

Language: English

Book: Jonah

Jonah

Chapter 1

¹ Now the word of Yahweh came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, ² "Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and speak out against it, because their wickedness has risen up before me." ³ But Jonah got up to run away from the presence of Yahweh and go to Tarshish. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and boarded the ship to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of Yahweh.

⁴ But Yahweh sent out a great wind on the sea and it became a mighty storm on the sea. Soon it appeared that the ship was going to be broken up. ⁵ Then the sailors became very afraid and each man cried out to his own god. They threw the ship's cargo into the sea to lighten it. But Jonah had gone down into the innermost parts of the ship, and he was lying there deeply asleep.

⁶ So the captain came to him and said to him, "What are you doing sleeping? Get up! Call upon your god! Maybe your god will notice us and we will not perish."

⁷ Each man said to his neighbor, "Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know who is the cause of this evil that is happening to us." So they threw lots, and the lot fell to Jonah.

⁸ Then they said to Jonah, "Please tell us who is the cause of this evil that is happening to us. What is your occupation, and where did you come from? What is your country, and from which people are you?" ⁹ Jonah said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear Yahweh, the God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land." ¹⁰ Then the men were even more afraid and said to Jonah, "What is this that you have done?" For the men knew that he was running away from the presence of Yahweh, because he had told them.

¹¹ Then they said to Jonah, "What should we do to you so that the sea will calm down for us?" For the sea became more and more stormy. ¹² Jonah said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will be calm for you, for I know that it is because of me that this great storm is happening to you."

¹³ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get themselves back to the land, but they could not do it because the sea was becoming more and more violent against them.

¹⁴ Therefore they cried out to Yahweh and said, "We beg you, Yahweh, we beg you, do not let us perish on account of this man's life, and do not put innocent blood on us, because you, Yahweh, have done just as it pleased you." ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared Yahweh very much. They offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows.

¹⁷ Now Yahweh had appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The narrative of this chapter starts abruptly. This could cause difficulty for the translator. The translator should not attempt to smooth this introduction unless absolutely necessary.

Special concepts in this chapter

Miracle

In verse [Jonah 17](#), there is the mention of "a great fish." It may be difficult to imagine a sea creature big enough to swallow a man whole and who then survives for three days and nights inside. Translators should not try to explain miraculous events in an attempt to make it easier to understand. (See: miracle)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Situational irony

There is an ironic situation in this chapter. Jonah is a prophet of God and should endeavor to do God's will. Instead, he is running away from God. Although the Gentile sailors are not Israelites, they act out of faith and fear of Yahweh when sending Jonah to a "certain death" by throwing him overboard. (See: prophet and will of God and faith)

Sea

People in the ancient Near East also saw the sea as chaotic and did not trust it. Some of the gods they worshiped were gods of the sea. Jonah's people, the Hebrews, feared the sea greatly. However, Jonah's fear of Yahweh was not enough to keep him from going into a ship and sailing to get away from Yahweh. His actions are contrasted by the actions of the Gentiles. (See: and fear)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Implicit information

Even though no one knows for sure where Tarshish was, the writer assumes that the reader knows that Jonah had to face away from Nineveh to go there.

Jonah 1:1

the word of Yahweh came

This is an idiom that means Yahweh spoke. "Yahweh spoke his message"

the word of Yahweh

"the message of Yahweh"

Yahweh

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

Amittai

This is the name of Jonah's father.

Jonah 1:2

Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city

"Go to the important city of Nineveh"

Get up and go

This is a common expression for traveling to distant places.

speak out against it

God is referring to the people of the city. Alternate translation: "warn the people"

their wickedness has risen up before me

"I know they have been continually sinning"

Jonah 1:3

got up to run away from the presence of Yahweh

"ran away from Yahweh." "got up" is referring to Jonah leaving where he was.

the presence of Yahweh

Here Yahweh is represented by his presence.

go to Tarshish

"and went to Tarshish." Tarshish was in the opposite direction to Nineveh. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "went in the opposite direction, toward Tarshish"

He went down to Joppa

"Jonah went to Joppa"

ship

A "ship" is a very large type of boat that can travel on the sea and carry many passengers or heavy cargo.

So he paid the fare

"There Jonah paid for the trip"

boarded the ship

"got on the ship"

with them

The word "them" refers to the others who were going on the ship.

away from the presence of Yahweh

Here Yahweh is represented by his presence.
Alternate translation: "away from Yahweh"

Jonah 1:4

Soon it appeared

It can be made explicit who thought the ship would be broken up. Alternate translation: "The men thought"

to be broken up

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "to break apart"

Jonah 1:5

the sailors

the men who worked on the ship

his own god

Here "god" refers to false gods and idols that people worship.

They threw the ship's cargo

"The men threw the heavy things off the ship." This was done to keep the ship from sinking.

to lighten it

Making the ship lighter would make it float better.
Alternate translation: "to help the ship float better"

But Jonah had gone down into the innermost parts of the ship

Jonah did this before the storm started.

down into the innermost parts of the ship

"inside the ship"

was lying there deeply asleep

"was lying there fast asleep" or "was lying there and sleeping deeply." For this reason, the storm did not wake him up.

Jonah 1:6

So the captain came to him and said to him

"The man in charge of the ship went to Jonah and said"

What are you doing sleeping?

"Why are you sleeping?" He used this rhetorical question to scold Jonah. Alternate translation: "Stop sleeping!"

Get up!

This refers to doing some activity. For Jonah, the Captain is telling him to wake up and pray to his god for safe passage.

Call upon your god!

"Pray to your god!" "Call" refers to getting the attention of someone.

Maybe your god will notice us and we will not perish

The implicit information that Jonah's god might save them could be made explicit. Alternate translation: "Maybe your god will hear and save us so that we will not die"

Jonah 1:7

Each man said to his neighbor

"The sailors all said to each other"

Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know who is the cause of this evil that is happening to us

"We should cast lots to know who has caused this trouble." The men believed that the gods would control how the lots fell in order to tell them what they wanted to know. This was a form of divination.

this evil

This refers to the terrible storm.

the lot fell to Jonah

"the lot showed that Jonah was the guilty person"

Jonah 1:8

Then they said to Jonah

"Then the men who were working on the ship said to Jonah"

Please tell us who is the cause of this evil that is happening to us.

"Who caused this bad thing that is happening to us?"

Jonah 1:9

fear Yahweh

The word "fear" refers to Jonah having a deep respect for God.

Jonah 1:10

What is this that you have done?

The men on the ship used this rhetorical question to show how angry they were at Jonah. Alternate translation: "You have done a terrible thing."

he was running away from the presence of Yahweh

Here Yahweh is represented by his presence. Jonah was seeking to escape Yahweh as if Yahweh was present only in the land of Israel. Alternate translation: "Jonah was running away from Yahweh"

because he had told them.

What he told them can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "because he had said to them, 'I am trying to get away from Yahweh.'"

Jonah 1:11

they said to Jonah

"the men on the ship said to Jonah" or "the sailors said to Jonah"

do to you so that the sea will calm down

"do with you in order to make the sea become calm"

the sea became more and more stormy

This was the reason that the men asked Jonah what they should do. This reason can also be put at the beginning of verse 11, as in the UDB. "Then, because the sea became more and more stormy, they said to Jonah, 'What should we do to you so that the sea will calm down for us?'"

Jonah 1:12

for I know that it is because of me that this great storm is happening to you

"because I know this huge storm is my fault"

Jonah 1:13

Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get themselves back to the land

The men did not want to throw Jonah into the sea, so they rowed hard as if they were digging into the water to get back to land.

the sea was becoming more and more violent

"the storm became worse, and the waves became bigger"

Jonah 1:14

General Information:

Even though the men knew that Jonah was guilty of sin against Yahweh, they thought they would be guilty of murder if they threw him off the boat.

Therefore

"Because of this" or "Because the sea became more violent"

they cried out to Yahweh

"the men prayed to Yahweh"

do not let us perish on account of this man's life

"Please do not kill us because we caused this man to die" or "We are going to cause this man to die. But please do not kill us"

do not put innocent blood on us

Blood is a metonym for the death of a person, and to put or lay blood on people is to make them responsible for that person's death. Alternate translation: "do not make us responsible for the death of an innocent man"

Jonah 1:15

the sea stopped raging

"the sea stopped moving violently" or "the sea became calm"

Jonah 1:16

feared Yahweh very much

"became greatly awed at Yahweh's power"

Jonah 1:17

General Information:

Some versions number this verse as the first verse of chapter 2. You may want to number the verses according to the main version that your language group uses.

Now

This word is used in English to introduce a new part of the story.

three days and three nights

"three days and nights"

Chapter 2

- ¹ Then Jonah prayed to Yahweh his God from the fish's stomach. ² He said,
"I called out to Yahweh about my distress
and he answered me;
from the belly of Sheol I cried out for help!
You heard my voice.
- ³ You had thrown me into the depths,
into the heart of the seas,
and the currents surrounded me;
all your waves and billows
passed over me.
- ⁴ I said, 'I am driven out
from before your eyes;
yet I will again look
toward your holy temple.'
- ⁵ The waters closed around me up to my neck;
the deep was all around me;
seaweed wrapped around my head.
- ⁶ I went down to the bases of the mountains;
the earth with its bars closed upon me forever.
Yet you brought up my life from the pit,
Yahweh, my God!
- ⁷ When my soul fainted within me,
I called Yahweh to mind;
then my prayer came to you
to your holy temple.
- ⁸ They give attention to meaningless gods
while they abandon covenant faithfulness.
- ⁹ But as for me, I will sacrifice to you
with a voice of thanksgiving;
I will fulfill that which I have vowed.
Salvation comes from Yahweh!"
- ¹⁰ Then Yahweh spoke to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah upon the dry land.
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Jonah 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter begins with a prayer by Jonah, and many translators have chosen to set it apart by setting its lines farther to the right on the page than the rest of the text. Translators can follow this practice, but they are not obligated to.

Special concepts in this chapter

Sea

This chapter contains many terms from the sea.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Poetry

Prayers in Scripture often contain a poetic form. Poetry frequently uses metaphors to communicate something with a special meaning. For example, since Jonah was in a fish in the sea, being trapped is compared to a prison. Jonah is overwhelmed by the depth of the sea and expresses this by speaking about the at the "base of the mountains" and in the "belly of Sheol."

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Repentance

Scholars are divided over whether Jonah's repentance was genuine or whether he was trying to save his life. In light of his attitude in chapter 4, it is uncertain if he was genuinely repentant. If possible, it is best for translators to avoid making a definitive stance on whether Jonah's repentance was genuine. (See: repent and save)

Jonah 2:1

Yahweh his God

This means "Yahweh, the God he worshiped." The word "his" does not mean that Jonah owned God.

Jonah 2:2

He said

"Jonah said"

I called out to Yahweh about my distress

"I prayed to Yahweh about my great trouble." Even though Jonah was praying to Yahweh, he used Yahweh's name here and not "you." Alternate translation: "Yahweh, I called out to you about my distress"

he answered me

"Yahweh responded to me" or "he helped me"

from the belly of Sheol

"from the center of Sheol" or "from the deep part of Sheol." Possible meanings are 1) Jonah was speaking as being in the belly of the whale was being in Sheol or 2) Jonah believed that he was about to die and go to Sheol or 3) He spoke as if he already had died and gone there.

Jonah 2:3

General Information:

This is a continuation of Jonah's prayer that started in Jonah 2:2. In verse 4 Jonah spoke of something he had prayed before this prayer.

into the depths, into the heart of the seas

This speaks of the vastness of the ocean Jonah was in.

into the heart of the seas

"to the bottom of the sea"

the currents surrounded me

"the sea water closed in around me"

waves and billows

These are disturbances on the surface of the ocean.

Jonah 2:4

I am driven out

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "You have driven me away" or "You have sent me away"

from before your eyes

Here Yahweh is represented by his "eyes." Alternate translation: "from you"

yet I will again look toward your holy temple

Jonah has hope that, in spite of all he is going through, he will see the temple.

Jonah 2:5

General Information:

This is a continuation of Jonah's prayer that started in Jonah 2:2.

The waters

"The waters" refers to the sea.

my neck

Some versions understand the Hebrew word in this expression to mean "my life." In that interpretation, the waters were about to take away Jonah's life.

the deep was all around me

"the deep water was all around me"

seaweed

grass that grows in the sea

Jonah 2:6

the earth with its bars closed upon me forever

Jonah used a metaphor to compare the earth to a prison. Alternate translation: "the earth was like a prison that was about to lock me in forever"

Yet you brought up my life from the pit

Jonah speaks of the place of the dead as if it were a pit. Alternate translation: "But you saved my life from the place of the dead" or "But you saved me from the place where the dead people are"

Yahweh, my God!

In some languages, it may be more natural to put this at the beginning of the sentence or next to the word "you."

Jonah 2:7

General Information:

This is a continuation of Jonah's prayer that started in Jonah 2:2.

I called Yahweh to mind

Since Jonah was praying to Yahweh, it might be more clear in some languages to say "I thought about you, Yahweh" or "Yahweh, I thought about you."

then my prayer came to you, to your holy temple

Jonah speaks as if his prayers could travel to God and his temple. Alternate translation: "then you in your holy temple heard my prayer"

Jonah 2:8

They give attention to meaningless gods

"People pay attention to meaningless gods"

they abandon covenant faithfulness

Possible meanings are 1) "they stop being faithful" or 2) "they reject your mercy"

Jonah 2:9

General Information:

This is a continuation of Jonah's prayer that started in Jonah 2:2.

But as for me, I

This expression in English shows that there is a contrast between the people Jonah had just spoken about and himself. They paid attention to useless gods, but he would worship Yahweh. Alternate translation: "But I"

I will sacrifice to you with a voice of thanksgiving

This means that Jonah would thank God while he offered a sacrifice to him. It is not clear whether Jonah planned to thank God by singing or shouting joyfully.

I will fulfill that which I have vowed

"I will do what I said I would do"

Salvation comes from Yahweh

This can be reworded so that the abstract noun "salvation" is expressed as the verb "save." "Yahweh is the one who saves people"

Jonah 2:10

upon the dry land

"upon the ground" or "onto the shore"

Chapter 3

¹ The word of Yahweh came to Jonah a second time, saying, ² "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I command you to give." ³ So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh, according to the word of Yahweh. Now Nineveh was a very large city, one of three days' journey. ⁴ Jonah began to enter the city and after a day's journey he called out and said, "In forty days Nineveh will be overthrown." ⁵ The people of Nineveh believed God and they proclaimed a fast. They all put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them down to the least of them. ⁶ Soon the news reached the king of Nineveh. He rose up from his throne, took off his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ He sent out a proclamation that said, "In Nineveh, by the authority of the king and his nobles: 'Do not let any man or animal, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not eat, nor drink water. ⁸ But let both man and animal be covered with sackcloth and let them cry out loudly to God. Let each one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows? God may relent and change his mind and turn away from his fierce anger so that we do not perish.'"

¹⁰ God saw their deeds, that they turned from their evil ways. So then God changed his mind about the punishment that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Jonah 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter returns to a narrative of Jonah's life.

Special concepts in this chapter

Animals

According to the king's proclamation, the animals had to participate in the fast he ordered. This most likely reflects their pagan mindset. There was nothing in the law of Moses that instructed the people to have the animals participate in any religious acts. (See: lawofmoses)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Size of Nineveh

When the author talks about the size of Nineveh, the measurements he gives are confusing. The phrase "three days' journey" is ambiguous in Hebrew, as many scholars have remarked. In Jonah's day, cities were not as big as they are today. So although Nineveh was a big city, it was not as big as most modern cities.

God repenting or relenting

The last verse of this chapter says, "So then God changed his mind about the punishment that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it." This concept of God changing his mind may be troubling for some translators and people may struggle to understand it. God's character is consistent. This whole book is written from a human viewpoint and so it is hard to understand the mind of God.

Yahweh is just and merciful so even though God did not follow through with a judgment in this instance, God's plan is always to punish evil. Later in history this nation did fall and was destroyed. (See: justice, mercy and judge and evil)

Jonah 3:1

The word of Yahweh came

This is an idiom that means Yahweh spoke. See how you translated this in [Jonah 1:1]

Jonah 3:2

Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city

"Go to the important city of Nineveh"

Get up

This refers to leaving the place one is at.

proclaim to it the message that I command you to give
"tell the people what I tell you to tell them"

Jonah 3:3

the word of Yahweh

Here "word" represents Yahweh's message.
Alternate translation: "the message of Yahweh"

So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh, according to the word of Yahweh

"This time Jonah obeyed Yahweh and went to Nineveh"

Jonah got up

"Jonah left the beach." The words "got up" refer to preparing to go somewhere.

Now

This word is used here to mark a change from the story to information about Nineveh.

one of three days' journey

"a city of three days' journey." A person had to walk for three days to completely go through it.

Jonah 3:4

after a day's journey he called out

Possible meanings are 1) "after Jonah walked a day's journey he called out" or 2) "while Jonah walked on the first day, he called out."

after a day's journey

"after a day's walk." A day's journey is the distance that people would normally travel in one day.
Alternate translation: "after Jonah walked for one day"

he called out and said

"he proclaimed" or "he shouted"

forty days

"40 days"

Jonah 3:5

They all put on sackcloth

Why people put on sackcloth can be stated more clearly. Alternate translation: "They also put on coarse cloth to show that they were sorry for having sinned"

from the greatest of them down to the least of them

"from the most significant to the least significant people" or "including all the important people and all the unimportant people"

Jonah 3:6

the news

"Jonah's message"

He rose up from his throne

"He got up from his throne" or "He stood up from his throne." The king left his throne to show that he was acting humbly.

throne

A throne is a chair that the king sits on. It shows that he is the king.

Jonah 3:7

He sent out a proclamation that said

"He sent out an official announcement that said" or "He sent his messengers to announce to the people in Nineveh"

nobles

important men who helped the king rule the city

herd nor flock

This refers to two kinds of animals that people care for. Alternate translation: "cattle or sheep"

Let them not eat, nor drink water

"They must not eat nor drink anything." The reason they were not to eat or drink anything can be made explicit by adding "in order to show that they are sorry for their sins."

Jonah 3:8

General Information:

This is a continuation of what the king told the people of Nineveh.

But let both

"Let both"

let both man and animal be covered with sackcloth

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "let people and animals wear sackcloth" or "let people cover themselves and their animals with sackcloth"

animal

The word "animal" refers to animals that people own.

cry out loudly to God

"pray earnestly to God." What they were to pray for can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "cry out loudly to God and ask for mercy"

the violence that is in his hands

This means "the violent things that he does"

Jonah 3:9

Who knows?

The king used this rhetorical question to get the people to think about something that they might not have thought possible, that if they would stop sinning, God might not kill them. It could be

translated as a statement: "We do not know." Or it could be stated as a word and be part of the next sentence: "Perhaps."

God may relent and change his mind

"God may decide to do something different" or "God may not do what he said he will do"

we do not perish

"we do not die." Here perish equates to drowning at sea.

Jonah 3:10

God saw their deeds

"God saw what they did" or "God understood that they had stopped doing evil actions"

they turned from their evil ways

The author speaks of the people stop sinning as if they turned their back to an object.

God changed his mind about the punishment that he had said he would do to them

Here God deciding not to do the punishment he had planned is spoken of as if he changed his mind.

Alternate translation: "God changed his thinking about the punishment that he had said he would do to them" or "God decided not to punish them as he had said he would"

he did not do it

What God was to do can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "he did not punish them" or "he did not destroy them"

Chapter 4

¹ But this displeased Jonah and he became very angry. ² So Jonah prayed to Yahweh and said, "Ah, Yahweh, is this not just what I said when I was back in my own country? That is why I acted first and tried to flee to Tarshish—because I knew that you are a gracious God, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and you hold back from sending disaster. ³ Therefore now, Yahweh, I beg you, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴ Yahweh said, "Is it good that you are so angry?" ⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made a shelter and sat under it in the shade so that he could see what might become of the city.

⁶ Yahweh God appointed a plant and made it grow up over Jonah so that it might be a shade over his head to relieve him of his distress. Jonah was very glad because of the plant. ⁷ But God appointed a worm at sunrise the next morning. It attacked the plant and the plant withered. ⁸ It came about that when the sun rose the next morning, God appointed a hot east wind. Also, the sun beat down on Jonah's head and he became faint. Then Jonah wished that he might die. He said to himself, "It is better for me to die than to live." ⁹ Then God said to Jonah, "Is it good that you are so angry about the plant?" Then Jonah said, "It is good that I am angry, even to death." ¹⁰ Yahweh said, "You have had compassion for the plant, for which you have not labored, nor did you make it grow. It grew up in a night and died in a night. ¹¹ So as for me, should I not have compassion for Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 people who do not know the difference between their right hand and their left hand, and also many animals?"

Jonah 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Jonah continues the narrative while bringing the book to what seems like an unusual end. This emphasizes that the book is not really about Jonah. It is about God's desire to be merciful on anyone, whether Jew or pagan. (See: mercy)

Special concepts in this chapter

Jonah's anger

It is important to see the relationship between a prophet and Yahweh. A prophet was to prophesy for Yahweh, and his words must come true. According to the law of Moses, if that did not happen, the penalty was death. When Jonah told the city of Nineveh that it was going to be destroyed in forty days, he was certain it was going to happen. When it did not happen, Jonah was angry with God because he hated the people of Nineveh. (See: prophet and lawofmoses)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical questions

As in other places, Jonah asks rhetorical questions to show how angry he was at Yahweh.

Parallel to Mount Sinai

In verse 2, Jonah attributes a series of characteristics to God. A Jewish reader of this book would recognize this as a formula Moses used in speaking about God when he was meeting God on Mount Sinai.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

God's grace

When Jonah went outside the city, he got very hot and God graciously provided some relief through the plant. God was trying to teach Jonah through an object lesson. It is important for the reader to see this clearly. (See: grace)

Jonah 4:1

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Jonah 4:2

Ah, Yahweh

The word "Ah" expresses Jonah's feeling of frustration.

is this not just what I said when I was back in my own country?

Jonah used this rhetorical question to show God how angry he was. Also, what Jonah said when he was back in his own country can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "When I was still in my own country I knew that if I warned the people of Nineveh, they would repent, and you would not destroy them"

because I knew that you are a gracious God ... and you hold back from sending disaster

This was Jonah's reason for going to Tarshish instead of to Nineveh. He did not want to go to Nineveh and preach to the people there, because he did not want them to turn from their sins, and he did not want God to be kind to them.

abounding in steadfast love

The abstract noun "love" can be expressed with the verb "love." Alternate translation: "always willing to love people without ceasing"

you hold back from sending disaster

God sends disaster on sinners to punish them. But if sinners repent from their sin, he forgives them and does not send disaster. This implicit information can be expressed more clearly. Alternate translation: "you forgive people and do not send disaster on them"

Jonah 4:3

take my life from me

Jonah's reason for wanting to die can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "since you will not destroy Nineveh as you said you would, please allow me to die"

for it is better for me to die than to live

"I would prefer to die than live" or "because I want to die. I do not want to live"

Jonah 4:4

Is it good that you are so angry?

God used this rhetorical question to scold Jonah for being angry about something he should not have been angry about. Alternate translation: "Your anger is not good."

Jonah 4:5

went out of the city

"left the city of Nineveh"

what might become of the city

"what would happen to the city." Jonah wanted to see if God would destroy the city or not destroy it.

Jonah 4:6

over Jonah so that it might be a shade over his head

"over Jonah's head for shade"

to relieve him of his distress

"to keep Jonah from suffering from the heat of the sun"

Jonah 4:7

But God appointed a worm

"God sent a worm"

It attacked the plant

"The worm chewed the plant"

the plant withered

The plant became dry and died. Alternate translation: "the plant died"

Jonah 4:8

God appointed a hot east wind

God caused a hot wind from the east to blow on Jonah. If in your language wind can only mean a cool or cold wind, then you may need to use a different word. Alternate translation: "God sent a very hot warmth from the east to Jonah"

the sun beat down

"the sun was very hot"

on Jonah's head

Jonah may have felt the heat most on his head. Alternate translation: "on Jonah"

he became faint

"he became very weak" or "he lost his strength"

It is better for me to die than to live

"I would prefer to die than live" or "Because I want to die. I do not want to live." See how you translated this in Jonah 4:3.

Jonah 4:9

Is it good that you are so angry about the plant?

God challenges Jonah for being angry that the plant died and yet wanted God to kill the people of Nineveh. Alternate translation: "Your anger about the plant dying is not good."

Is it good that you are so angry about the plant?

implicit information can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "You should be more concerned about the people in Nineveh dying than about the plant dying."

It is good that I am angry, even to death.

"It is good that I am angry. Now I am angry enough to die!"

Jonah 4:10

Yahweh said

It may be helpful to say that Yahweh was speaking to Jonah. Alternate translation: "Yahweh said to Jonah"

Jonah 4:11

should I not have compassion for Nineveh, that great city ... animals?

God used this question to emphasize his claim that he should have compassion on Nineveh. Alternate translation: "I certainly should have compassion for Nineveh, that important city ... animals."

in which there are more

This can also be the beginning of a new sentence. Alternate translation: "There are more" or "It has more"

who do not know the difference between their right hand and their left hand

This may be a way of saying "they cannot tell the difference between right and wrong."

also many animals

The author is pointing out the depth of Nineveh's repentance to the extent that Yahweh takes note of the animals' participation in the act of repentance.

Book: Nahum

Nahum

Chapter 1

¹ The declaration about Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite.

² Yahweh is a jealous God and avenges;
Yahweh avenges and is full of wrath;
Yahweh takes vengeance on his adversaries,
and he continues his anger for his enemies.

³ Yahweh is slow to anger and great in power;
he will not acquit the wicked.
Yahweh makes his way in the whirlwind and the storm,
and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

⁴ He rebukes the sea and makes it dry;
he dries up all the rivers.
Bashan is weak, and Carmel also;
the flowers of Lebanon have become weak.

⁵ The mountains shake in his presence,
and the hills melt;
the earth collapses in his presence, indeed,
the world and all people who live in it.

⁶ Who can stand before his rage?
Who can resist the fierceness of his anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire,
and the rocks are broken apart by him.

⁷ Yahweh is good,
a stronghold in the day of trouble;
and he acknowledges those who take refuge in him.

⁸ But he will make a full end to his enemies
with an overwhelming flood;
he will pursue them into darkness.

⁹ What are you people plotting against Yahweh?
He will make a full end to it;
trouble will not rise up a second time.

¹⁰ Like tangled thorns
and like the drink of drunkards,
they will be consumed like dry stubble.

¹¹ From you, Nineveh, has come out
someone who plotted evil against Yahweh,
a wicked counselor.

¹² This is what Yahweh says,

"Even if they are at their full strength and full numbers,
they will nevertheless be sheared; their people will pass away.
But you, Judah: Though I have afflicted you,
I will afflict you no more.

¹³ Now will I break that people's yoke from off you;
I will break your chains."

¹⁴ Yahweh has given a command about you, Nineveh:
"There will be no more descendants bearing your name.

I will cut off the carved images and the cast metal figures
from the houses of your gods.
I will prepare your grave,
for you are contemptible."

¹⁵ Look, on the mountains
there are the feet of someone who is bringing good news,
who is announcing peace!
Celebrate your festivals, Judah,
and fulfill your vows,
for the wicked one will invade you no more;
he is completely cut off.

Nahum 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations prefer to set apart extended quotations, prayers and songs. The ULB and many other English translations set the lines of the entire book (except for verse 1 of this chapter) farther to the right on the page than regular text because they are poetic prophecy. (See: prophet)

Despite being divided into three chapters, this book consists of one long prophecy.

Special concepts in this chapter

Yahweh's anger against Nineveh

This prophecy should be read in reference to the book of Jonah. That book described how the people of Nineveh, Assyria's capital city, repented when Jonah warned them that Yahweh was angry at them. The book of Nahum, written a little over one hundred years later than when Jonah was set, indicates that the Ninevites would be punished by God, but only after he had used them for his own purposes. These actions of Yahweh, although described as vengeance or anger, do not have the same sinful quality as they usually do with humans. (See: evil and avenge and sin)

Complete destruction

At that time, Assyria controlled almost the entire Near East. Nahum prophesied that the Assyrians would be so completely destroyed as a nation that they would no longer even be a people group. This prophecy came true very suddenly.

Nahum 1:1

General Information:

Nahum describes the destruction of Nineveh in poetry.

The declaration about Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite

These words are an introduction to the entire book. This can be stated as a complete sentence. Alternate translation: "This is the book of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite, which gives a declaration about Nineveh"

Elkoshite

A person from the village of Elkosh

Nahum 1:2

General Information:

Nahum begins to describe Yahweh coming to judge his enemies and to save his people. The vision is full

of metaphorical language and uses different kinds of parallelism.

Yahweh

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

full of wrath

"very angry" or "most angry"

he continues his anger for

"continues to be angry with"

Nahum 1:3

slow to anger

"slow to become angry"

he will not acquit the wicked

This emphatic negative statement can be translated positively. Alternate translation: "he will always be sure to punish the wicked"

Yahweh makes his way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet

The biblical writers often associated Yahweh's presence with powerful storms. Here the writer speaks of Yahweh as if he were a person walking or marching and kicking up dust as he comes to judge the people.

the dust of his feet

"the dust that his feet kick up"

Nahum 1:4

General Information:

Nahum continues to describe Yahweh coming to judge his enemies and to save his people.

Bashan is weak, and Carmel also; the flowers of Lebanon have become weak

The word translated as "weak" can also mean "withered" or "dried out." Bashan was known for its good pastureland where people tended sheep and cattle, "Carmel" refers to Mount Carmel, which was known for its tree orchards, and the snow from the mountains in Lebanon kept that place fertile. Since Yahweh dries up all the rivers and causes drought, these fertile places will no longer be fertile. Alternate translation: "The fields of Bashan wither, the trees of Mount Carmel die, and the flowers of Lebanon fade"

Nahum 1:5

the hills melt

Possible meanings are 1) the earthquake causing the hills to crumble to pieces is spoken of as if the hills were melting or 2) the water from the storms coursing down the hills and causing them to erode is spoken of as if the hills were melting.

the earth collapses

Possible meanings are 1) the mountains and hills collapse or 2) the entire ground begins to move with violent motions.

the world and all people who live in it

Here the word "world" refers to the inhabited places on the earth. The verb for this phrase is understood from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "the world shakes and all the people who live in it collapse"

Nahum 1:6

General Information:

Nahum continues to describe Yahweh coming to judge his enemies and to save his people.

Who can stand before his rage? Who can resist the fierceness of his anger?

These two rhetorical questions mean basically the same thing. They can be translated with statements. Alternate translation: "No one can stand before his rage! No one can resist the fierceness of his anger!"

resist the fierceness of his anger

Possible meanings are 1) "rise up and fight against him when he is angry" 2) "keep him from destroying him when he is angry"

fierceness of his anger

"intensity of his anger" or "amount of his anger"

His wrath is poured out like fire

Nahum speaks of Yahweh's anger as if it were a liquid that he pours out and which burns like fire. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "He pours out his wrath like fire" or "He expresses his fierce anger"

the rocks are broken apart by him

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "he breaks apart the rocks" or "he causes the rocks to break apart"

Nahum 1:7

a stronghold ... those who take refuge in him

Nahum speaks of Yahweh as if he were a place where people can be safe from those who wish to harm them, and of those who trust Yahweh to protect them as if they were taking refuge inside that safe place.

in the day of trouble

"in times of trouble" or "when troubles happen." The word "day" here refers to a general period of time.

Nahum 1:8

he will make a full end to his enemies

The idiom "make a full end" refers to causing his enemies to die. Alternate translation: "he will completely destroy his enemies" or "he will kill all his enemies"

with an overwhelming flood

Nahum speaks of Yahweh destroying his enemies in such a way that they will be powerless to avoid death as if Yahweh caused them to drown in a great flood of water.

he will pursue them into darkness

Here the word "darkness" represents the place of the dead, which is characterized as a dark place. Nahum speaks of Yahweh killing his enemies as if he were chasing them into this dark place. Alternate translation: "he will cause all his enemies to die"

Nahum 1:9

General Information:

Nahum tells the people of Nineveh how Yahweh will deal with them.

What are you people plotting against Yahweh?

This rhetorical question emphasizes the futility of making evil plans against Yahweh. Alternate translation: "It is futile for you people to plot against Yahweh"

He will make a full end to it

The idiom "make a full end" refers to causing something to exist no longer. Alternate translation: "He will completely stop what you do" or "He will cause your plotting to fail"

trouble will not rise up a second time

Possible meanings are 1) "trouble" is a metonym for the punishment that Yahweh will inflict upon the people. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will not have to punish you a second time" or 2) "trouble" refers to the trouble that the people cause by plotting against Yahweh. Alternate translation: "you will not cause trouble a second time"

Nahum 1:10

General Information:

Nahum uses three metaphors to show that Yahweh will destroy

Like tangled thorns

Possible meanings for this metaphor are that Nahum speaks of 1) the people who plot against Yahweh being unable to free themselves from the trouble that Yahweh will bring upon them as though they were tangled up in thorn bushes and unable to get free or 2) Yahweh quickly destroying those who plot against him as if Yahweh were a person weaving thorn bushes together so they will burn quickly and putting them in a fire.

like the drink of drunkards

Possible meanings for this metaphor are that Nahum speaks of 1) those who plot against Yahweh suffering the consequences of their plans as if they were completely drunk with alcohol or 2) Yahweh destroying those who plot against him as if he were a drunkard drinking a large amount of alcoholic drink.

they will be consumed like dry stubble

Nahum speaks of Yahweh completely destroying those who plot against him as if fire would burn them up like fire burns up dry stubble. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "fire will completely devour them like it devours dry stubble"

consumed

Nahum speaks of fire burning something completely as if the fire were devouring that thing. Alternate translation: "burned up by fire"

Nahum 1:11

From you, Nineveh, has come out someone who plotted evil against Yahweh

"Someone who planned evil against Yahweh has come out from you, Nineveh." The words "From you, Nineveh" are at the beginning of the sentence to emphasize that the writer is now speaking to Nineveh.

From you, Nineveh, has come out someone

The writer speaks as if the city of Nineveh were one person who could hear him speak. The word "Nineveh" is a personification of the people who live in Nineveh. Alternate translation: "From among the people of Nineveh has come out someone" or "From Nineveh have come out people"

a wicked counselor

someone who encouraged people to do wicked things

Nahum 1:12

General Information:

Yahweh speaks to the Israelites about Nineveh.

Even if they are at their full strength and full numbers

This refers to the Assyrians or to the people of Nineveh.

they will nevertheless be sheared

Yahweh speaks of destroying the people of Nineveh as if they were sheep that he will shear. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I will nevertheless shear them" or "I will nevertheless destroy them"

pass away

"disappear" or "waste away" or "all die"

Nahum 1:13

Now will I break that people's yoke from off you; I will break your chains

Yahweh speaks of freeing Judah from Assyrian oppression as if he were breaking the yoke and chains that the Assyrians had placed on them. Alternate translation: "Now I will free you from that people and they will no longer oppress you"

Nahum 1:14

Yahweh has given a command about you, Nineveh ... your name ... your gods ... your grave ... you are

The writer speaks as if the city of Nineveh were one person who could hear him speak. The word "Nineveh" is a personification of the people who

live in Nineveh. See how you translated "you, Nineveh" in [Nahum 1:11]

I will cut off the carved images and the cast metal figures from the houses of your gods

Yahweh speaks of destroying the Assyrian idols as if he were cutting them off, like a person would cut a branch from a tree. The word "house" is a metonym for the temples in which the people worshiped these idols. Alternate translation: "I will destroy the carved images and the cast metal figures that are in the temples of your gods"

I will prepare your grave

It is implied that Yahweh will also bury them in the graves that he digs for them. Alternate translation: "I will dig your graves and bury you in them"

Nahum 1:15

on the mountains there are the feet of someone who is bringing good news

Here the word "feet" represent the person who is running in order to declare a message. Alternate translation: "on the mountains there is someone who is bringing good news"

wicked one ... he

Nahum refers to the people of Nineveh as though they were one person.

he is completely cut off

Nahum speaks of the people of Nineveh being completely destroyed as if they had been cut off, like a person would cut a branch from a tree. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "he is completely destroyed" or "Yahweh has completely destroyed him"

Chapter 2

- ¹ The one who scatters is coming up against you.
Guard the city wall, watch the road,
strengthen your loins, pull together all your strength.
 - ² For Yahweh is restoring the majesty of Jacob
like the majesty of Israel,
although the plunderers devastated them
and destroyed their vine branches.
 - ³ The shields of his mighty men are red,
and the soldiers are clothed in scarlet;
the chariots flash with their metal
on the day that they are made ready,
and the cypress spears are waved in the air.
 - ⁴ The chariots speed through the streets;
they rush back and forth in the wide streets.
They look like torches,
and they run like lightning.
 - ⁵ He remembers his nobles;
they stumble over each other in their march;
they hurry to attack the city wall.
The large shield is made ready to protect these attackers.
 - ⁶ The gates at the rivers are forced open,
and the palace collapses.
 - ⁷ Huzzab is stripped
and is taken away;
her female servants moan like doves,
beating on their breasts.
 - ⁸ Nineveh is like a leaking pool of water,
with its people fleeing away like rushing water.
Others shout, "Stop, stop,"
but no one turns back.
 - ⁹ Take the silver plunder, take the gold plunder,
for there is no end to the treasure,
to the splendor of all Nineveh's desirable things.
 - ¹⁰ Nineveh is empty; empty and devastated.
Everyone's heart melts, everyone's knees strike together,
and anguish is in all loins; their faces are all pale.
 - ¹¹ Where now is the lions' den,
the place where the young lion cubs were fed,
the place where the lion and lioness walked,
with the cubs, where they were afraid of nothing?
 - ¹² The lion tore his victims to pieces for his cubs;
he strangled victims for his lionesses,
and filled his cave with victims,
his dens with torn carcasses.
 - ¹³ "See, I am against you—
this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts.
I will burn your chariots in the smoke,
and the sword will devour your young lions.
I will cut off your prey from your land,
and the voices of your messengers will be heard no more."
-

Nahum 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations prefer to set apart extended quotations, prayers and songs. The ULB and many other English translations set the lines of the entire book (except for verse 1 of chapter 1) farther to the right on the page than regular text because they are poetic prophecy. (See: prophet)

Despite being divided into three chapters, this book contains one long prophecy.

Special concepts in this chapter

Complete destruction

At that time, Assyria controlled almost the entire Near East. Nahum prophesied that the Assyrians would be so completely destroyed as a nation that they would no longer even be a people group. This prophecy came true and did so very suddenly. At times, this chapter is very violent in describing the destruction of Assyria, and this violence should not be toned down through the use of euphemism.

Nahum 2:1

General Information:

Nahum often wrote prophecy in the form of poetry. Hebrew poetry uses different kinds of parallelism. Here he begins to describe the destruction of Nineveh.

The one who scatters

Nahum speaks of an army or military leader destroying Nineveh as if he were to break Nineveh apart as one would shatter a clay pot and scatter the pieces around. Alternate translation: "The one who will destroy you"

is coming up against you

The idiom to "come against" means to attack. Alternate translation: "is preparing to attack you"

Guard the city wall, watch the road, strengthen your loins, pull together all your strength

Nahum speaks to the people of Nineveh. He tells them to prepare for battle although he knows that the enemy will destroy the city.

watch the road

This refers to having soldiers watch the roads leading to the city so that they can keep track of the enemy's approach.

strengthen your loins

The loins are a synecdoche for the whole body. Alternate translation: "make yourselves strong" or "prepare for battle"

pull together all your strength

This is an idiom that means to prepare oneself for action. Here it applies to military action. Alternate translation: "prepare yourselves for battle"

Nahum 2:2

For Yahweh is restoring the majesty of Jacob, like the majesty of Israel

The words "Jacob" and "Israel" are metonyms for the people who are descended from Jacob. Possible meanings are 1) the word "Jacob" refers to the southern kingdom and the word "Israel" refers to the northern kingdom. Alternate translation: "For Yahweh is restoring the majesty of Judah, as he promised to restore the majesty of Israel" or 2) both "Jacob" and "Israel" refer to the nation as a whole, included both northern and southern kingdoms and the two lines are parallel. Alternate translation: "For Yahweh is restoring the majesty of all Israel"

the plunderers

people who steal things by force, usually in war

destroyed their vine branches

Possible meanings are 1) this is a metaphor in which the Assyrians taking away Israel's possessions by force is spoken of as if Israel were a vine whose branches the Assyrians had stripped bare. Alternate translation: "robbed them of all of their possession, like one would strip bare vine branches" or 2) the words "vine branches" are a synecdoche for the agricultural fields throughout the nation. Alternate translation: "destroyed their fields of crops"

Nahum 2:3

The shields of his mighty men are red

Possible meanings are 1) the shields appear red as the light from the sun reflects upon their metal surfaces or 2) the shields are covered with leather that has been dyed red.

his mighty men

the soldiers of the one "who will dash" Nineveh "to pieces" (Nahum 2:1).

the chariots flash with their metal

This likely refers to the light from the sun reflecting upon the metal chariots.

on the day that they are made ready

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "when the soldiers have made them ready" or "when the soldiers have prepared them to attack"

the cypress spears are waved in the air

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the soldiers wave their cypress spears in the air"

cypress

a type of tree whose wood is good for weapons

Nahum 2:4

The chariots speed through the streets

"The soldiers drive the chariots wildly through the streets"

They look like torches

Nahum compares the way that the light from the sun reflects upon the chariots with torches whose fire gives light.

they run like lightning

Nahum compares the way that the light from the sun reflects upon the chariots, and the quickness with which the chariots move, with lightning that flashes quickly in the sky.

Nahum 2:5

He remembers his nobles

The word "remembers" is a metonym for what he does after he remembers them: he calls them to action. Alternate translation: "He calls his nobles" or "He summons his nobles"

nobles

military leaders

in their march

The word "march" can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: "as they march"

The large shield is made ready to protect these attackers

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "The attackers make ready the large shield to protect themselves"

The large shield

This refers to a large cover that those who besieged a city would set up over themselves and their battering rams to protect themselves against the arrows and other projectiles with which the people in the city would attack them.

Nahum 2:6

The gates at the rivers are forced open

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "The enemy forces open the gates at the rivers"

The gates at the rivers

This refers to the gates that controlled the flow and direction of the river.

Nahum 2:7

Huzzab is stripped and is taken away

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "The enemy strips Huzzab and takes her away"

Huzzab is stripped and is taken away

The exact meaning of the word "Huzzab" is uncertain. Two possible meanings are 1) it is the name of a queen in Nineveh and the sentence means that the attacking soldiers have stripped her of her clothes in order to humiliate her and then have carried her off into captivity or 2) it is the name of an idol and the sentence means that the attackers have stripped the gold and silver off the idol and have carried it away.

is stripped

If your language has a word for forcibly taking a person's clothes off of that person and leaving him embarrassed and with nothing to keep him warm, you should use it here.

her female servants moan like doves

The moaning sounds that the female servants make sound like the sounds that doves make.

her female servants

If the word "Huzzab" refers to a queen, then this phrase refers to the young women who attended her. If the word "Huzzab" refers to an idol, then this phrase refers to the young women who worked as temple prostitutes.

beating on their breasts

Beating one's breast was a gesture used to express great mourning.

Nahum 2:8

Nineveh is like a leaking pool of water, with its people fleeing away like rushing water

Nahum compares the way that the people flee from the city of Nineveh with the way that water gushes from a reservoir of water when the dam has been broken.

Nahum 2:9

Take the silver plunder ... Nineveh's desirable things

It is not clear who is speaking here. This may be an apostrophe in which Nahum gives directions to the attackers, or the attackers may be speaking and giving directions to one another.

Take the silver plunder, take the gold plunder

The word "plunder" means things stolen by force, usually in war. Alternate translation: "Take the silver as plunder, take the gold as plunder" or "Take the silver, take the gold"

there is no end to the treasure, to the splendor

The words "no end" are an exaggeration to express that there is a great amount of something. Alternate translation: "there is a very great amount of treasure, of the splendor"

to the splendor of all Nineveh's desirable things

This phrase refers to the silver, gold, and other treasures in Nineveh. The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "there is no end to the splendor of all Nineveh's beautiful treasures"

Nahum 2:10

Everyone's heart melts

Nahum speaks of the people losing courage as if their hearts melt like wax. Alternate translation: "Everyone loses courage"

everyone's knees strike together

This describes a physical response to great fear. The people's legs shake so badly that their knees knock together and they are unable to walk or run.

anguish is in all loins

The loins are either 1) a synecdoche for the whole person. Alternate translation: "everyone is in anguish" Or 2) a metonym for the internal organs, and you should describe them using your language's words for how a person's stomach feels when he is very frightened. Alternate translation: "everyone's stomachs are churning"

Nahum 2:11

General Information:

In these verses, Nahum speaks of the people of Nineveh as if they were a group of lions, and of the city Nineveh as if it were their den. The metaphor speaks of the way in which the Assyrians would conquer other people and take their possessions as their own as if they were lions hunting prey and bringing the dead animals back to their den.

Where now is the lions' den ... afraid of nothing?

Nahum uses this rhetorical question to mock Nineveh, which has been destroyed. Alternate translation: "The lions' den is nowhere to be found ... afraid of nothing." or "Look at what has become of the lions' den ... afraid of nothing!"

Nahum 2:12

he strangled victims

"he choked victims." This is probably a reference to the way that lions usually kill their prey, by biting its throat. Alternate translation: "he killed his victims"

filled his cave with victims, his dens with torn carcasses

These two phrases are saying the same thing in different ways. The verb may be supplied for the second phrase. Alternate translation: "filled his cave with victims, and filled his dens with torn carcasses"

Nahum 2:13

See

"Look" or "Listen" or "Pay attention to what I am about to tell you."

the sword will devour your young lions

Here the word "sword" is a metonym for soldiers who attack with swords and is spoken of as if it were a person who eats its victims. Nahum also continues to speak to the people of Nineveh as if they were lions. Alternate translation: "attackers will kill your people with swords"

I will cut off your prey from your land

Yahweh speaks of the people of Nineveh as if they were lions who preyed upon the nations. Possible meanings are 1) the word "prey" is a metonym for the things that they have taken from those upon whom they preyed, and Yahweh speaks of taking those things away from them as if it were cutting off their prey. Alternate translation: "I will take away from your land all the things that you took from others" or 2) Yahweh speaks of the nations whom the people of Nineveh had plundered as if they were Nineveh's prey, and preventing Nineveh from plundering any more nations as if he were cutting off their prey. Alternate translation: "I will stop you from preying upon any other nation"

the voices of your messengers will be heard no more

This likely refers to the messengers that the Assyrians sent out to other nations to demand surrender or payment of tribute. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "no one will ever hear the voices of your messengers again"

Chapter 3

- ¹ Woe to the city full of blood!
It is all full of lies and stolen property;
victims are always in her.
- ² But now there is the noise of whips
and the sound of rattling wheels,
prancing horses, and bounding chariots.
- ³ Horsemen charging,
flashing swords and glittering spears!
Piles of the dead, bodies that could not be counted—
their attackers stumble over the bodies.
- ⁴ This is happening because of the lustful actions
of the beautiful prostitute, the expert in witchcraft,
who sells nations through her prostitution,
and peoples through her acts of witchcraft.
- ⁵ "See, I am against you—
this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts—
I will raise up your skirt over your face
and show your private parts to the nations,
your shame to the kingdoms.
- ⁶ I will throw disgusting filth on you
and make you vile;
I will set you up as a spectacle.
- ⁷ It will come about that everyone who looks at you
will flee from you and say,
'Nineveh is destroyed; who will weep for her?'
Where can I go to find anyone to comfort you?"
- ⁸ Nineveh, are you better than Thebes,
which was located on the Nile River,
which had water around her,
whose rampart was the sea,
and the sea was its wall?
- ⁹ Cush and Egypt were her strength,
and there was no end to it;
Put and Libya were allies to her.
- ¹⁰ Yet Thebes was carried away;
she went into captivity;
her young children were dashed in pieces
at the head of every street;
her enemies threw lots for her honorable men,
and all her great men were bound in chains.
- ¹¹ You also will become drunk; you will try to hide,
and you also will look for a refuge from your enemy.
- ¹² All your fortresses will be like fig trees
with the earliest ripe figs:
if they are shaken,
they fall into the mouth of the eater.
- ¹³ See, the people among you are women;
the gates of your land have been opened wide to your enemies;
fire has devoured their bars.
- ¹⁴ Go draw water for the siege;
strengthen your fortresses;
go into the clay and tread the mortar;
pick up the molds for the bricks.
- ¹⁵ Fire will devour you there, and the sword will destroy you.

It will devour you as young locusts devour everything.

Make yourselves as many as the young locusts,
as many as the full-grown locusts.

16 You have multiplied your merchants
more than the stars in the heavens;
but they are like young locusts:
they plunder the land and then fly away.

17 Your princes are like locust swarms,
and your commanders are like locusts
that camp in the walls on a cold day.
But when the sun rises they flee,
and the place they go to is not known.

18 King of Assyria, your shepherds are asleep;
your nobles are lying down resting.
Your people are scattered on the mountains,
and there is no one to gather them.

19 No healing is possible for your wounds.
Your wounds are severe.
Everyone who hears the news about you
will clap their hands in joy over you.
On whom has your wickedness
not trodden continually?

Nahum 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations prefer to set apart extended quotations, prayers and songs. The ULB and many other English translations set the lines of the entire book (except for verse 1 of chapter 1) farther to the right on the page than regular text because they are poetic prophecy. (See: prophet)

Despite being divided into three chapters, the book contains one long prophecy.

Special concepts in this chapter

Euphemism

This chapter speaks about the evils of the Assyrians in violent ways. It is important to avoid toning down this language through the use of euphemism, if at all possible. Although there is some hyperbole, the reader should not assume that the author intends this writing to be taken as completely hyperbolic. (See: and evil)

Nahum 3:1

General Information:

Nahum often wrote prophecy in the form of poetry. Hebrew poetry uses different kinds of parallelism. Here he continues to describe the destruction of Nineveh.

the city full of blood

Here the word "blood" represents bloodshed and refers to the people who have committed murder. Alternate translation: "the city full of murderers"

It is all full of lies

Here the word "lies" is a metonym for those who tell lies. Alternate translation: "It is full of liars"

Nahum 3:2

the noise of whips and the sound of rattling wheels, prancing horses, and bounding chariots

These phrases describe the sound of chariots rushing through the streets as their drivers use their whips on the horses.

Nahum 3:3

Piles of the dead, bodies that could not be counted

There were so many dead bodies that the attackers piled them in heaps.

bodies

bodies of people who have died

their attackers stumble over the bodies

This shows that there were very many dead bodies on the ground.

Nahum 3:4

the lustful actions of the beautiful prostitute

Nahum speaks of Nineveh causing other nations to be subject to her as if the city were a prostitute who seduces men with her beauty.

the expert in witchcraft

Nahum speaks of Nineveh causing other nations to be subject to her as if the city were a witch who casts a spells on others.

who sells nations through her prostitution, and peoples through her acts of witchcraft

Here the word "sells" implies that the people of Nineveh cause other nations and peoples to become slaves. Nineveh uses her beauty, power, and influence to make others her slaves. Alternate translation: "who by her prostitution and witchcraft causes the people of other nations to become her slaves"

Nahum 3:5

See

"Look" or "Listen" or "Pay attention to what I am about to tell you"

I will raise up your skirt over your face and show your private parts to the nations

This refers to the practice of publicly humiliating prostitutes by stripping them naked in front of the community. This continues the metaphor of Yahweh speaking of the city of Nineveh as if it were a prostitute. Alternate translation: "I will publicly humiliate you, as one would humiliate a prostitute by raising up her skirt over her face and showing her private parts to all the people"

your shame to the kingdoms

This phrase explains the purpose of lifting up Nineveh's skirt. The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "I will show your shame to the kingdoms"

Nahum 3:6

I will throw disgusting filth on you

The words "disgusting filth" refer to all kinds of garbage. Throwing garbage at a person was a sign of strong contempt. Alternate translation: "I will show my contempt for you, like a person would throw disgusting filth at another"

Nahum 3:7

who will weep for her?

The people ask this rhetorical question to emphasize the negative answer. Alternate translation: "no one will weep for her."

Where can I go to find anyone to comfort you?

Yahweh uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that there will be no one who will be able to comfort Nineveh. Alternate translation: "There is nowhere I could go to find someone to comfort you." or "There will be no one to comfort you."

Nahum 3:8

General Information:

Nahum speaks to the people of Nineveh as though they were the city itself.

are you better than Thebes ... wall?

Nahum asks this rhetorical question to emphasize the negative answer that it anticipates. Alternate translation: "you are not better than Thebes ... wall."

Thebes

This was the former capital of Egypt, which the Assyrians had conquered.

which was located on the Nile River

"which was built by the Nile River"

whose rampart was the sea, and the sea was its wall

These two phrases share similar meanings. The word "sea" refers to the Nile River, which ran near the city. Nahum speaks of the Nile as if it were the wall that protected the city. Alternate translation: "which had the Nile river as its defense, as some cities have a wall for their defense"

rampart

A rampart is a wall built around a city to keep enemy armies from getting into the city.

Nahum 3:9

Cush and Egypt were her strength

"Ethiopia and Egypt strengthened her" or "Cush and Egypt were her allies"

there was no end to it

The word "it" refers to the "strength" that Cush and Egypt gave to Thebes. That there was no end to it is a hyperbole that expresses the great amount of strength. Alternate translation: "their strength was very great"

Put and Libya

These are the names of places in northern Africa that were close to Thebes.

Nahum 3:10

General Information:

Nahum continues to speak to the people of Nineveh as though they were the city itself.

Yet Thebes was carried away

The word "Thebes" represents the people who lived in Thebes. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Yet those who attacked Thebes carried the people away"

she went into captivity

The word "she" refers to Thebes and represents the people who lived there. Alternate translation: "they went into captivity"

her young children were dashed in pieces

This is a brutal description of the soldiers killing children. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "enemy soldiers dashed her young children to pieces" or "enemy soldiers beat her young children to death"

at the head of every street

The beginning of a street is spoken of as if it were the head. Also, "every" is a generalization that means many places all over the city. Alternate translation: "on every street corner" or "in the streets all over the city"

all her great men were bound in chains

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "they bound all her great men in chains"

Nahum 3:11

You also will become drunk

Here the word "You" refers to Nineveh. Nahum speaks of the people of Nineveh suffering and dying in battle as if they had become drunk from drinking too much wine.

Nahum 3:12

General Information:

Nahum continues to speak to the people of Nineveh as though they were the city itself.

All your fortresses

Possible meanings for the word "fortresses" are 1) it refers to Nineveh's fortifications, such as the wall that surrounded the city Alternate translation: "All of your fortifications" or "All of your defenses" or 2) it refers to the fortified cities that were situated along Assyria's borders and prevented enemy armies from attacking Nineveh. Alternate translation: "All of your fortified cities"

All your fortresses will be like fig trees with the earliest ripe figs: if they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater

Nahum compares the ease with which the attackers will conquer Nineveh with the ease with which a person can cause ripe figs to fall from a tree. Alternate translation: "Your enemies will destroy your fortresses as easily as a person can shake a fig tree and eat the first ripe figs that fall"

the earliest ripe figs

This refers to the figs that would ripen first on the tree. These figs fell from the tree easily, so that a person only had to shake the tree to make them fall. Figs that ripened later would require a person to climb the tree and pick them by hand.

if they are shaken

"if the trees are shaken." This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "if a person shakes the trees"

they fall into the mouth of the eater

"the figs fall into the mouth of the eater." This is an exaggeration. By saying that the figs fall from the tree into the mouth of the one who eats it, Nahum emphasizes that the figs are ready to eat immediately. Alternate translation: "a person can eat the fig immediately"

Nahum 3:13

the people among you are women

In this ancient culture, women were not warriors for a number of reasons, including their being generally weaker physically than men. Here Nahum speaks of Nineveh's warriors losing their strength and courage to fight as if the people in the city were all women. Alternate translation: "your people are all like women who are weak and cannot defend themselves"

the gates of your land have been opened wide to your enemies

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the gates of your land are wide open to your enemies" or "someone has opened wide to your enemies the gates of your land"

the gates of your land have been opened wide to your enemies

Possible meanings are 1) if "fortresses" in v. 12 refers to the Nineveh's defenses, then "the gates of your land" refers to the gates in the walls around Nineveh. Alternate translation: "the gates of your city are wide open for your enemies to attack" or 2) if "fortresses" in v. 12 refers to the fortified cities that were situated along Assyria's borders, then "the gates of your land" is a metaphor in which those cities are spoken of as if they were gates that prevented enemy armies from entering the land. Alternate translation: "your land is defenseless before your enemies because they have destroyed the cities that protected your borders"

fire has devoured their bars

Possible meanings are 1) if "fortresses" in v. 12 refers to the Nineveh's defenses, then "their bars" refers to the bars that locked the gates in the walls around Nineveh. Alternate translation: "fire has destroyed the bars that lock your city gates" or 2) if "fortresses" in v. 12 refers to the fortified cities that were situated along Assyria's borders, then "their bars" is a metaphor in which those cities are spoken of as if they were locked gates that prevented enemy armies from entering the land. Alternate translation: "the cities on your borders can no longer protect you, just as gates can no longer protect a city when fire has destroyed their bars"

fire has devoured

Nahum speaks of fire burning up and destroying as if fire were eating. Alternate translation: "fire has destroyed" or "fire has burned up"

Nahum 3:14

General Information:

Nahum continues to speak to the people of Nineveh as though they were the city itself.

Go draw water for the siege ... pick up the molds for the bricks

Nahum speaks to the people of Nineveh. He tells them to prepare for battle and to repair the walls, although he knows that the enemy will destroy the city.

strengthen your fortresses

"repair the fortifications"

go into the clay and tread the mortar; pick up the molds for the bricks

These phrases refer to making mud bricks that they will use to repair the city's wall.

Nahum 3:15

Fire will devour you there

Nahum speaks of fire burning and destroying as if it were eating. Alternate translation: "Fire will destroy you there" or "Your enemies will burn you with fire there"

the sword will destroy you

Here the word "sword" is a metonym for the enemies who will attack with swords. Alternate translation: "your enemies will kill you with their swords"

It will devour you as young locusts devour everything

The word "It" refers to the "sword," which is personified as eating those whom it kills. The soldiers using their swords to kill everyone in Nineveh is compared with the way that a swarm of locusts eats every plant in its path. Alternate translation: "Your enemies' swords will kill all of

you, just as easily as a swarm of locusts devours everything in its path"

Make yourselves as many as the young locusts, as many as the full-grown locusts

These words begin a new paragraph where Nahum compares the number of people in Nineveh with the large number of locusts in a swarm.

Nahum 3:16

General Information:

Nahum speaks to the people of Nineveh as though they were the city itself.

You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars in the heavens

This exaggeration emphasizes the great number of merchants who lived and worked in Nineveh. Alternate translation: "It is as if you have more merchants than there are stars in the sky" or "You have more merchants than anyone could count"

they are like young locusts: they plunder the land and then fly away

Nahum compares the way that these merchants, who have made their profit by selling their goods in Nineveh, will flee from the city when the battle begins with the way that locusts fly away after they have eaten all of the plants in their path.

Nahum 3:17

your commanders are like locusts that camp in the walls on a cold day. But when the sun rises they flee

Nahum compares the way that the officials in Nineveh will flee when the battle starts with the way that locusts will remain still while it is cold, but will fly away when the sun rises and the air becomes warm.

the place they go to is not known

"and no one knows where they have gone"

Nahum 3:18

your shepherds are asleep; your nobles are lying down resting

These two lines share similar meanings. Nahum speaks of the leaders of Assyria as if they were shepherd who are to care for their sheep. He speaks of the shepherds and rulers dying as if they had fallen asleep. Alternate translation: "your leaders who are like shepherds are dead; your rulers are all dead"

Your people are scattered on the mountains

Nahum speaks of the people of Nineveh as if they were sheep that scatter after the shepherds have died. Alternate translation: "Your people are scattered like sheep on the mountains"

Nahum 3:19

No healing is possible for your wounds. Your wounds are severe

Nahum speaks of the certainty of the destruction of Nineveh and the defeat of its king as if the king had suffered an incurable wound.

No healing is possible for your wounds

The word "healing" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "No one is able to heal your wounds"

On whom has your wickedness not trodden continually?

The writer either 1) speaks of wickedness as if it were a person who steps on other people while he goes from one place to another or 2) uses "wickedness" as a metonym for the people who commit it and "trodden" as a metaphor for committing wickedness. This rhetorical question emphasizes the negative answer that it anticipates. Alternate translation: "Your wickedness has continually trodden on everyone." or "There is no one to whom you have not continually done wickedness."

Book: Haggai

Haggai

Chapter 1

¹ In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of Yahweh came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest Joshua son of Jozadak, saying, ² "Yahweh of hosts says this: These people say, 'It is not time for us to come or to build the house of Yahweh.'"

³ Then the word of Yahweh came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, saying, ⁴ "Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your finished houses, while this house lies ruined? ⁵ So now Yahweh of hosts says this: Consider your ways!

⁶ You have sown much seed, but bring in little;
you eat but do not have enough;
you drink but cannot get drunk.
You wear clothes but cannot warm yourselves,
and the wage earner earns money
only to put it into a bag full of holes!

⁷ Yahweh of hosts says this: "Consider your ways! ⁸ Go up to the mountain, bring timber, and build my house; then I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified!—says Yahweh." ⁹ "You looked for much, but behold! you have brought little home, for I blew it away! Why?" declares Yahweh of hosts. "Because my house lies in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. ¹⁰ Because of this the heavens withhold the dew from you, and the earth withholds its produce. ¹¹ I have summoned a drought upon the land and upon the mountains, upon the grain and upon the new wine, upon the oil and upon what the earth sends forth, upon men and upon animals, and upon all the labor of your hands!"

¹² Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and the high priest Joshua son of Jozadak, along with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Yahweh their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, because Yahweh their God had sent him and the people feared the face of Yahweh. ¹³ Then Haggai, the messenger of Yahweh, spoke Yahweh's message to the people and said, "I am with you!—this is Yahweh's declaration!" ¹⁴ So Yahweh stirred up the spirit of the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and the spirit of the high priest Joshua son of Jozadak, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people, so that they went and worked on the house of Yahweh of hosts, their God ¹⁵ in the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

Haggai 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in this chapter.

Special concepts in this chapter

Farming imagery

Scripture frequently uses the imagery of farming in reference to spiritual matters. The statement "You have sown much seed, but bring in little harvest" indicates that they had done a lot but have very little to show for it. (See: spirit and seed)

Haggai 1:1

In the second year of Darius the king

"In the second year of the reign of Darius the king" or "After Darius had been king for more than a year"

Darius ... Haggai ... Zerubbabel ... Shealtiel ... Joshua ... Jozadak

These are all names of men.

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

"on the first day of the sixth month." This is the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar. The first day is near the middle of August on Western calendars.

the word of Yahweh came

This idiom is used to introduce a special message from God. Alternate translation: "Yahweh gave a message" or "Yahweh spoke this message"

Yahweh

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

by the hand of Haggai

Here the word "hand" refers to Haggai himself. Yahweh used Haggai as the agent to deliver his command. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:1]

Haggai 1:2

the house of Yahweh
the temple

Haggai 1:3

the word of Yahweh came

This idiom is used to introduce a special message from God. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:1]

by the hand of Haggai

Here the word "hand" refers to Haggai himself. Yahweh used Haggai as the agent to deliver his command. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:1]

Haggai 1:4

Is it a time for you ... ruined?

Yahweh is rebuking the people. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "Now is not the time for you ... ruined."

this house

the temple of Yahweh

Haggai 1:5

Consider your ways

"Think carefully about how you are living"

Haggai 1:6

bring in little

"harvest little" or "bring in only a small crop"

but cannot get drunk

There is not enough wine to satisfy the people's thirst and not nearly enough for drunkenness. The reader should understand that the text is not calling drunkenness a good thing.

the wage earner earns money only to put it into a bag full of holes

Not earning enough money to buy necessary goods is spoken of as if the person were losing the money that falls out through holes in the money bag. Alternate translation: "the money the worker earns is gone before he finishes buying everything he needs"

Haggai 1:7

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Haggai 1:8

bring timber

This represents only a part of what they needed to build the temple.

Haggai 1:9

behold

"look" or "listen" or "pay attention to what I am about to tell you"

I blew it away

The people not being able to find what they were looking for is spoken of as if Yahweh had blown on dust so it would go away. Alternate translation: "I made sure there was nothing there for you to find"

declares Yahweh of hosts

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. Alternate translation: "this is what Yahweh has declared" or "this is what I, Yahweh, have declared"

runs to his own house

"is always working to build his own house." The word "runs" emphasizes that the people consider building their own houses the most important thing they can do.

Haggai 1:10

the heavens withhold the dew from you

The dew that appears at night is spoken of as if it formed in the sky and fell like rain. The sky is spoken of as if it were a person who refused to give a present or a parent who refused to feed his child. Alternate translation: "the sky does not allow the dew to fall" or "no dew forms"

the earth withholds its produce

The earth is spoken of as if it were a person who refused to give a present or a parent who refused to feed his child. Alternate translation: "the earth does not allow food you grow" or "no food grows"

Haggai 1:11

I have summoned a drought upon the land

Rain not falling for a long time is spoken of as if Yahweh had told a person to come and make the land dry. Alternate translation: "I have kept the rain from falling on the land"

upon the new wine, upon the oil

"Wine" and "oil" are metonyms for grapes and olives.

what the earth sends forth

"what the earth produces" or "all kinds of food"

all the labor of your hands

The abstract noun "labor" can be translated using the phrase "work hard." The labor that the hands perform is a metonym for the things that the labor produces. The hand is a metonym for the person. Alternate translation: "everything you have worked hard to make"

Haggai 1:12

Zerubbabel ... Shealtiel ... Joshua ... Jozadak ... Haggai

See how you translated these men's names in [Haggai 1:1]

obeyed the voice of Yahweh ... the words of Haggai

The voice and the words are metonyms for the persons. Alternate translation: "obeyed Yahweh and Haggai"

the people feared the face of Yahweh

Possible meanings are 1) the face could be a synecdoche for the person. Alternate translation: "the people feared Yahweh" or 2) the face could be a metonym for the person's presence. Alternate translation: "the people were afraid to be in Yahweh's presence"

Haggai 1:13

this is Yahweh's declaration

"this is what Yahweh has declared" or "this is what I, Yahweh, have declared"

Haggai 1:14

Yahweh stirred up the spirit of the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and the spirit of the high priest Joshua son of Jozadak, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people

Stirring the spirit is a metonym for making someone want to act. Alternate translation: "Yahweh made the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and the high priest Joshua son of Jozadak, and all the remnant of the people want to act"

remnant

people who were still alive after being captive in Babylon and had returned to Jerusalem

Haggai 1:15

in the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month

This is just 23 days after he received the vision. This is the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar. The twenty-fourth day is near the middle of September on Western calendars.

the second year of Darius the king

"second year of the reign of Darius the king" or "after Darius had been king for more than one year"

Chapter 2

¹ In the seventh month on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of Yahweh came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, saying, ² "Speak to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest Joshua son of Jozadak, and to the remnant of the people. Say, ³ 'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not like nothing in your eyes? ⁴ Now, be strong, Zerubbabel!—this is Yahweh's declaration— and be strong, high priest Joshua son of Jozadak; and be strong, all you people in the land! —this is Yahweh's declaration—and work, for I am with you!— this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts. ⁵ This is the covenant that I established with you when you came out of Egypt, and my Spirit stands among you. Do not fear!

⁶ For Yahweh of hosts says this: In a little while I will once again shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land! ⁷ I will shake every nation, and every nation will bring their precious things to me, and I will fill this house with glory, says Yahweh of hosts. ⁸ The silver and gold are mine!—this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts. ⁹ The glory of this house will be greater in the future than at the beginning, says Yahweh of hosts, and I will give peace in this place!—this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts."

¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ¹¹ "Yahweh of hosts says this: Ask the priests concerning the law, and say, ¹² 'If a man carries meat that is set apart to Yahweh in the fold of his garment, and the fold touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any kind of food, does it become holy?'"

The priests answered and said, "No."

¹³ Then Haggai said, "If someone who is unclean because of death touches any of these things, do they become unclean?" The priests answered and said, "Yes, they become unclean."

¹⁴ So Haggai answered and said, "So it is with this people and this nation before me!— this is Yahweh's declaration—and so it is with the work of their hands. What they offer to me is unclean!

¹⁵ So now, think in your minds about the past leading up to this very day. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of Yahweh, ¹⁶ how was it then? When you came to a heap of twenty measures of grain, there were only ten; and when you came to the wine vat to draw out fifty measures, there were only twenty. ¹⁷ I afflicted you and all the work of your hands with blight and mildew, but you still did not turn to me—this is Yahweh's declaration. ¹⁸ Consider from this day forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day that the foundation of the temple of Yahweh was laid. Consider it! ¹⁹ Is there still seed in the storehouse? The vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not borne! But from this day will I bless you!"

²⁰ Then the word of Yahweh came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month and said, ²¹ "Speak to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, and say,

'I will shake the heavens and the earth.

²² For I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms
and destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations!

I will overthrow the chariots and their riders;
the horses and their riders will fall down,
each one because of his brother's sword.

²³ On that day—this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts— I will take you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, as my servant—this is Yahweh's declaration. I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you!— this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts!"

Haggai 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in 2:3-9, 21-23.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Unclean

Haggai uses an extended metaphor in this chapter related to ritual cleanliness. While the Jews were not unclean by nature as the Gentiles were, their actions made them unclean. (See: and clean)

Haggai 2:1

In the seventh month on the twenty-first day of the month

This is the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. The twenty-first day is near the middle of October on Western calendars.

the word of Yahweh came

This idiom is used to introduce a special message from God. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:1]

by the hand of Haggai

Here the word "hand" refers to Haggai himself. Yahweh used Haggai as the agent to deliver his command. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:1]

Haggai

See how you translated this man's name in [Haggai 1:1]

Haggai 2:2

Speak to the governor

This is a urgent exhortation.

Zerubbabel ... Shealtiel ... Joshua ... Jozadak

See how you translated these men's names in [Haggai 1:1]

Haggai 2:3

General Information:

Yahweh speaks to the people about the new temple they are building. They are building it on the same place their ancestors built the former temple, which Nebuchadnezzar completely destroyed. This new temple is much smaller than the former temple.

Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory?

Yahweh speaks of the new temple as if it were the same building as the old temple. He is telling those who had seen the former temple to pay attention. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "I want those among you who saw this house in its former glory to pay attention."

How do you see it now?

Yahweh is telling them that he knows what they are thinking about the new temple. He speaks of the new temple as if it were the same building as the old temple. This rhetorical question can be

translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "I know what you think of this new temple."

Is it not like nothing in your eyes?

Yahweh is telling the people that he understands that they are disappointed because the new temple is so small. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "I know that you think it is not important at all."

Haggai 2:4

Now, be strong

"From now on, be strong"

this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:9]

Haggai 2:5

my Spirit stands among you

Possible meanings are 1) "my Spirit lives among you" or "my Spirit will fight against your enemies" as a helper, or 2) "my Spirit is a witness to you," testifying that God is still with them.

Haggai 2:6

I will ... shake the heavens ... the earth ... the sea ... the dry land

The words "I will shake the earth" could be translated as "I will cause an earthquake," and that earthquake would shake "the sea" as well as "the dry land," a merism for the entire earth. Yahweh speaks of the heavens and every nation as if they also were solid objects that he could shake.

shake

Use the verb you usually use for pushing trees back and forth to get fruit or other objects to fall from them.

Haggai 2:7

I will shake every nation

The metaphor that begins with the words "I will ... shake the heavens" in verse 6 ends here. Yahweh speaks of every nation as if they also were solid objects that he could shake.

I will fill this house with glory

Yahweh speaks of glory as if it were a solid or liquid that could be put into a container, the temple. Possible meanings are 1) the temple will become very beautiful. Alternate translation: "I will make

this house very beautiful" or 2) the "precious things" that "every nation will bring" include much silver and gold and other forms of wealth. Alternate translation: "I will have people bring many beautiful things into this house"

Haggai 2:8

this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:9]

Haggai 2:9

General Information:

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Haggai 2:10

On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month

This is the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar. The twenty-fourth day is near the middle of December on Western calendars.

in the second year of Darius

"in the second year of the reign of Darius" or "when Darius had been king for more than one year"

Darius ... Haggai

See how you translated these men's names in [Haggai 1:1]

the word of Yahweh came

This idiom is used to introduce a special message from God. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:1]

Haggai 2:11

Ask the priests

This is an urgent exhortation.

Haggai 2:12

meat that is set apart to Yahweh ... holy

The words "that is set apart to Yahweh" and the word "holy" translate the same Hebrew word. "holy meat ... holy"

Haggai 2:13

because of death

"because he has touched a dead body"

Haggai 2:14

So Haggai answered and said, "So it is ... is unclean

Haggai answers the priests with the words that Yahweh told Haggai to tell the priests. Alternate translation: "So Haggai answered and told them Yahweh's words: 'So it is ... is unclean'"

So it is with this people and this nation before me

"I look at this people and this nation the same way." Yahweh reminds the priests that a clean thing that touches an unclean thing becomes unclean. He then reminds them that he thinks of them as unclean because they have been worshiping idols, and so everything they touch and make becomes unclean.

this is Yahweh's declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:9]

the work of their hands

The hands are a synecdoche for the people whose hands they are. Alternate translation: "everything they have done" or "everything they make with their hands"

Haggai 2:15

think in your minds

This is an urgent exhortation.

Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "Before you laid the first stones for the temple"

Haggai 2:16

twenty measures

"20 measures." A "measure" is an unknown amount.

fifty measures

"50 measures." A "measure" is an unknown amount.

Haggai 2:17

all the work of your hands

"everything you made" or "your crops"

this is Yahweh's declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:9]

Haggai 2:18

Consider from this day forward

This is an urgent exhortation.

the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month

This is the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar. The twenty-fourth day is near the middle of December on Western calendars. See how you translated this in [Haggai 2:10]

the day that the foundation of the temple of Yahweh was laid

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "the day that you laid the foundation of Yahweh's temple"

Haggai 2:19

Is there still seed in the storehouse?

Yahweh is preparing the people for the promise he is about to give them. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "You can see that there is no seed in the storehouse."

The vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree

"Your grape vines, fig trees, pomegranate trees, and olive trees"

the pomegranate

This is a type of sweet fruit. You may need to make explicit that the tree is being spoken of. Alternate translation: "the pomegranate tree"

have not borne

"have not produced fruit"

Haggai 2:20

the word of Yahweh came

This idiom is used to introduce a special message from God. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:1]

Haggai

This is the name of a man. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:1]

on the twenty-fourth day of the month

You may need to make explicit which month is spoken of. Alternate translation: "on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month"

Haggai 2:21

Zerubbabel

This is the name of a man. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:1]

I will shake the heavens and the earth

The words "I will shake the earth" could be translated as "I will cause an earthquake." Yahweh speaks of the heavens as if they also were solid objects that he could shake. See how these ideas are translated in [Haggai 2:6]

shake

Use the verb you usually use for pushing trees back and forth to get fruit or other objects to fall from them. See how you translated this in Haggai 2:6.

the heavens and the earth

This is a merism for "the whole universe" or "everything that exists."

Haggai 2:22

I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms

The throne is a metonym for the person sitting on the throne. Alternate translation: "I will take kings off of their thrones"

the throne of kingdoms

Here "throne" is a metonym for the king who sits on it. Alternate translation: "government ruled by kings"

I will ... destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations

You may need to make explicit that "the nations" are Israel's enemies. Alternate translation: "I will make it so the kingdoms of the nations that are Israel's enemies are no longer strong"

each one because of his brother's sword

The sword here is a metonym for violent death. Alternate translation: "each one because his brother has killed him"

Haggai 2:23

this is the declaration of Yahweh of hosts

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:9]

Zerubbabel ... Shealtiel

See how you translated these men's names in [Haggai 1:1]

this is Yahweh's declaration

Yahweh speaks of himself by name to express the certainty of what he is declaring. See how you translated this in [Haggai 1:9]

I will make you like a signet ring

Kings used a signet ring to seal documents to show that they truly had his authority. Zerubbabel would have authority from Yahweh because he would speak Yahweh's words.

Book: Malachi

Malachi

Chapter 1

¹ The burden of the word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of Malachi.

² "I have loved you," says Yahweh. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares Yahweh. "Yet I have loved Jacob, ³ but Esau I have hated. I have made his mountains an abandoned devastation, and I have made his inheritance a place for the jackals of the wilderness." ⁴ If Edom says, "We are beaten down, but we will return and rebuild the ruins," Yahweh of hosts will say, "They may rebuild, but I will throw down again. Others will call them 'The country of wickedness' and 'The people with whom Yahweh is angry forever.' ⁵ Your own eyes will see this, and you will say, 'Yahweh is great beyond the borders of Israel.'"

⁶ "A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. If I, then, am a Father, where is my honor? If I am a master, where is the reverence for me?" says Yahweh of hosts to you priests, who despise my name. "But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' ⁷ By offering polluted bread upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that Yahweh's table is contemptible. ⁸ When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not evil? When you offer the lame and sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor! Will he accept you or will he lift up your face?" says Yahweh of hosts. ⁹ Now you keep asking the face of God, that he may be gracious to us. But Yahweh of hosts says that with such an offering in your hand, would he lift up any of your faces? ¹⁰ "Oh, if only there were one of you who would shut the temple gates, so that you might not light fires on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you," says Yahweh of hosts, "and I will not accept any offering from your hand. ¹¹ For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations and in every place incense and pure grain offerings will be offered in my name. For my name will be great among the nations," says Yahweh of hosts. ¹² "But you are profaning it when you say the Lord's table is polluted, and that its fruit, its food, is to be despised. ¹³ You also say, 'How tiresome this is,' and you snort at it," says Yahweh of hosts. "You bring what has been torn or is lame or sick; and this you bring as your offering. Should I accept this from your hand?" says Yahweh. ¹⁴ "May the deceiver be cursed who has a male animal in his flock and vows to give it to me, and yet sacrifices to me, the Lord, what is flawed! For I am a great king," says Yahweh of hosts, "and my name will be honored among the nations."

Malachi 1 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Yahweh of hosts

This is an important title used in this chapter. It reminds the reader of the great power Yahweh has to punish the nations. (See: yahwehofhosts)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical questions

There are many rhetorical questions in this chapter. They all have a rather dramatic effect. They increase the emotional connotations of what is being said.

Malachi 1:1

The burden of the word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of Malachi

This can be expressed as a statement. "This is the burden of the word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of Malachi"

burden

This is a metaphor for a serious message.

Yahweh

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

by the hand of Malachi

The phrase "by the hand of" is an idiom that means that Yahweh used Malachi to deliver his message. Alternate translation: "through Malachi" or "spoken to them by Malachi"

Malachi 1:2

How have you loved us?

This question indicates that the people doubt the truth of what God says. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "You have not shown that you love us."

Was not Esau Jacob's brother?

This question, a reply of Yahweh reminding the people of their nation's history, may also be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "You know that Esau was Jacob's brother."

declares Yahweh

"Yahweh has solemnly said this"

I have loved Jacob

Here "loved" implies a relationship of loyalty between Yahweh and Jacob, in which a covenant existed between them. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "as you know, I obligated myself with a covenant to love Jacob"

I have loved Jacob

This name "Jacob" refers here not only to Jacob, but also to all his descendants.

Malachi 1:3

Esau I have hated

Here "hated" implies that there was no covenant between Yahweh and Esau. However, it does not imply that Yahweh was emotionally against Esau.

Esau I have hated

This name "Esau" refers here not only to Esau, but also to all his descendants.

his mountains

This refers to the hill country of Edom.

I have made his inheritance a place for the jackals of the wilderness

In the Old Testament, the presence of wild animals such as jackals was a frequent description of land deserted by the people who once lived there.

his inheritance

Here "inheritance" stands for the region that Esau's descendants, the nation of Edom, occupied.

Malachi 1:4

If Edom says

Here "Edom" stands for the people of Edom. Alternate translation: "If the people of Edom say"

I will throw down

Here "throw down" stands for "destroy." Alternate translation: "I will destroy"

country of wickedness

Here "wickedness" stands either for wicked people or for wicked actions. Alternate translation: "country of wicked people"

Malachi 1:5

Your own eyes will see this

Here "your own eyes" stands for the people themselves. Alternate translation: "You yourselves will see this"

Malachi 1:6

General Information:

Yahweh rebukes the priests using an imaginary conversation in which the priests protest that they are doing right and Yahweh tells them what they are doing wrong.

despise my name

Here "my name" stands for Yahweh himself. Alternate translation: "treat me as though you hate me"

How have we despised your name?

Here the priests are asking a question in order to state that they have not really despised Yahweh. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "We have not really despised your name." or "Tell us how we have despised your name, because we do not think that we have done so."

Malachi 1:7

polluted bread

Here "polluted" describes anything that is not suitable to sacrifice to God.

How have we polluted you?

Here the priests are asking a question in order to state that they have not really polluted Yahweh. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "We have not polluted you." or "Tell us how we have polluted you, because we do not think that we have done so."

polluted you

This expression refers to insulting God by giving him unsuitable sacrifices.

table

This refers to an altar.

By saying that Yahweh's table is contemptible.

This is the answer that Yahweh gives to the priests, but the full answer is only implied. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "You have polluted my altar by saying, 'Yahweh's table is contemptible.'"

contemptible

something people should regard as bad, worse than worthless

Malachi 1:8

When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not evil?

Here Yahweh uses a question to rebuke the people. Alternate translation: "You know very well that it is evil for you to offer blind animals for sacrifice!"

When you offer the lame and sick, is that not evil?

Here Yahweh uses a question to rebuke the people. Alternate translation: "And you know very well that it is evil for you to offer lame and sick animals!"

Present that to your governor! Will he accept you or will he lift up your face?

Here the imperative functions as a condition. Alternate translation: "If you present that to your governor, will he accept you or will he lift up your face?"

Present that to your governor! Will he accept you or will he lift up your face?

Here Yahweh asks this question in order to remind the people that their governor would never accept defective animals from them. Alternate translation: "If you present that to your governor, you know that the he will not accept you. He will not lift up your face."

will he lift up your face

Lifting up someone's face refers to accepting him with favor. Alternate translation: "will he accept you with favor" or "will he agree to help you"

Present

give as a gift to show respect

Malachi 1:9

Now you keep asking the face of God, that he may be gracious to us

Malachi is no longer speaking for God. He is talking directly to the Israelites; he is criticizing them for daring to think that God will have mercy on them.

keep asking the face of God, that he may be gracious

They were speaking nicely to God hoping to convince him to stop being angry with them.

Alternate translation: "keep begging God to be gracious"

with such an offering in your hand, would he lift up any of your faces?

Here Yahweh is asking a question in order to make a statement of rebuke. Alternate translation: "if you offer unacceptable offerings, he will certainly not lift up your faces."

with such an offering in your hand

This difficult phrase in Hebrew is interpreted in many different ways by modern versions.

in your hand

Here "hand" stands for the people bringing the offering. Alternate translation: "brought by you"

would he lift up any of your faces

Lifting up someone's face refers to accepting him with favor. Alternate translation: "would he accept any of you with favor" or "would he agree to help any of you"

Malachi 1:10

Oh, if only

This expresses great desire.

so that you might not light fires on my altar in vain

Here "light fires on my altar" stands for offering sacrifices on Yahweh's altar. Alternate translation: "so that you might not make fires to burn offerings that I will not accept"

from your hand

Here "your hand" stands for "you." Alternate translation: "from you"

Malachi 1:11

from the rising of the sun to its setting

This double expression means "everywhere." It is parallel to "among the nations" and "in every place"

my name will be great among the nations

Here "my name" stands for Yahweh's reputation and honor. Alternate translation: "I will be honored in other nations"

in every place incense and pure grain offerings will be offered in my name

This may be expressed in active form. Alternate translation: "in these nations people will worship me by offering incense and pure grain offerings to me"

in my name

Here "name" stands for Yahweh. Alternate translation: "to me"

Malachi 1:12

its fruit, its food

Possible meanings are 1) "the meat sacrificed on the altar from animals whose other parts the priests should eat" or 2) "the meat sacrificed on the altar."

Malachi 1:13

snort at it

show great disrespect by making noises through the nose

what has been torn

Possible meanings are 1) "what you have stolen from others" or 2) "what a wild animal has killed."

Should I accept this from your hand?

Here Yahweh is asking a question in order to make a statement of rebuke. Alternate translation: "I should certainly not accept this from you!"

from your hand

Here "your hand" stands for "you." Alternate translation: "from you"

Malachi 1:14

my name will be honored among the nations

This may be expressed in active form. Alternate translation: "people in the other nations honor my name"

my name will be honored

Here "my name" stands for Yahweh. Alternate translation: "I will be honored"

Chapter 2

¹ Now you priests, this command is for you. ² "If you will not listen, and if you will not lay it on your heart to give honor to my name," says Yahweh of hosts, "then I will send a curse on you, and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have cursed them, because you are not laying my command on your heart. ³ See, I am about to rebuke your descendants, and I will spread dung on your faces, the dung from your festivals, and he will take you away with it. ^[1]^[2]⁴ You will know that I have sent this command to you, and that my covenant may continue to be with Levi," says Yahweh of hosts. ⁵ "My covenant with him was life and peace, and I gave them to him; I gave him fear, and he feared me, and he stood in awe of my name. ⁶ True instruction was in his mouth, and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness and he turned many away from iniquity. ⁷ For a priest's lips should keep knowledge and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is a messenger of Yahweh of hosts. ⁸ But you have turned away from the true path. You have caused many to stumble with respect to the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says Yahweh of hosts. ⁹ "So, I have made you contemptible and lowly before all the people, because you have not kept my ways, but have instead shown partiality in matters of the law."

¹⁰ Is there not one Father for us all? Has not one God created us? Why are we faithless each man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers? ¹¹ Judah has been faithless. A disgusting thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the holy place of Yahweh which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. ¹² May Yahweh cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, the one who is awake and the one who answers, even if he is bringing an offering to Yahweh of hosts. ^[3]¹³ You also do this: You cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, with weeping and sighing, because he still does not turn toward the offering or accept it with favor from your hand. ¹⁴ But you say, "Why does he not?" Because Yahweh was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have been faithless, even though she was your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ Did he not make them one, with a portion of his spirit? Then why did he make you one? Because he was seeking an offspring from God. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ "For I hate divorce," says Yahweh, the God of Israel, "and the one who covers his garment with violence," says Yahweh of hosts. "So guard yourselves in your spirit and do not be faithless."

¹⁷ You have wearied Yahweh with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the eyes of Yahweh, and he delights in them," or "Where is the God of justice?"

Footnotes

2:3 ^[1] Instead of

2:3 ^[2] Instead of

2:12 ^[3] Instead of

Malachi 2 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Levites

The priests are given a strong warning in this chapter. They have not followed the law of Moses and have led the people in the wrong direction. Yahweh has not accepted their sacrifices. (See: priest and lawofmoses)

Marital unfaithfulness

Because the Jews lived under a covenantal arrangement with Yahweh, their relationship is described using the imagery of a marriage. Marital unfaithfulness indicates a person's unfaithfulness to Yahweh.

Malachi 2:1

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Malachi 2:2

lay it on your heart

This refers to considering something to be very important. Alternate translation: "consider it to be very important"

give honor to my name

The abstract noun "honor" can be stated as a verb. Alternate translation: "honor my name"

my name

Here this expression refers to God.

I will send a curse on you

The abstract noun "curse" can be stated as a verb. Alternate translation: "I will curse you"

you are not laying my command on your heart

This refers to considering God's command to be very important. Alternate translation: "you are not considering my command to be very important"

Malachi 2:3

I will spread dung on your faces

Here "dung on your faces" stands for disgrace. Alternate translation: "I will most certainly put you in deep disgrace; it will be as bad as if I had spread dung on your faces"

the dung from your festivals

Here "festivals" stands for the animals that the priests offered in sacrifice at the Israelite festivals. "The dung" probably refers both to the dung that was produced by the animals just before they were slaughtered for sacrifice, and to the dung that was found inside the animals when their bodies were cut apart before being sacrificed. Temple workers had to transport this dung to a place outside of the temple, and probably outside of Jerusalem.

he will take you away with it

This difficult expression can be translated as "God will take you away with it," that is, with the dung. This expression continues the same metaphor of slaughtering animals for sacrifice, and it can be put in active form. Alternate translation: "they will throw you on the dung pile; God will make sure that they take you away when they remove all the dung"

he will take you away with it

Possible meanings of this expression are 1) God will punish the unfaithful priests by killing them and causing their bodies to be carried away on the piles of animal dung, or 2) God will punish the unfaithful priests in such a horrible way that it will be as if

their bodies had been carried away with the animal dung.

Malachi 2:4

Levi

Here Levi represents his descendants, the tribe of Levi. Alternate translation: "so that my covenant may be with you, the descendants of Levi"

Malachi 2:5

General Information:

Yahweh speaks of the tribe of Levi as though they are Levi.

My covenant with him was life and peace

Here the intended results of the covenant are spoken of as if they were the covenant itself. Alternate translation: "The purpose of my covenant with Levi was for the priests to live in prosperity and peace"

fear, and he feared me

This expression continues the same metaphor, but leaves out an idea that is implied in the text. This can begin a new sentence. Alternate translation: "My covenant with him was also fear, and he feared me" or "In my covenant with him, I required him to fear me, and he did fear me"

in awe of my name

Here "my name" stands for God himself.

Malachi 2:6

nothing false was found

Here finding something stands for that thing existing. Alternate translation: "there was no falsehood"

on his lips

Here "lips" stands for a person's ability to speak.

He walked with me

Here walking stands for living, conducting one's life in a certain way.

in peace and uprightness

Here the idea of location stands for the manner in which Levi lived. Alternate translation: "peacefully and uprightly"

he turned many away from iniquity

Here persuading people to stop sinning is spoken of as if it were turning them away from sin. Alternate translation: "he persuaded many people to stop sinning"

lips

Here "lips" stands for a person's ability to speak.

Malachi 2:7

For a priest's lips should keep knowledge

Here knowledge is spoken of as if it were an object that a priest could keep. In this passage, the idea of "keep knowledge" implies communicating true knowledge about God.

seek instruction

Here instruction is spoken of as if it were an object that people could look for. This can be restated to remove the abstract noun "instruction." Alternate translation: "want to be instructed" or "want a priest to teach them truly"

from his mouth

Here "mouth" stands for what a person says.

Malachi 2:8

you have turned away from the true path

The right way to behave is spoken of as if it were the right path to follow, and abandoning right conduct is spoken of as if it were turning away from that path.

You have caused many to stumble

Disobeying God is spoken of as if it were stumbling.

You have caused many to stumble with respect to the law

The expression "with respect to the law" gives the context for the "stumbling." Alternate translation: "You have caused many to disobey the law"

corrupted the covenant of Levi

"broken the covenant I made with the Levites."

Malachi 2:9

before all the people

This spatial idea stands for the people's awareness of the priests' evil behavior.

kept my ways

Here "ways" stands for "desires" and "behavior." These ways are spoken of as if they were things that could be kept by people. Alternate translation: "followed my desires in how you should live"

shown partiality in matters of the law

"set easy standards of behavior for people you like and difficult standards of behavior for people you do not like"

shown partiality

Here the habit of favoring some people more than others is spoken of as if it were a thing that could be shown to others. Alternate translation: "made people aware that you favor some people more than others"

Malachi 2:10

General Information:

Here the prophet Malachi begins to speak to his fellow Israelites.

Is there not one Father for us all? Has not one God created us?

Malachi asks these questions in order to remind his fellow Israelites about what they already know. Alternate translation: "You know that we all have one Father, that our God has created a nation out of us." or "You all know that God is the Father of all us Israelites, because he is the one who made our nation."

Has not one God created us?

This question is meant to express a statement. Alternate translation: "Certainly it is the same God who has created us."

created us

This probably refers to God forming the Hebrews into a nation.

Why are we faithless each man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Malachi asks this question in order to rebuke his fellow Israelites. This question may be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "We should certainly not mistreat our brothers and disrespect God's covenant by disobeying his commands, as you have been doing."

Malachi 2:11

Judah has been faithless

Here "Judah" stands for the people in the region of Judah, and the fact that they have been faithless to Yahweh is spoken of as if they were one man named "Judah." Alternate translation: "The people of Judah have been faithless"

A disgusting thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem

This can be expressed in active form. Alternate translation: "People have done disgusting things in Israel and in Jerusalem"

For Judah has profaned the holy place of Yahweh

Here "Judah" refers again to the people of Israel. Alternate translation: "For the people of Judah have profaned the holy place of Yahweh"

has married the daughter of a foreign god

The people of Judah are again referred to as if they were one man named "Judah." Alternate translation: "have married women from other nations, women who worship idols"

Malachi 2:12

May Yahweh cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who
Destroying something is often spoken of as it were cutting it off from something else. Alternate translation: "May Yahweh destroy anyone in the tents of Jacob who" or "May Yahweh kill anyone in the community of Israel who"

the tents of Jacob

Here "tents of Jacob" stands for the community of Israel.

Jacob

Here "Jacob" stands for all the Israelites, because Jacob was one of the patriarchs from whom the Israelites were descended.

the one who is awake and the one who answers

This expression seems to mean "absolutely everyone."

Malachi 2:13

General Information:

Malachi continues to speak to his fellow Israelites.

You cover the altar of Yahweh with tears

This sarcastically exaggerates the amount of tears the people cry to show that Yahweh knows that the people do not really feel sad.

with weeping and sighing

The words "weeping" and "sighing" share similar meanings and intensify the idea of weeping. Alternate translation: "with great weeping"

does not turn toward the offering

Here turning toward a gift stands for receiving it and showing favor to the giver.

does not turn toward the offering

This implies that those who are weeping at Yahweh's altar have offered sacrifices to him.

from your hand

Here "hand" stands for the person giving the offering. Alternate translation: "from you"

Malachi 2:14

Why does he not?

The full thought, as in [Malachi 2:13]

the wife of your youth

"the woman you married when you were young"

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

This statement assumes that this woman is still living.

a witness between you and the wife of your youth

Here a witness to an agreement between two people is thought of as standing between them in order to testify about what they agreed to, in case a dispute arises between the two people. This sentence also was meant to remind the people that Yahweh would punish any Israelite who broke the covenant of marriage.

she was your companion and your wife by covenant

This statement implies that many of the Israelites had divorced their wives.

by covenant

"by the covenant of marriage that you agreed to"

Malachi 2:15

Did he not make them one, with a portion of his spirit?

This question may be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "He certainly made husband and wife one, with a portion of his spirit."

make them one

This expression implies making husband and wife one flesh. Alternate translation: "make husband and wife one flesh"

an offspring from God

Children who would honor and obey God.

Malachi 2:16

I hate divorce

Here "divorce" stands for the act of divorce, when a man sends away his wife, so as to end his marriage to her. Alternate translation: "I hate it when a man divorces his wife"

the one who covers his garment with violence

This phrase probably means any man who is violent toward his wife.

So guard yourselves in your spirit and do not be faithless

"So be careful to be loyal to your wife"

Malachi 2:17

You have wearied Yahweh

Yahweh is spoken of as if human behavior could make him tired, but God cannot grow weary in a physical or emotional sense. This statement probably means that the people have repeatedly offended Yahweh. Alternate translation: "You have offended Yahweh"

How have we wearied him?

This question is meant to deny that the people have done any wrong. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "We have certainly not wearied him."

By saying

The complete idea here is, "You have wearied him by saying." This is the prophet's answer to the rhetorical question.

in the eyes

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. Alternate translation: "in the opinion" or "in the judgment"

Where is the God of justice?

The priests ask this question in order to claim either that Yahweh does not care whether people do evil or not, or that he never punishes evildoers. Alternate translation: "God certainly does not punish evil people!"

the God of justice

the God who punishes evildoers justly

Chapter 3

¹ "See, I am about to send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, see, he will come," says Yahweh of hosts.

² But who will be able to endure the day of his coming? Who will be able to stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire and like laundry soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi. He will refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings of righteousness to Yahweh. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to Yahweh, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. ⁵ "Then I will approach you for judgment. I will quickly become a witness against the sorcerers, the adulterers, those who swear to deception, and against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, those who oppress the widow and the orphan, against those who turn away the foreigner, and against those who do not honor me," says Yahweh of hosts. ⁶ "For I, Yahweh, have not changed; therefore you descendants of Jacob have not been consumed.

⁷ From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says Yahweh of hosts. "But you say, 'How will we return?' ⁸ Would a person rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation. ¹⁰ Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and test me now in this," says Yahweh of hosts, "if I do not open to you the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing on you, until there is no more room for it all. ¹¹ I will rebuke those who destroy your crops, so that they do not destroy the harvest of your land. Your vines in the fields will not lose their fruit," says Yahweh of hosts. ¹² "All the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight," says Yahweh of hosts.

¹³ "Your words against me have been strong," says Yahweh. "But you say, 'What have we said among ourselves against you?' ¹⁴ You have said, 'It is useless to serve God. What profit is it that we have kept his requirements or walked mournfully before Yahweh of hosts? ¹⁵ So now we call those who do evil blessed. Evil-doers not only prosper, but they even test God and escape.'"

¹⁶ Then those who feared Yahweh spoke with one another. Yahweh paid attention and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him about those who feared Yahweh and honored his name. ¹⁷ "They will be mine," says Yahweh of hosts, "my own treasured possession, on the day that I act. I will pity them, as a man pities his own son who serves him. ¹⁸ Then once again you will distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who worships God and one who does not worship him.

Malachi 3 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Messiah

There are several prophecies in this chapter concerning the Messiah and the one who comes before the Messiah. At times, this chapter switches between prophesying about the first coming of the Messiah and the second coming of the Messiah without formal divisions between them. (See: prophet and christ)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical questions

Several rhetorical questions are used in this chapter to convince the reader of the truth of what he is saying and of their sin. (See: sin)

Malachi 3:1

General Information:

Yahweh begins speaking again to the people of Israel in verse 1, but the prophet Malachi begins speaking in verse 2.

See

"Look" or "Listen" or "Pay attention to what I am about to tell you"

he will prepare the way before me

Here getting people ready to welcome Yahweh is spoken of as if a road were being cleared for Yahweh to travel on.

Then the Lord, whom you seek ... The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight

Some modern versions translate this in a way that implies that these two expressions refer to the same person. Other modern versions leave this matter ambiguous. We recommend that translations leave this matter ambiguous, as the ULB does.

The messenger of the covenant

Almost all versions leave ambiguous the sense of this expression. But translators may need to make explicit the relationship between "messenger" and "the covenant." The UDB presents "the messenger" as one promised by the covenant that Yahweh had with Israel. Another choice is to present the messenger as a person who will either confirm that covenant or announce a new covenant.

Malachi 3:2

But who will be able to endure the day of his coming? Who will be able to stand when he appears?

These rhetorical questions imply that no one will be able to resist Yahweh when he comes. They can be combined into one statement. Alternate translation: "However, no one will be able to resist Yahweh when he comes to judge them."

the day of his coming

Here "day" stands for "time." Alternate translation: "the time when he comes"

be able to stand

Here standing represents resisting someone's attack or accusations.

For he will be like a refiner's fire and like laundry soap

This sentence gives the reason why no one will be able to resist God when he comes. God's power to judge the people and to stop them from sinning is spoken of as if it were the power of strong soap to clean clothes, or the power of fire to melt an object. These are ways of saying that God's power to do these things cannot be stopped.

Malachi 3:3

he will purify the sons of Levi

Forgiving the sons of Levi and persuading them not to sin any longer is spoken of as if it were purifying metal. Alternate translation: "he will correct the sons of Levi and forgive them for having sinned"

the sons of Levi

Here "sons" refers to descendants. The male descendants of Levi were the priests and workers in the temple.

He will sit

Here sitting implies the action of a metalworker, who sits down in order to purify small amounts of gold or silver. It also implies the action of a king, who sits down to judge people and give decrees.

He will refine them like gold and silver

Here persuading people not to sin any longer is spoken of as if a metalworker were making gold and silver more pure.

they will bring offerings of righteousness to Yahweh

Here "of righteousness" means "motivated by righteous desires to worship God." Alternate translation: "they will bring acceptable offerings to Yahweh in order to worship Yahweh"

Malachi 3:4

General Information:

Malachi continues speaking in verse 4, but Yahweh begins speaking again in verse 5.

the offering of Judah and Jerusalem

Here "Judah" and "Jerusalem" stand for the people in those places. Alternate translation: "the offerings brought by the people of Judah and Jerusalem"

as in the days of old, and as in ancient years

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize that the offering was once pleasing to Yahweh. Alternate translation: "as it was in the distant past" or "as it was a long time ago"

Malachi 3:5

Then I will approach you for judgment

Here "judgment" refers to the act of judging. Alternate translation: "Then I will approach you in order to judge you"

oppress the hired worker in his wages

"cause the hired worker to suffer by not paying him for his work"

turn away the foreigner

That is, turning away the foreigner from gaining his rights. Depriving people of their rights is spoken of as if it were physically turning them away from oneself. Perhaps the idea is turning away someone

who comes for a wrong to be set right. Alternate translation: "deny foreigners living in Israel the rights that they should have"

Malachi 3:6

General Information:

Yahweh continues to speak to the people of Israel.

you descendants of Jacob have not been consumed

This can be translated in active form. The word "consumed" is a metaphor for "destroyed."

Alternate translation: "I have not consumed you descendants of Jacob" or "you descendants of Jacob have not perished"

Malachi 3:7

From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them

Disobeying God's statutes is spoken of as if it were turning away from them. Alternate translation: "You have disobeyed my statutes ever since the days of your ancestors"

Return to me, and I will return to you

Here loving each other and being faithful to each other is spoken of as if it were returning to each other. Alternate translation: "Love me and honor me, and I will always help you"

How will we return?

The people ask this question in order to claim that they have never stopped obeying God. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "We have never gone away from you, so we cannot return to you." or "We have never gone away from you, so it makes no sense to speak of us as returning to you."

Malachi 3:8

General Information:

Yahweh continues to speak to the people of Israel.

Would a person rob God?

This question implies that the idea of robbing God is very wicked. This can be expressed as a statement. God speaks of himself in the third person. Alternate translation: "A man should certainly not rob God." or "No one should ever rob me."

How have we robbed you?

This question implies that the people do not think they have robbed God. Alternate translation: "We have certainly not robbed you."

In tithes and offerings

This reply from Yahweh implies a fuller answer. Alternate translation: "You have robbed me by withholding from me your tithes and offerings"

Malachi 3:9

You are cursed with a curse

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I have certainly cursed you"

you are robbing me, the whole nation

Here "nation" stands for the people to whom Yahweh is speaking. Alternate translation: "all of you in the whole nation are robbing me"

Malachi 3:10

General Information:

Yahweh continues to speak to the people of Israel.

the full tithe

"all the tithes"

my house

Here "house" stands for the temple. Alternate translation: "my temple"

and test me now in this ... if I do not open to you the windows of heaven

Here the command "test me" stands for something that the people can do and should do: "if you test me." This can be divided into two sentences also. Alternate translation: "And if you test me ... I will open up the windows of heaven" or "And you should test me ... If you do, I will open up the windows of heaven"

Malachi 3:11

General Information:

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Malachi 3:12

All the nations will call you blessed

Here to be called blessed stands for being blessed. Alternate translation: "All the nations will know that you have been blessed"

All the nations

This expression stands for the people in all the nations. Alternate translation: "The people in all the nations"

a land of delight

Here "delight" stands for the condition in which the inhabitants of a land take delight in their land.

Malachi 3:13

General Information:

These verses begin a new section in the book. Here Yahweh is speaking to the people of Israel.

Your words against me have been strong

Here "strong" stands for "harsh" or "terrible." And "Your words" stands for "What you have said." Alternate translation: "What you have said about me is terrible"

What have we said among ourselves against you?

The people ask this question in order to claim that they have said nothing against God. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "We have not said anything among ourselves against you."

Malachi 3:14

What profit is it that we have kept his requirements or walked mournfully before Yahweh of hosts?

The people ask this question among themselves in order to make a statement. Alternate translation: "It is useless that we have kept his requirements and walked mournfully before Yahweh of hosts."

walked mournfully before Yahweh of hosts

Here "walk mournfully" stands for "behave in a sorrowful manner," probably in order to indicate sorrow over their sins.

before Yahweh of hosts

Here this expression refers to God being aware of what the people were doing.

Malachi 3:15

we call those who do evil blessed

Here to "call ... blessed" stands for being blessed. This may be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "we say that God has blessed those who do evil" or "we say that those who do evil are well off"

escape

That is, "they escape God's punishment."

Malachi 3:16

General Information:

The event described here may have taken place after the godly people in Israel repented of their sins.

a book of remembrance was written before him about those who feared Yahweh

This can mean 1) the Israelites wrote a book so they would remember what they had promised and listed the names of people who feared Yahweh or 2) Yahweh caused someone in heaven to write a book with the names of people who feared him.

book of remembrance

This expression refers to any book that helps people remember important things, such as events or people who lived in the past.

honored his name

Here "his name" stands for God himself.

Malachi 3:17

They will be mine

"They will be my people"

my own treasured possession

Here "possession" refers to one's personal property. This idea can be expressed with a verb. Alternate translation: "they will belong completely to me"

I act

the time when Yahweh will judge and punish the rebellious Israelites, giving victory to the faithful Israelites

Malachi 3:18

distinguish between

"see a difference between" or "treat differently"

Chapter 4

¹ For see, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and all the evildoers will become stubble. The day that is coming will burn them up," says Yahweh of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ² But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. You will go out, and you will leap like calves from the stall. ³ On that day you will trample down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I act," says Yahweh of hosts.

⁴ "Remember the law of my servant Moses that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel, the statutes and the rulings. ⁵ See, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and fearful day of Yahweh. ⁶ He will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, so that I do not come and attack the land with complete destruction."

Malachi 4 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Last days

Although the Jews may have hoped these prophecies referenced a time in the near future to them, the prophecies of this chapter exclusively relate to the last days. (See: prophet and lastday)

Malachi 4:1

see

"look" or "listen" or "pay attention to what I am about to tell you"

the day is coming, burning like a furnace

The disaster occurring at this time is spoken of as if the day itself were burning. God's judgment is often spoken of as if it were a fire.

arrogant ... evildoers

See how you translated these wordsd in Malachi 3:15.

all the arrogant and all the evildoers will become stubble

These people are spoken of as if they will become dried-up plants fit only for being burned. It is common for the Bible to speak of people as if they were plants or trees. Alternate translation: "all the arrogant and all the evildoers will burn up like dry plants"

The day that is coming will burn them up

Here "the day" stands for the events that will occur on that day. Alternate translation: "On that day I will burn them up"

it will leave them neither root nor branch

This expression continues to speak of people as if they were plants or trees. So being deprived of all roots and branches stands for being completely killed off. Alternate translation: "nothing will be left"

Malachi 4:2

you who fear my name

Here "my name" stands for Yahweh himself.

the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings

This can mean 1) Yahweh, who always acts righteously, will come and heal his people on that day or 2) on that day Yahweh will reveal the people's righteousness and heal them.

healing in its wings

Possible meanings are 1) the act of healing someone is spoken of as if it were an object that the sun carried to people by means of its wings or 2) the healing takes place under the wings, that is, in the security God gives his people.

wings

It was common in the Ancient Near East to speak of the sun as if it had wings, with which it moved across the sky. Possible meanings are 1) the sun's life-giving rays of light are spoken of as if they were its wings or 2) the wings are said to cover God's people so as to give them peace and safety.

You will go out, and you will leap like calves from the stall

Here the redeemed people of Yahweh are spoken of as if they were young bulls released from their stalls, allowed to go out into their pasture.

Malachi 4:3

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

Here the victory of God's people is spoken of as if they were walking over the burned bodies of their enemies.

they will be ashes

The Israelites' enemies are spoken of as having been burned to ashes (Malachi 4:1).

Malachi 4:4

Remember

Here "Remember" stands for "Think about" and, at the same time, "Obey."

Horeb

This is another name for Sinai.

all Israel

Here "all Israel" is a reference to all the people in the nation of Israel.

the statutes

These are the laws that God gave Israel for all time.

the rulings

These are legal decisions meant to make clear how the general statutes apply to everyday life.

Malachi 4:5

the coming of the great and fearful day of Yahweh

Here the occurrence of this day is spoken of as if it were coming. Alternate translation: "before the great and fearful day of Yahweh happens"

the great and fearful day of Yahweh

This expression refers to any time in which Yahweh acts decisively.

Malachi 4:6

He will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers

Here changing how people think is spoken of as if it were turning their hearts.
