **sons** does not mean literal first-generation offspring but “descendants.” The phrase **the sons of Javan** refers to the Ionians, that is, the Greeks. Alternate translation: [to the Greeks] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Javan

The word **Javan** is the name of a man. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.133)**)

in order to remove them far from their territory

While this phrase seems to describe a purpose or goal, it is actually describing a result. Alternate translation: [and as a result, they were removed far from their territory] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.103)**)

Joel 3:7

Behold me rousing them

As in [2:19](#), this expression means "I am going to rouse them." Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [But I am going to stir them up] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

where you sold them there

It may seem that this expression contains extra information that would be unnatural to express in your language. If so, you can shorten it. Alternate translation: [to which you sold them] (See: **Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit (p.150)**)

and I will return your recompense onto your head

See how you translated the same expression in [3:4](#). (See: **Synecdoche (p.193)**)

onto your head

Since Yahweh is referring to multiple nations, it might be more natural in your language to use the plural form of "head." Alternate translation: [onto your heads] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.100)**)

Joel 3:8

For I will sell

Yahweh is using the word **For** to introduce more specific information about what he described in the previous verse. Alternate translation: [This will happen when I sell] (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.105)**)

into the hand of the sons of Judah

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: [into the hands of the sons of Judah] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.100)**)

For I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah

Yahweh is using one part of a person, the **hand**, to represent the whole person in the act of taking possession of something. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express this meaning with more general terms. Alternate translation: [For I will sell your sons and your daughters to the sons of Judah] (See: **Synecdoche (p.193)**)

the sons of Judah

Here the word **sons** does not mean literal first-generation offspring but “descendants.” The phrase **the sons of Judah** refers to the Judeans. Alternate translation: [the Judeans] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

to the Sabeans

The word **Sabeans** is the name of a people group. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.133)**)

to a faraway nation.” For Yahweh has spoken

The phrase **For Yahweh has spoken** indicates that this is a direct quotation from Yahweh. You may wish to indicate that in your translation, using a natural way of introducing direct quotations in your language. Alternate translation: [to a faraway nation,” says Yahweh] (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.177)**)

Joel 3:9

Proclaim

The imperative **Proclaim** is plural here, so use the plural form in your translation if your language marks that distinction. Joel is addressing generally all those who would be in a position to make this proclamation. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.124)**)

Consecrate a war

Joel assumes that his listeners will know that by **Consecrate a war** he means to perform the rites with which they would begin a war. You could say that explicitly if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [Perform the rites with which you would begin a war] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.97)**)

Joel 3:10

your plowshares

The word **plowshares** describes blades for plows, which are tools used to break up soil for planting. If your readers would not be familiar with what a plowshare is, in your translation you could use the name of a similar thing that your readers would recognize, or you could use a general expression. Alternate translation: [your plow blades] or [your farming tools] (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.197)**)

and your pruning hooks

The expression **pruning hooks** describes curved blades used for trimming trees and vines. If your readers would not be familiar with what a pruning hook is, in your translation you could use the name of a similar thing that your readers would recognize, or you could use a general expression. Alternate translation: [your curved trimming blades] or [your gardening tools] (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.197)**)

Let the weak say, I {am} strong

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate this so that there is not a quotation within a quotation. Alternate translation: [Let the weak say that they are strong] (See: **Quotes within Quotes (p.179)**)

the weak

Joel is using the adjective **weak** 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: [anyone who is weak] (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.162)**)

Joel 3:11

Hurry and come

This phrase expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **Hurry** tells in what way the nations should **come**. Alternate translation: [Come quickly] (See: **Hendiadys (p.130)**)

Joel 3:12

Let the nations rouse themselves

Most versions treat [verses 12](#) and [13](#) as a direct quotation of Yahweh, but some do not. If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, you may wish to follow the quotation boundaries that it has. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to use the same boundaries as the ULT. (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.111)**)

the Valley of Jehoshaphat

See how you translated this name in [3:2](#). (See: **Copy or Borrow Words (p.109)**)

will I sit to judge

To **sit to judge** means to sit down as a symbolic action that represents taking an official position of authority to make judgments. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could explain the significance of this action. Alternate translation: [I will take my place as judge] (See: **Symbolic Action (p.191)**)

Joel 3:13

Stretch out the sickle, for the harvest has ripened. & for

Yahweh is speaking as if he literally wanted the “warriors” mentioned in 3:11 to harvest grain. He means that he wants them to punish the nations. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [Strike the nations, just as harvesters cut down grain with a sickle] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Stretch out the sickle

Yahweh is using the first action that someone would do in order to use a sickle, **Stretch** it out, to refer to the entire act of using it. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [Use the sickle] (See: **Synecdoche (p.193)**)

Stretch out the sickle

Yahweh is not referring to a specific **sickle**. He means the sickles that his “warriors” of **verse 11** symbolically have. It may be more natural in your language to express this meaning by using a plural form. Alternate translation: [Use your sickles] (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.126)**)

Stretch out

The imperatives **Stretch out**, **Come**, and **go down** are plural here, so use the plural form in your translation if your language marks that distinction. These imperatives seems to be addressing the “warriors” mentioned in 3:11. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.124)**)

Come, go down, for the winepress is full

Yahweh is speaking as if he literally wanted those “warriors” to press grapes. He means once again that he wants them to punish the nations. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [Yes, come and punish the nations, just as harvesters tread down the grapes that fill a winepress] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

for & for their wickedness is

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: [for they are very wicked] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

Joel 3:14

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, & in the valley of

Joel is repeating the word **multitudes** in order to intensify the idea that it expresses. If your language can repeat words for intensification, it would be appropriate to do that here in your translation. If not, your language may have another way of expressing the emphasis. Alternate translation: [Vast multitudes in the valley of decision] (See: **Reduplication (p.182)**)

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, & in the valley of

Joel 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: [Multitudes, multitudes are in the valley of decision] (See: **Ellipsis (p.115)**)

in the valley of decision, & in the valley of

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **decision**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [in the valley where I will decide their fate] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

Joel 3:15

The sun and the moon become dark, and the stars withdraw their brightness

These are the same phrases as in [2:10](#), where Joel used them to describe the locust swarm blocking the light of the sun, moon, and stars. Here, in Joel's description of the final judgment, these phrases could: (1) have a literal meaning, describing how the creation will disintegrate at the end of history. See the UST. Or (2) be symbolic of earthly rulers and nations losing their power. Alternate translation: [All earthly powers fade before the power of Yahweh] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

and the stars withdraw their brightness

See how you translated the same expression in [2:10](#). (See: **Personification (p.167)**)

Joel 3:16

Yahweh will roar from Zion

Joel is speaking as if Yahweh would literally **roar** like a lion. He means that Yahweh will powerfully proclaim his judgments. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [Yahweh will powerfully proclaim his judgments from Zion, just as a lion roars powerfully] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

and the heavens and the earth will shake

Joel is speaking as if the **heavens** and the **earth** would literally shake. This could be: (1) a literal description of how the creation will disintegrate at the end of history. See the UST. Or (2) a symbolic description of how powers on earth and in heaven will give way before the power of Yahweh. Alternate translation: [Yes, powers on earth and in heaven will give way before the power of Yahweh] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

But Yahweh {will be} a shelter for his people and a stronghold for the sons of Israel

Joel is describing Yahweh as a **shelter** and a **stronghold**. He means that Yahweh will protect his people. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [But Yahweh will protect his people, yes, he will guard the sons of Israel] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

for the sons of Israel

See how you translated the term **sons** in [2:23](#). Alternate translation: [the people of Israel] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

Joel 3:17

Then you will know

This verse begins a direct quotation from Yahweh. You may wish to indicate that in your translation, using a natural way of introducing direct quotations in your language. Alternate translation: [He says, "Then you will know] (See: **Quotations and Quote Margins (p.177)**)

the mountain of my holiness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **holiness**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: [my holy mountain] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

Joel 3:18

And it will be on that day

Some versions do not treat this verse as part of the direct quotation of Yahweh in 3:17–21. If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, you may wish to follow the quotation boundaries that it has. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to use the same boundaries as the ULT. (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.111)**)

on that day

Yahweh is using the term **day** to mean a specific time, by association with the way a day is a specific period of time. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [at that time] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

the mountains will drip sweet wine, and the hills will flow {with} milk

Yahweh is describing the **mountains** and **hills** as producing **wine** and **milk**. He means that the land will be very productive. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the grapevines on the mountains will produce grapes for wine abundantly, and the pastures on the hills will nourish cattle that will produce much milk] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

and a spring will go forth

In a context such as this, your language might say “come” instead of **go**. Alternate translation: [and a spring will come out] (See: **Go and Come (p.128)**)

and a spring

Yahweh is using the term **spring** by association to mean the water that comes from a spring. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [water from a spring] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

from the house of Yahweh

See how you translated the same expression in 1:9. Alternate translation: [from the temple of Yahweh] (See: **Metaphor (p.154)**)

the Valley of Shittim

The word **Shittim** is the name of a valley. In your translation, you could spell it the way it sounds in your language, as the ULT does, or you could use a word or phrase from your language that expresses the meaning of this name. Alternate translation: [the Valley of the Acacias] (See: **Copy or Borrow Words (p.109)**)

Joel 3:19

Egypt will become 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: [Egypt will become desolate] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.90)**)

for the violence of the sons of Judah

Yahweh is using this possessive form to describe not **violence** that the **sons of Judah** committed but violence that was committed against them. It may be helpful to clarify this for your readers. Alternate translation: [for the violence that they committed against the sons of Judah] (See: **Possession (p.169)**)

they shed innocent blood

Yahweh is using the term **blood** to mean the lives of people, by association with the way people's blood may be shed when they are killed. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [killed innocent people] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

in their land

The word **their** could refer to: (1) **the sons of Judah**, and would mean that the violence was done in Judah. Alternate translation: [in the land of Judah] or (2) **Egypt** and **Edom**, and would mean that the violence was done in those countries. Alternate translation: [in their lands] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.175)**)

Joel 3:20

But Judah

Yahweh is using the term **Judah** by association to mean the people living in Judah. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [the people of Judah] (See: **Metonymy (p. 160)**)

and Jerusalem to generation and generation

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 Jerusalem will dwell to generation and generation] (See: **Ellipsis (p.115)**)

to generation and generation

Like the expression in [2:2](#), this means “for a very long time.” Your language may have a comparable expression that you can use in your translation. Alternate translation: [for all generations to come] (See: **Idiom (p.141)**)

Joel 3:21

And I will acquit their blood {that} I have not acquitted

See the discussion in the introduction to this chapter of an alternate reading for this phrase. Alternate translation: [And I will avenge their blood {that} I have not avenged] (See: **Textual Variants (p.195)**)

their blood

Yahweh is using the term **blood** to mean the deaths of people, by association with the loss of blood that usually occurs when people die violently. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [their deaths] (See: **Metonymy (p.160)**)

for Yahweh {is} dwelling in Zion

Some versions do not treat this clause as part of the direct quotation of Yahweh in [3:17–21](#). If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, you may wish to follow the quotation boundaries that it has. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to use the same boundaries as the ULT. (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.111)**)

for Yahweh {is} dwelling in Zion

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: [for I am dwelling in Zion] (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.120)**)



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Version 86

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: [Joel 1:7](#); [Joel 1:8](#); [Joel 1:15](#); [Joel 2:1](#); [Joel 2:3](#); [Joel 2:13](#); [Joel 2:14](#); [Joel 2:17](#); [Joel 2:19](#); [Joel 2:20](#); [Joel 2:23](#); [Joel 2:30](#); [Joel 2:32](#); [Joel 3:1](#); [Joel 3:13](#); [Joel 3:14](#); [Joel 3:17](#); [Joel 3:19](#)

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: Joel 1:5; Joel 1:8; Joel 1:9; Joel 1:10; Joel 1:12; Joel 1:13; Joel 1:16; Joel 1:17; Joel 1:18; Joel 2:2; Joel 2:5; Joel 2:31; Joel 2:32

Apostrophe

Description

An apostrophe is a figure of speech in which a speaker turns his attention away from his listeners and speaks to someone or something that he knows cannot hear him. He does this to tell his listeners his message or feelings about that person or thing in a very strong way.

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use apostrophe, and readers could be confused by it. They may wonder who the speaker is talking to, or think that the speaker is crazy to talk to things or people who cannot hear.

Examples from the Bible

Mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on you. (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

King Saul was killed on Mount Gilboa, and David sang a sad song about it. By telling these mountains that he wanted them to have no dew or rain, he showed how sad he was.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to you. (Luke 13:34a ULT)

Jesus was expressing his feelings for the people of Jerusalem in front of his disciples and a group of Pharisees. By speaking directly to Jerusalem as though its people could hear him, Jesus showed how deeply he cared about them.

He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh: "**Altar, altar!** This is what Yahweh says, 'See, ... on you they will burn human bones.'" (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)

The man of God spoke as if the altar could hear him, but he really wanted the king, who was standing there, to hear him.

Translation Strategies

If apostrophe would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. But if this way of speaking would be confusing to your people, let the speaker continue speaking to the people that are listening to him as he tells **them** his message or feelings about the people or thing that cannot hear him. See the example below.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh: "**Altar, altar!** This is what Yahweh says, 'See, ... on you they will burn human bones.'" (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)

He said this about the altar: "This is what Yahweh says **about this altar**. 'See, ... they will burn people's bones on **it**.'"

Mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on **you**. (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

As for these mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on **them**.

"

Referenced in: [Joel 2:21](#); [Joel 2:22](#)

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: Joel 1:6; Joel 1:8; Joel 1:13; Joel 2:1; Joel 2:6; Joel 2:8; Joel 2:15; Joel 2:16; Joel 2:20; Joel 2:23; Joel 2:26; Joel 2:27; Joel 2:28; Joel 3:9

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: [Joel 1:5](#); [Joel 2:12](#); [Joel 3:4](#); [Joel 3:7](#); [Joel 3:8](#)

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.

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Referenced in: [Introduction to Joel](#); [Joel 1:5](#); [Joel 3:6](#)

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: [Joel 1:6](#); [Joel 3:8](#)

Copy or Borrow Words

Description

Sometimes the Bible includes things that are not part of your culture and for which your language may not have a word. The Bible also includes people and places for which you may not have names.

When that happens you can “borrow” the word from the Bible in a familiar language and use it in your translation in your own language. This means that you basically copy it from the other language. This page tells how to “borrow” words. (There are also other ways to translate words for things that are not in your language. See [Translate Unknowns](#).)

This page answers the question: *What does it mean to borrow words from another language and how can I do it?*

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

[Translate Unknowns \(UTA PDF\)](#)

Examples From the Bible

Seeing one fig tree along the roadside, he went to it. (Matthew 21:19a ULT)

If there are no fig trees where your language is spoken, there might not be a name for this kind of tree in your language.

Above him were the **seraphim**; each one had six wings; with two each covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. (Isaiah 6:2 ULT)

Your language might not have a name for this kind of creature.

The declaration of the word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of **Malachi**. (Malachi 1:1 ULT)

Malachi might not be a name that people who speak your language use.

Translation Strategies

There are several things to be aware of when borrowing words from another language.

- Different languages use different scripts, such as the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Cyrillic, Devanagari, and Korean scripts. These scripts use different shapes to represent the letters in their alphabets.
- Languages that use the same script might pronounce the letters in that script differently. For example, when speaking German, people pronounce the letter “j” the same way that people pronounce the letter “y” when speaking English.
- Languages do not all have the same sounds or combinations of sounds. For example, many languages do not have the soft “th” sound in the English word “think,” and some languages cannot start a word with a combination of sounds like “st” as in “stop.”

There are several ways to borrow a word.

- (1) If your language uses a different script from the language you are translating from, you can simply substitute each letter shape with the corresponding letter shape of the script of your language.
- (2) You can spell the word as the Other Language spells it, and pronounce it the way your language normally pronounces those letters.
- (3) You can pronounce the word similarly to the way the Other Language does, and adjust the spelling to fit the rules of your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If your language uses a different script from the language you are translating from, you can simply substitute each letter shape with the corresponding letter shape of the script of your language.

.A man's name in Hebrew letters — זְפַנְיָהּ
"Zephaniah" — The same name in Roman letters

(2) You can spell the word as the Other Language spells it, and pronounce it the way your language normally pronounces those letters.

Zephaniah — This is a man's name.
"Zephaniah" — The name as it is spelled in English, but you can pronounce it according to the rules of your language.

(3) You can pronounce the word similarly to the way the Other Language does, and adjust the spelling to fit the rules of your language.

Zephaniah — If your language does not have the "z," you could use "s." If your writing system does not use "ph" you could use "f." Depending on how you pronounce the "i" you could spell it with "i" or "ai" or "ay."
"Sefania"
"Sefanaia"
"Sefanaya"

"

Referenced in: [Joel 3:2](#); [Joel 3:12](#); [Joel 3:18](#)

Direct and Indirect Quotations

Description

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

He commanded him to tell no one, but **to go and show himself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for his cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.**

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

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

He commanded him, **“Tell no one.** But go and show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”

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

Next we recommend you learn about:

Quotes within Quotes ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Joel 2:13](#); [Joel 2:20](#); [Joel 3:12](#); [Joel 3:18](#); [Joel 3:21](#)

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: [Joel 1:16](#); [Joel 2:2](#); [Joel 2:14](#); [Joel 2:20](#); [Joel 2:21](#); [Joel 2:32](#); [Joel 3:1](#); [Joel 3:4](#)

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: [Joel 1:3](#); [Joel 1:16](#); [Joel 2:2](#); [Joel 2:5](#); [Joel 2:31](#); [Joel 2:32](#); [Joel 3:2](#); [Joel 3:14](#); [Joel 3:20](#)

Exclamations

Description

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

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

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

Sentence Types ([UTA PDF](#))

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

”

Referenced in: [Joel 1:15](#); [Joel 1:18](#)

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: [Joel 2:26](#); [Joel 2:31](#); [Joel 2:32](#); [Joel 3:21](#)

Forms of 'You' — Formal or Informal

(You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_youform.)

Description

Some languages make a distinction between the formal form of "you" and the informal form of "you." This page is primarily for people whose language makes this distinction.

This page answers the question: *What are the formal and informal "you"?*

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

Forms of You ([UTA PDF](#))

Pronouns ([UTA PDF](#))

In some cultures people use the formal "you" when speaking to someone who is older or in authority, and they use the informal "you" when speaking to someone who is their own age or younger or who has less authority. In other cultures, people use the formal "you" when speaking to strangers or people they do not know well, and the informal "you" when speaking with family members and close friends.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. These languages do not have formal and informal forms of "you."
- English and many other source languages do not have formal and informal forms of "you."
- Translators who use a source text in a language that does have formal and informal forms of "you" will need to understand how those forms are used in that language. The rules in that language may not be exactly the same as the rules in the translator's language.
- Translators will need to understand the relationship between two speakers in order to choose the appropriate form in their language.
- Use of "you" by people speaking to Jesus is sometimes particularly difficult for translators. Because Jesus is God, some will want to always use the formal form when people are speaking to him, but it is important to recognize the actual relationship and feelings towards Jesus. Pharisees and Sadducees became Jesus' enemies early on and would have been unlikely to have spoken with particular respect to him. Also, when Jesus was with Pilate, he was treated as a criminal, not with respect.

Translation Principles

- Understand the relationship between a speaker and the person or people he is speaking to.
- Understand the speaker's attitude toward the person he is speaking to.
- Choose the form in your language that is appropriate for that relationship and attitude.

Examples From the Bible

Yahweh God called to the man and said to him, "Where are **you**?" (Genesis 3:9 ULT)

God is in authority over the man, so languages that have formal and informal forms of "you" would probably use the informal form here.

It seemed good to me also, having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, to write for **you** an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, so that **you** might know the certainty concerning the things that **you** have been taught. (Luke 1:3-4 ULT)

Luke called Theophilus "most excellent." This shows us that Theophilus was probably a high official to whom Luke was showing great respect. Speakers of languages that have a formal form of "you" would probably use that form here.

‘Our Father who is in heaven, may **your** name be honored as holy.’ (Matthew 6:9b ULT)

This is part of a prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. Some cultures would use the formal “you” because God is in authority. Other cultures would use the informal “you” because God is our Father.

Translation Strategies

Translators whose language has formal and informal forms of “you” will need to understand the relationship between two speakers in order to choose the appropriate form of “you” in their language.

Deciding whether to use the formal or informal “You”

Pay attention to the relationships between the speakers.

- Is one speaker in authority over the other?
- Is one speaker older than the other?
- Are the speakers family members, relatives, friends, strangers, or enemies?

If you have a Bible in a language that has formal and informal forms of “you,” see what forms it uses. Remember, though, that the rules in that language might be different than the rules in your language.

Translation Strategies Applied

English does not have formal and informal forms of “you,” so we cannot show in English how to translate using formal and informal forms of “you.” Please see the examples and discussion above.

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

Forms of 'You' — Singular ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Joel 1:19](#); [Joel 1:20](#)

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: [Joel 1:3](#); [Joel 2:12](#); [Joel 3:9](#); [Joel 3:13](#)

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: [Joel 1:4](#); [Joel 1:10](#); [Joel 1:11](#); [Joel 1:12](#); [Joel 1:18](#); [Joel 1:19](#); [Joel 2:1](#); [Joel 2:7](#); [Joel 2:22](#); [Joel 2:23](#); [Joel 3:3](#); [Joel 3:13](#)

Go and Come

Description

This page answers the question: *What do I do if the word "go" or "come" is confusing in a certain sentence?*

Different languages have different ways of determining whether to use the words "go" or "come" and whether to use the words "take" or "bring" when talking about motion. For example, when saying that they are approaching a person who has called them, English speakers say "I'm coming," while Spanish speakers say "I'm going." You will need to study the context in order to understand what is meant by the words "go" and "come" (and also "take" and "bring"), and then translate those words in a way that your readers will understand which direction people are moving in.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of talking about motion. The biblical languages or your source language may use the words "go" and "come" or "take" and "bring" differently than your language uses them. If these words are not translated in the way that is natural in your language, your readers may be confused about which direction people are moving.

Examples From the Bible

Yahweh said to Noah, "**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark." (Genesis 7:1 ULT)

In some languages, this would lead people to think that Yahweh was in the ark.

But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you.
Then you will be free from my oath. (Genesis 24:41 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to his servant. Abraham's relatives lived far away from where he and his servant were standing and he wanted his servant to **go** to them, not **come** toward Abraham.

When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ... (Deuteronomy 17:14a ULT)

Moses is speaking to the people in the wilderness. They had not yet gone into the land that God was giving them. In some languages, it would make more sense to say, "When you have **gone** into the land ..."

They **brought** him up to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (Luke 2:22b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to say that they **took** or **carried** Jesus to the temple.

Then see, there was a man whose name was Jairus, and he was a leader of the synagogue. And falling at the feet of Jesus, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

The man was not at his house when he spoke to Jesus. He wanted Jesus to **go** with him to his house.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to ask what did you come out to see.

Translation Strategies

If the word used in the ULT would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other strategies.

- (1) Use the word “go,” “come,” “take,” or “bring” that would be natural in your language.
- (2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the word “go,” “come,” “take,” or “bring” that would be natural in your language.

But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you.
(Genesis 24:41 ULT)

But you will be free from my oath if you **go** to my relatives and they will not give her to you.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

What did you come out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

- (2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ... (Deuteronomy 17:14 ULT)

“When you have **arrived** in the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ...”

Yahweh said to Noah, “**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark ...” (Genesis 7:1 ULT)

Yahweh said to Noah, “**Enter**, you and all your household, into the ark ...”

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

What did you travel out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

”

Referenced in: [Joel 3:18](#)

Hendiadys

Description

In a hendiadys, a speaker uses two words that mean different things and that are connected with “and.” These two words work together to express a single idea. Usually one of the words is the primary idea and the other word further describes the primary one.

This page answers the question: *What is hendiadys and how can I translate phrases that have it?*

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

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

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

... his own **kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

Though “kingdom” and “glory” are both nouns, “glory” actually tells what kind of kingdom it is: it is a **kingdom of glory** or **a glorious kingdom**.

Two phrases connected by “and” can also be a hendiadys when they refer to a single person, thing, or event.

while we look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

Titus 2:13 contains two hendiadyses. “The blessed hope” and “appearing of the glory” refer to the same thing and serve to strengthen the idea that the return of Jesus Christ is greatly anticipated and wonderful. Also, “our great God” and “Savior Jesus Christ” refer to one person, not two.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Often a hendiadys contains an abstract noun. Some languages may not have a noun with the same meaning.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that the second word is further describing the first one.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that only one person or thing is meant, not two.

Examples From the Bible

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

“A mouth” and “wisdom” are nouns, but in this figure of speech “wisdom” describes what comes from the mouth.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

“Willing” and “obedient” are adjectives, but “willing” describes “obedient.”

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.
- (2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.
- (3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.
- (4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the

other.

(5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

For I will give you **wise words** ...

Walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own glorious kingdom**.

(2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

for I will give you **words of wisdom**.

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own kingdom of glory**.

(3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

If you are **willingly obedient** ...

(4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the other.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

The adjective "obedient" can be substituted with the verb "obey."

if you **obey willingly** ...

(4) and (5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

We look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

The noun "glory" can be changed to the adjective "glorious" to make it clear that Jesus' appearing is what we hope for. Also, "Jesus Christ" can be moved to the front of the phrase and "great God and Savior" put into a relative clause that describes the one person, Jesus Christ.

We look forward to receiving **what we are longing for, the blessed and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, who is our great God and Savior**.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Doublet ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Joel 2:19](#); [Joel 3:2](#); [Joel 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: [Joel 1:1](#); [Joel 1:15](#); [Joel 3:6](#); [Joel 3:8](#)

Hyperbole

Description

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

It rains here every night.

The speaker means this as literally true if he means that it really does rain here every night.

The speaker means this as a **generalization** if he means that it rains here most nights.

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

This page answers the question: *What are hyperboles? What are generalizations? How can I translate them?*

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

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

Hyperbole

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

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

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

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

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

Generalization

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers need to be able to understand whether or not a statement is literally true.

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

Examples From the Bible

Examples of Hyperbole

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Examples of Generalization

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

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

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

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

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

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

Caution

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Express the meaning without the exaggeration.

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

The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and **a great number of troops**.

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

The one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame. (Proverbs 13:18a ULT)

In general, the one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame

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

And when you pray, do not make useless repetitions as the Gentiles **generally** do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.

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

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

Almost all the country of Judea and **almost all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. or:

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

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

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

The country of Judea and the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

"

Referenced in: [Joel 1:6](#); [Joel 1:12](#); [Joel 2:2](#); [Joel 2:3](#); [Joel 2:10](#); [Joel 2:24](#); [Joel 2:28](#)

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: [Joel 1:1](#); [Joel 1:5](#); [Joel 1:9](#); [Joel 2:2](#); [Joel 2:7](#); [Joel 2:8](#); [Joel 2:13](#); [Joel 2:19](#); [Joel 2:20](#); [Joel 2:21](#); [Joel 2:31](#); [Joel 3:4](#); [Joel 3:7](#); [Joel 3:20](#)

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: [Joel 2:15](#)

Introduction of a New Event

Description

When people tell a story, they tell about an event or a series of events. Often they put certain information at the beginning of the story, such as who the story is about, when it happened, and where it happened. This information that the writer gives before the events of the story begin is called the setting of the story. Some new events in a story also have a setting because they might involve new people, new times, and new places. In some languages, people also tell if they saw the event or heard about it from someone else.

This page answers the question: *How do we introduce a new event in a story?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

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

When your people tell about events, what information do they give at the beginning? Is there a certain order that they put it in? In your translation, you will need to follow the way your language introduces new information at the beginning of a story or a new event rather than the way the source language did that. In this way your translation will sound natural and communicate clearly in your language.

Examples From the Bible

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, **there was a certain priest named Zechariah**, from the division of Abijah. And **his wife was** from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (Luke 1:5 ULT)

The verses above introduce a story about Zechariah. The first bolded phrase tells when it happened, and the next two bolded phrases introduce the main people. The next two verses go on to explain that Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and did not have any children. All of this is the setting. Then the phrase “And it happened that” in Luke 1:8 helps to introduce the first event in this story:

And it happened that in his performing as priest before God, in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, he came up by lot to enter into the temple of the Lord to burn incense. (Luke 1:8-9 ULT)

The birth of Jesus Christ happened in the following way. His mother, Mary, was engaged to marry Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18 ULT)

The bolded sentence above makes it explicit that a story about Jesus is being introduced. The story will tell about how the birth of Jesus happened.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, learned men from the east arrived in Jerusalem. (Matthew 2:1 ULT)

The bolded phrase above shows that the events concerning the learned men happened **after** Jesus was born.

Now in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. (Matthew 3:1-22 ULT)

The bolded phrase above shows that John the Baptist came preaching around the time of the previous events. It is probably very general and refers to when Jesus lived in Nazareth.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River to John, to be baptized by him. (Matthew 3:13 ULT)

The word “then” shows that Jesus came to the Jordan River some time after the events in the previous verses.

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

The author first introduced the new person and then told about what he did and when he did it. In some languages, it might be more natural to tell about the time first.

6 Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. 7 Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives went into the ark together because of the waters of the flood. (Genesis 7:6-7 ULT)

Verse 6 is a statement of the events that happen in the rest of chapter 7. Chapter 6 already told about how God told Noah that there would be a flood, and how Noah prepared for it. Chapter 7 verse 6 introduces the part of the story that tells about Noah and his family and the animals going into the ship, the rain starting, and the rain flooding the earth. Some languages might need to make it clear that this verse simply introduces the event, or move this verse after verse 7. Verse 6 is not one of the events of the story. The people went into the ship before the flood came.

Translation Strategies

If the information given at the beginning of a new event is clear and natural to your readers, consider translating it as it is in the ULT or UST. If not, consider one of these strategies:

- (1) Put the information that introduces the event in the order that your people put it.
- (2) If readers would expect certain information but it is not in the Bible, consider using an indefinite word or phrase to fill in that information, such as: "another time" or "someone."
- (3) If the introduction is a summary of the whole event, use your language's way of showing that it is a summary.
- (4) If it would be strange in the target language to give a summary of the event at the beginning, indicate that the event would actually happen later in the story.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Put the information that introduces the event in the order that your people put it.

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

There was a **man whose name was Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Council**. One night he came to Jesus.

One night **a man named Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Council**, came to Jesus.

As he passed by, **he saw Levi the son of Alpheus, sitting** at the tax collector's tent, and he said to him ... (Mark 2:14a ULT)

As he passed by, **Levi the son of Alpheus was sitting** at the tax collector's tent. Jesus saw him and said to him ...

As he passed by, **there was a man sitting** at the tax collector's tent. His name was Levi, and he was the son of Alpheus. Jesus saw him and said to him ...

As he passed by, **there was a tax collector** sitting at the tax collector's tent. His name was Levi, and he was the son of Alpheus. Jesus saw him and said to him ...

(2) If readers would expect certain information, but it is not in the Bible, consider using an indefinite word or phrase such as “another time,” or “someone.”

Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6 ULT) — If people expect to be told something about when the new event happened, the phrase “after that” can help them see that it happened after the events already mentioned.

After that, when Noah was 600 years old, the flood came upon the earth.

Again he began to teach beside the sea. (Mark 4:1a ULT) — In chapter 3 Jesus was teaching at someone’s house. Readers may need to be told that this new event happened at another time, or that Jesus actually went to the sea.

Another time Jesus began to teach people again beside the sea.

Jesus went to the sea and **began to teach people again** there.

(3) If the introduction is a summary of the whole event, use your language’s way of showing that it is a summary.

Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6 ULT)

Now this is what happened when Noah was 600 years old and the flood came upon the earth.

This part tells about what happened when the flood came upon the earth. It happened when Noah was 600 years old.

(4) If it would be strange in the target language to give a summary of the event at the beginning, show that the event will actually happen later in the story.

Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives went into the ark together because of the waters of the flood. (Genesis 7:6-7 ULT)

Now this is what happened when Noah was 600 years old. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives went into the ark together because **God had said that the waters of the flood would come.**

Next we recommend you learn about:

Background Information ([UTA PDF](#))

Introduction of New and Old Participants ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Joel 2:28](#); [Joel 2:32](#)

Litany

Description

A litany is a figure of speech in which the various components of a thing are listed in a series of very similar statements. The speaker does this to indicate that what he is saying should be understood as comprehensive and without exceptions. In a sense, the speaker is describing an overwhelming situation by overwhelming his audience with an excessive series of statements.

This page answers the question: *What is the figure of speech called litany?*

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany.
- (2) You can put each sentence of the litany on a separate line. Also, if each sentence in the litany has two parts, you can format the litany so that the equivalent parts of each sentence line up. Use this or any other type of formatting that will show that each sentence is reinforcing the same meaning.
- (3) You can eliminate words like “and,” “but,” and “or” at the beginning of sentences so that it will be clearer that the component parts of the litany are all being listed in a row.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) combined with (3):

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

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

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

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

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

(1) combined with (2):

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

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

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

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

(Amos 9:1b-4 ULT)

In the above example, the sentence before the litany explains its overall meaning. That sentence can be placed as an introduction. The second half of each sentence can be formatted in a descending staircase pattern as above, or lined up evenly like the first half of each sentence, or in another way. Use whatever format best shows that these sentences are all communicating the same truth, that it is not possible to escape from God.

”

Referenced in: [Introduction to Joel](#); [Joel 1:4](#); [Joel 2:9](#)

Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit

Description

Some languages have ways of saying things that are natural for them but sound strange when translated into Other Languages. One of the reasons for this is that some languages say things explicitly that some Other Languages would leave as implicit information.

This page answers the question: *What can I do if some of the explicit information seems confusing, unnatural, or unnecessary in our language?*

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

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

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

If you translate all of the explicit information from the source language into the explicit information in the target language, it could sound foreign, unnatural, or perhaps even unintelligent if the target language would not make that information explicit. Instead, it is best to leave that kind of information implicit in the target language.

Examples from the Bible

And Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower **to burn it with fire**. (Judges 9:52 ESV)

In Biblical Hebrew, it is normal to start most sentences with a conjunction such as “and” to show the connection between sentences. In English, it is not natural to do so, it is quite tiresome for the English reader, and it gives the impression that the author is uneducated. In English, it is best to leave the idea of connection between sentences implicit in most cases and not translate the conjunction explicitly.

In Biblical Hebrew, it is normal to say that something was burned with fire. In English, the idea of fire is included in the action of burning, and so it is unnatural to state both ideas explicitly. It is enough to say that something was burned and leave the idea of fire implicit.

But the centurion **answered and said**, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof” (Matthew 8:8a ULT)

In the biblical languages, it was normal to introduce direct speech with two verbs of speaking. One verb indicated the action, and the other introduced the words of the speaker. English speakers do not do this, so it is very unnatural and confusing to use two verbs. For the English speaker, the idea of speaking is included in the idea of answering. Using two verbs in English implies two separate speeches, rather than just one. So in English, it is better to use only one verb of speaking.

Translation Strategies

- (1) If the explicit information of the source language sounds natural in the target language, then translate it as explicit information.
- (2) If the explicit information does not sound natural in the target language or seems unnecessary or confusing, leave the explicit information implicit. Only do this if the reader can understand this information from the context. You can test this by asking the reader a question about the passage.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the explicit information of the source language sounds natural in the target language, then translate it as explicit information.

- There would be no change to the text using this strategy, so no examples are given here.

(2) If the explicit information does not sound natural in the target language or seems unnecessary or confusing, make the explicit information implicit. Only do this if the reader can understand this information from the context. You can test this by asking the reader a question about the passage.

And Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower **to burn it with fire**. (Judges 9:52 ESV)

Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it, and he approached the door of the tower **to burn it**. (Or) ... **to set it on fire**.

In English, it is clear that the action of this verse follows the action of the previous verse without the use of the connector “and” at the beginning, so it was omitted. Also, the words “with fire” were left out, because this information is communicated implicitly by the word “burn.” An alternative translation for “to burn it” is “to set it on fire.” It is not natural in English to use both “burn” and “fire,” so the English translator should choose only one of them. You can test if the readers understood the implicit information by asking, “How would the door burn?” If they knew it was by fire, then they have understood the implicit information. Or, if you chose the second option, you could ask, “What happens to a door that is set on fire?” If the readers answer, “It burns,” then they have understood the implicit information.

But the centurion **answered and said**, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof” (Matthew 8:8a ULT)

The centurion **answered**, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof”

In English, the information that the centurion responded by speaking is included in the verb “answered,” so the verb “said” can be left implicit. You can test if the readers understood the implicit information by asking, “How did the centurion answer?” If they knew it was by speaking, then they have understood the implicit information.

He opened his mouth and taught them, saying, (Matthew 5:2 ULT)

He began to teach them, saying, (Or) He taught them, saying,

In English, it would be very strange to include the information that Jesus opened his mouth when he spoke. That information is included in the verbs “taught” and “saying,” so that phrase can be omitted and that information left implicit. However, “he opened his mouth” is an idiom that indicates the beginning of a speech, so that information may be included, or it may also be left implicit.

Next we recommend you learn about:

When to Keep Information Implicit ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Joel 2:26](#); [Joel 3:7](#)

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**.

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Referenced in: [Joel 2:16](#); [Joel 2:17](#); [Joel 2:28](#); [Joel 2:29](#)

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: [Joel 1 Chapter Introduction](#); [Joel 1:2](#); [Joel 1:6](#); [Joel 1:7](#); [Joel 1:9](#); [Joel 1:10](#); [Joel 1:12](#); [Joel 1:17](#); [Joel 1:18](#); [Joel 1:19](#); [Joel 1:20](#); [Joel 2:3](#); [Joel 2:7](#); [Joel 2:12](#); [Joel 2:13](#); [Joel 2:17](#); [Joel 2:23](#); [Joel 2:25](#); [Joel 2:28](#); [Joel 2:29](#); [Joel 2:31](#); [Joel 3:1](#); [Joel 3:4](#); [Joel 3:6](#); [Joel 3:8](#); [Joel 3:13](#); [Joel 3:15](#); [Joel 3:16](#); [Joel 3:18](#)

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](#).

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Referenced in: [Introduction to Joel](#); [Joel 1:2](#); [Joel 1:7](#); [Joel 1:15](#); [Joel 1:16](#); [Joel 2 Chapter Introduction](#); [Joel 2:1](#); [Joel 2:2](#); [Joel 2:3](#); [Joel 2:6](#); [Joel 2:11](#); [Joel 2:18](#); [Joel 2:20](#); [Joel 2:22](#); [Joel 2:25](#); [Joel 2:26](#); [Joel 2:28](#); [Joel 2:29](#); [Joel 2:31](#); [Joel 3:18](#); [Joel 3:19](#); [Joel 3:20](#); [Joel 3:21](#)

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**.

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Referenced in: [Joel 3:10](#)

Parallelism

Description

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, Israel.

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

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

Yahweh truly sees everything a person does.

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

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

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

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

All you have done is lie to me.

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

Yahweh sees absolutely everything that a person does.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Personification ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Introduction to Joel](#); [Joel 1:2](#); [Joel 1:6](#); [Joel 2:20](#)

Personification

Description

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

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: [Joel 1:10](#); [Joel 2:10](#); [Joel 2:20](#); [Joel 3:15](#)

Possession

Description

In English, the grammatical form that commonly indicates possession is also used to indicate a variety of relationships between people and objects or people and other people. In English, that grammatical relationship is shown by using the word “**of**,” by using **an apostrophe and the letter “s”**, or by using a **possessive pronoun**. The following examples are different ways to indicate that my grandfather owns a house.

- the house **of** my grandfather
- my grandfather **'s** house
- **his** house

Possession is used in Hebrew, Greek, and English for a variety of situations. Here are a few common situations that it is used for.

- Ownership — Someone owns something.
- The clothes of me - my clothes — The clothes that I own
- Social Relationship — Someone has some kind of social relationship with another.
- The mother of John — John's mother - the woman who gave birth to John, or the woman who cared for John
- A teacher of Israel - Israel's teacher — a person who teaches Israel
- Association — A particular thing is associated with a particular person, place, or thing.
- The sickness of David - David's sickness — the sickness that David is experiencing
- the fear of the Lord — the fear that is appropriate for a human being to have when relating to the Lord
- Contents — Something has something in it.
- a bag of clothes — a bag that has clothes in it, or a bag that is full of clothes
- Part and whole: One thing is part of another.
- my head — the head that is part of my body
- the roof of a house — the roof that is part of a house

In some languages there is a special form of possession, termed **inalienable possession**. This form of possession is used for things that cannot be removed from you, as opposed to things you could lose. In the examples above, *my head* and *my mother* are examples of inalienable possession (at least in some languages), while *my clothes* or *my teacher* would be alienably possessed. What may be considered alienable vs. inalienable may differ by language. In languages that mark the difference, the expression of inalienable possession and alienable possession will be different.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between two ideas represented by the two nouns when one is in the grammatical relationship of possessing the other.
- Some languages do not use grammatical possession for all of the situations that your source text Bible might use it for.

Examples From the Bible

Ownership — In the example below, the son owned the money.

▮ The younger son ... wasted his wealth by living recklessly. (Luke 15:13b)

Social Relationship — In the example below, the disciples were people who learned from John.

This page answers the question: *What is possession and how can I translate phrases that show it?*

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

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Then **the disciples of John** came to him. (Matthew 9:14a ULT)

Association — In the example below, the gospel is the message associated with Paul because he preaches it.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, from the seed of David, according to **my gospel**, (2 Timothy 2:8 ULT)

Material — In the example below, the material used for making the crowns was gold.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

Contents — In the example below, the cup has water in it.

For whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Part of a whole — In the example below, the door was a part of the palace.

But Uriah slept at **the door of the king's palace**. (2 Samuel 11:9a ULT)

Part of a group — In the example below, “us” refers to the whole group and “each one” refers to the individual members.

Now to **each one of us** grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7 ULT)

Events and Possession

Sometimes one or both of the nouns is an abstract noun that refers to an event or action. In the examples below, the abstract nouns are in **bold** print. These are just some of the relationships that are possible between two nouns when one of them refers to an event.

Subject — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who would do the action named by the first noun. In the example below, **John baptized people**.

The **baptism of John**, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me. (Mark 11:30)

In the example below, **Christ loves us**.

Who will separate us from the **love of Christ**? (Romans 8:35)

Object — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who or what something would happen to. In the example below, **people love money**.

For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10a ULT)

Instrument — Sometimes the word after “of” tells how something would happen. In the example below, God would **punish people by sending enemies to attack them with swords**.

Then be afraid of the sword, because wrath brings **the punishment of the sword**. (Job 19:29a ULT)

Representation — In the example below, John was baptizing people who were repenting of their sins. They were being baptized to show that they were repenting. Their **baptism represented their repentance**.

John came, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching **a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4 ULT)

Strategies for learning what the relationship is between the two nouns

- (1) Read the surrounding verses to see if they help you to understand the relationship between the two nouns.
- (2) Read the verse in the UST. Sometimes it shows the relationship clearly.
- (3) See what the notes say about it.

Translation Strategies

If possession would be a natural way to show a particular relationship between two nouns, consider using it. If it would be strange or hard to understand, consider these.

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.
- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.
- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

"On their heads were **gold crowns**"

- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.

Whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Whoever gives you a **cup that has water in it** to drink ... will not lose his reward.

Wealth is worthless on **the day of wrath**. (Proverbs 11:4a ULT)

Wealth is worthless on **the day when God shows his wrath**.

or:

Wealth is worthless on the **day when God punishes people because of his wrath**.

- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb. (In the example below, there are two possession relationships, "punishment of Yahweh" and "your God.")

Notice that I am not speaking to your children, who have not known or seen **the punishment of Yahweh your God**. (Deuteronomy 11:2a ULT)

Notice that I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen **how Yahweh, the God whom you worship, punished the people of Egypt**.

You will only observe and see the **punishment of the wicked**. (Psalms 91:8 ULT)

You will only observe and see **how Yahweh punishes the wicked**.

You will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. (Acts 2:38b ULT)

You will receive the **Holy Spirit, whom God will give to you**.

"

Referenced in: [Joel 1:6](#); [Joel 2:7](#); [Joel 3:19](#)

Predictive Past

Description

The predictive past is a figure of speech that uses the past tense to refer to things that will happen in the future. This is sometimes done in prophecy to show that the event will certainly happen. It is also called the prophetic perfect.

Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of understanding; their honored leaders go hungry, and their common people have nothing to drink. (Isaiah 5:13 ULT)

In the example above, the people of Israel had not yet gone into captivity, but God spoke of their going into captivity as if it had already happened because he had decided that they certainly would go into captivity.

This page answers the question: *What is the predictive past?*

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

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

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

Reason This Is a Translation Issue:

Readers who are not aware of the past tense being used in prophecy to refer to future events may find it confusing.

Examples From the Bible

Now Jericho was tightly closed because of the sons of Israel. No one went out and no one came in. Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:1-2 ULT)

For to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given; and the rule will be on his shoulder. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)

In the examples above, God spoke of things that would happen in the future as if they had already happened.

But even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them, saying, "Look! The Lord came with thousands and thousands of his holy ones." (Jude 1:14 ULT)

Enoch was speaking of something that would happen in the future, but he used the past tense when he said "the Lord came."

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.
- (2) If it refers to something in the immediate future, use a form that would show that.
- (3) Some languages may use the present tense to show that something will happen very soon.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.

For to us a child **has been born**, to us a son **has been given**. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)

For to us a child **will be born**, to us a son **will be given**.

(2) If it refers to something that would happen very soon, use a form that shows that.

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:2 ULT)

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I **am about to deliver** over to you Jericho, its king, and its powerful soldiers."

(3) Some languages may use the present tense to show that something will happen very soon.

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:2 ULT)

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I **am delivering** over to you Jericho, its king, and its powerful soldiers."

"

Referenced in: [Joel 2:18](#); [Joel 2:19](#); [Joel 2:21](#); [Joel 2:22](#); [Joel 2:23](#)

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: [Joel 1:6](#); [Joel 1:7](#); [Joel 1:8](#); [Joel 1:13](#); [Joel 1:14](#); [Joel 2:3](#); [Joel 2:4](#); [Joel 2:14](#); [Joel 2:17](#); [Joel 2:19](#); [Joel 2:23](#); [Joel 3:19](#)

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: [Joel 2:12](#); [Joel 2:19](#); [Joel 2:25](#); [Joel 3:1](#); [Joel 3:8](#); [Joel 3:17](#)

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: [Joel 2:17](#); [Joel 3:10](#)

Reduplication

Description

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

Writers and speakers in the Bible sometimes repeat the same word or forms of the same word. This is to increase the intensity, completeness, or certainty of the action that the word describes, or to otherwise increase the emotional impact of the word.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages may not repeat words to increase the intensity, completeness, or certainty of an action, or they may not repeat words to increase the level of emotion that they communicate. In these cases, repeated words may appear to be a mistake or may indicate that the speaker is unable to speak correctly.

Examples From the Bible

To the woman he said, "To multiply I will multiply your pain and your childbearing..." (Genesis 3:16 ULT)

The speaker is repeating forms of the verb "multiply" in order to intensify the idea of multiplying.

To be circumcised he must be circumcised (Genesis 17:13)

The speaker is repeating forms of the verb "circumcise" in order to increase the certainty that this must happen.

Begin, possess, to possess his land (Deuteronomy 2:31 ULT)

Moses repeats the word "possess" to emphasize the completeness of the action of possessing the land.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Psalm 22:1 ULT)

The writer repeats "my God" to increase the level of emotion that he wants to communicate; he is crying out desperately to God.

"Fallen, fallen has Babylon the Great..." (Revelation 14:8 ULT)

The angel repeats the word "fallen" in order to show deep emotion in this lament for the ruined city of Babylon.

Translation Strategies

If repeating words would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, then do the same in your translation. If not, here are some other options:

- (1) If your language would not repeat words to increase the intensity, completeness, or certainty of an action, then use a different word or phrase to add that meaning.
- (2) If your language would not repeat words to increase emotional intensity, then use an emotional word to do that.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If your language would not repeat words to increase the intensity, completeness, or certainty of an action, then use a different word or phrase to add that meaning.

To the woman he said, "To multiply I will multiply your pain and your childbearing..." (Genesis 3:16 ULT)

To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain and your childbearing..."

To be circumcised he must be circumcised (Genesis 17:13 ULT)

He certainly must be circumcised
Or
By all means, he must be circumcised

Begin, possess, to possess his land (Deuteronomy 2:31 ULT)

Begin to completely possess his land
Or
Enter his land until you completely possess it

(2) If your language would not repeat words to increase emotional intensity, then use an emotional word to do that.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Psalm 22:1 ULT)

You are my God! Why, then, have you forsaken me?
Or
My God, oh, why have you forsaken me?

"Fallen, fallen has Babylon the Great..." (Revelation 14:8 ULT)

"Alas, Babylon the Great has fallen!

"

Referenced in: [Joel 1:7](#); [Joel 2:26](#); [Joel 3:14](#)

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: [Joel 1:2](#); [Joel 1:16](#); [Joel 2:11](#); [Joel 2:14](#); [Joel 2:17](#); [Joel 3:4](#)

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 lightning 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: [Joel 1:8](#); [Joel 2:2](#); [Joel 2:3](#); [Joel 2:4](#); [Joel 2:5](#); [Joel 2:7](#); [Joel 2:9](#)

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: [Joel 1:8](#); [Joel 1:13](#); [Joel 1:14](#); [Joel 3:12](#)

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: [Joel 2:32](#); [Joel 3:4](#); [Joel 3:7](#); [Joel 3:8](#); [Joel 3:13](#)

Textual Variants

Description

Thousands of years ago, people wrote the books of the Bible. Other people then copied them by hand and translated them. They did this work very carefully, and over the years many people made thousands of copies. However, people who looked at them later saw that there were small differences between them. Some copiers accidentally left out some words, or some mistook one word for another that looked like it. Occasionally, they added words or even whole sentences, either by accident or because they wanted to explain something. Modern Bibles are translations of the old copies. Some modern Bibles include some of these sentences that were added. In the ULT, these added sentences are usually written in footnotes.

This page answers the question: *Why does the ULT have missing or added verses, and should I translate them?*

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

Choosing a Source Text ([UTA PDF](#))

Original Manuscripts ([UTA PDF](#))

Bible scholars have read many old copies and compared them with each other. For each place in the Bible where there was a difference, they have figured out which wordings are most likely correct. The translators of the ULT based the ULT on wordings that scholars say are most likely correct. Because people who use the ULT may have access to Bibles that are based on other copies, the ULT translators have sometimes included information about some of the differences between them, either in the ULT footnotes or in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

Translators are encouraged to translate the text in the ULT and to write about added sentences in footnotes, as is done in the ULT. However, if the local church really wants those sentences to be included in the main text, translators may put them in the text and include a footnote about them.

Examples From the Bible

Matthew 18:10-11 ULT has a footnote about verse 11.

¹⁰ See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven their angels always look on the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ ^[1]

^[1] Many authorities, some ancient, insert v. 11: **For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.**

John 7:53-8:11 is not in the best earliest manuscripts. It has been included in the ULT, but it is marked off with square brackets ([]) at the beginning and end, and there is a footnote after verse 11.

53 [Then everyone went to his own house ... 11 She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."] ^[2]

^[2] Some ancient manuscripts include John 7:53-8:11

Translation Strategies

When there is a textual variant, you may choose to follow the ULT or another version that you have access to.

- (1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.
- (2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The translation strategies are applied to Mark 7:14-16 ULT, which has a footnote about verse 16.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man. ¹⁶ If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts do not include verse 16.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Chapter and Verse Numbers ([UTA PDF](#))

Original Manuscripts ([UTA PDF](#))

Terms to Know ([UTA PDF](#))

The Original and Source Languages ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Joel 2:7](#); [Joel 2:17](#); [Joel 3:1](#); [Joel 3:21](#)

Translate Unknowns

While working to translate the Bible, you (the translator) might find yourself asking: “How do I translate words like lion, fig tree, mountain, priest, or temple when people in my culture have never seen these things and we do not have a word for them?”

This page answers the question: *How can I translate ideas that my readers are not familiar with?*

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Description

Unknowns are things that occur in the source text that are not known to the people of your culture. The unfoldingWord® Translation Words pages and the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes will help you understand what they are. After you understand them, you will need to find ways to refer to those things so that people who read your translation will understand what they are.

They said to him, “We have nothing here except five loaves of **bread** and two fish.” (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

Bread is a particular food made by mixing finely crushed grains with oil, and then cooking the mixture so that it is dry. (Grains are the seeds of a kind of grass.) In some cultures people do not have bread and do not know what it is.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the things that are in the Bible because those things are not part of their own culture.
- Readers may have difficulty understanding a text if they do not know some of the things that are mentioned in it.

Translation Principles

- Use words that are already part of your language if possible.
- Keep expressions short if possible.
- Represent God’s commands and historical facts accurately.

Examples From the Bible

So I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals**. (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

Jackals are wild animals like dogs that live in only a few parts of the world. So they are not known in many places.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous **wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

If wolves do not live where the translation will be read, the readers may not understand that they are fierce, wild animals like dogs that attack and eat sheep.

They offered him wine mixed with **myrrh**, but he did not drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT)

People may not know what myrrh is and that it was used as a medicine.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

Some languages have terms for things that give light, like the sun and fire, but they have no general term for lights.

Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT)

People in many parts of the world have not seen snow, but they may have seen it in pictures.

Translation Strategies

Here are ways you might translate a term that is not known in your language:

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.
- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.
- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.
- (4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.
- (5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly they are very hungry and dangerous animals**.

"Ravenous wolves" is part of a metaphor here, so the reader needs to know that they are very dangerous to sheep in order to understand this metaphor. (If sheep are also unknown, then you will need to also use one of the translation strategies to translate sheep, or change the metaphor to something else, using a translation strategy for metaphors. See [Translating Metaphors](#).)

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked grain seeds** and two fish.

- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.

Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT) This verse is not about snow. It uses snow in a figure of speech to help people understand how white something will be.

Your sins ... will be white like **milk**.

Your sins ... will be white like **the moon**.

- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **myrrh**. But he refused to drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT) — People may understand better what myrrh is if it is used with the general word "medicine."

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **a medicine called myrrh**. But he refused to drink it.

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT) —
People may understand better what bread is if it is used with a phrase that tells what it is made
of (seeds) and how it is prepared (crushed and baked).

We have nothing here except five loaves of **baked crushed seed bread**
and two fish.

(4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals** (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **wild dogs**

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked food** and two fish.

(5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

to him who made **the sun and the moon**

Next we recommend you learn about:

Copy or Borrow Words ([UTA PDF](#))

How to Translate Names ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Joel 1:4](#); [Joel 2:1](#); [Joel 3:10](#)

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: [Joel 1:3](#); [Joel 1:12](#)

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