Gender Issues in Bible Translations

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In the EHV logo the circle of light or rainbow radiating from the cross is divided into three parts to symbolize the three *solas* of the Reformation, by grace alone, by faith alone, and by Scripture alone. This semi-circle, together with the base, form the Latin letter D, which means 500 and honors the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, the year in which the first edition of the EHV was published.

Gender Issues, Marriage Issues, and Sexual Issues in Bible Translations

This article is addressed only to the translational aspects of the contemporary debates concerning so-called gender accurate or gender neutral language in the Bible. It does not aim to address the theological and pastoral issues involved in such topics as male and female roles in the Bible, the nature of marriage, and contemporary views about gender identity. Its primary concern is not to debate the validity of various trends in English grammar and usage. It rather addresses one question, "What English expression will best convey the divinely intended meaning of a given passage of Holy Scripture?" Accurately conveying the message of the divinely inspired text takes priority over adopting new trends in English usage. Contemporary trends of English usage cannot be accepted if they blur the message of a biblical text.

In dealing with individual passages of Scripture, the EHV begins with the following premises:
- God created mankind as male and female.
- God instituted marriage as a life-long union of one man and one woman.
- People do not have the right to alter the divine institution of marriage.
- From the time of creation God established different roles for men and women in their relationships within his creation.
- The New Testament affirms that these roles and God's purposes for men and women within marriage still apply today.

When they are wrestling with the best rendering for individual passages, translators must choose the renderings that best preserve and clarify the biblical principles of marriage and gender, as they are expressed throughout Scripture.

So-called "gender accurate" language is one of the most controversial issues in contemporary Bible translation. It is at the heart of the conflict between some supporters of NRSV, TNIV, and NIV 2011 toward one end of the spectrum, some supporters of ESV and CSB toward the middle, and the King James and NKJV toward the other end. Some of the main points of the controversy include: whether "man" can still be used in a generic sense to refer to "human beings" and whether singulars should be changed to plurals to avoid masculine pronouns. In this paper we cannot do more than outline the issues by providing examples from various translations and suggesting topics for further study.

The principle followed by the EHV is rather simple:

> In trying to produce gender accurate language the translator will strive to be inclusive where the original is inclusive and exclusive where the original is exclusive.

Giving principles for Bible translation, however, is much like giving principles for investing. It is very easy to state good principles. The investing principle I follow is: "Buy the stocks that are going to go up. Do not buy the stocks that are going to go down." I believe this is a great principle that needs little explanation. The problem is not in stating the principle. The problem lies in the complexity of applying the principle to specific cases in the real world. This is also true in Bible translations as we shall see.

We will first study specific words and phrases and then state some general conclusions

Man

Let us take the "man" issue first. Hebrew and Greek have a pair of words, *ish* and *aner,* which refer to male beings as their default meaning, but these terms can sometimes have a wider application. Hebrew and Greek have another pair of words, *adam* and *anthropos,* which are more open to an inclusive meaning that includes both males and females. Neither of these pairs is completely differentiated from the other. Context can indicate exceptions to the usual usage. Sometimes the word-pairs are distinct from one another; sometimes they may be used interchangeably or in parallelism.

The Hebrew term *adam* includes a person of each gender in Genesis 1:27 (See also 1:26; 5:1-2).

NIV   So God created *man* in his own image, in the image of God he created him;
          male and female he created them.
HCSB So God created *man* in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male
          and female he created them.
CSB   So God created *man* in his own image; he created him in the image of God;
          he created them male and female.
ESV   So God created *man* in his own image, in the image of God he created him;
          male and female he created them.
TNIV   So God created *human being*s in his own image; in the image of God he
          created them; male and female he created them.
NIV11   So God created *mankind* in his own image, in the image of God he created
          them; male and female he created them.
NRSV   So God created *humankind* in his image, in the image of God he created
          them; male and female he created them.
EHV   God created *the man** in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and
          female he created them.
             * Hebrew *ha-adam*

But in other places it is clear that *adam* can refer to an individual male (Ge 2:7-8, Ge 2:15-16) or to "man" rather than "woman" (Ge 2:22, 3:8, 3:20).
A complicating factor is the use of *Adam* as the proper name of the first male. Does the term "sons of *adam"* merely mean "humans," or does it remind us of our descent from the man who came from the earth and who will return to it? Also how does one keep the original connotation of "earth-man" when that is part of the picture? In passages that focus on original sin and its effects, can "sons of *adam*" be translated "children of Adam" rather than "human beings"?

The Greek word *anthropos* includes all people in 1Timothy 2:4.

NIV84   [God] wants all men to be saved
NIV11   [God] wants all people to be saved
CSB   [God] wants everyone to be saved
ESV   [God] desires all people to be saved
EHV   [God] wants all people to be saved
Here the inclusive "people" is a better translation than "men" because it
brings out the contrast with the "man" and "woman" passages that follow in
1 Timothy 1 and 2.

James 1:7 and 8 seem to be a case in which *anthropos* and *aner* could be interchangeable: "That *person* (*anthropos*) should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a *person* (*aner*) is

double-minded and unstable in all they do" (NIV). Or should we say, "Such people are double-minded and unstable in all *they* do"?

EHV reads: "That person should not expect that he will receive anything from the Lord. [8]He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

In Ephesians 2:15 does Christ create one new man or one new humanity?

NIV84 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself *one new man* out of the two, thus making peace,

CSB   He made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that He might create in Himself *one new man* from the two, resulting in peace.

ESV   by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself *one new man* in place of the two, so making peace,

NASB   by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into *one new man*, thus establishing peace,

NET   when he nullified in his flesh the law of commandments in decrees. He did this to create in himself *one new man* out of two, thus making peace,

NLT   He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself *one new people* from the two groups.

MSG   He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created *a new kind of human being, a fresh start* for everybody.

BBE   Having in his flesh put an end to that which made the division between us, even the law with its rules and orders, so that he might make in himself, of the two, *one new man*, so making peace;

NKJV   having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is , the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself *one new man* from the two, thus making peace,

NRSV   He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself *one new humanity* in place of the two, thus making peace,

KJV   Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain *one new man*, so making peace.

EHV   He made the two groups one by destroying the wall of hostility that divided them [15]when he abolished the law of commandments and regulations in his flesh. He did this to create in himself *one new person* out of the two, in this way making peace.

Everyone/they

Perhaps this is the place for an aside on the singular/plural grammatical dissonance which recent translators sometimes produce in their efforts to avoid masculine pronouns. In the example above from James 1 ("Such a *person* is double-minded and unstable in all *they* do") the NIV translators apparently wanted to avoid "him" in the second part of the sentence, but they didn't want to use "persons" in the first part of the sentence because they don't want to be criticized for removing the more personal individual emphasis of the singular form.

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There are, of course, cases in which a singular/plural shift makes sense or even is required: "Everyone liked the picnic, but they did not like the mosquitoes."[1] "Everyone was in their shorts" is correct but not without its unclarities. Presumably all of the men and women present owned more than one pair of shorts, but each was wearing only one pair. Why not say, "Everyone was wearing their own shorts" or better yet, "everyone was wearing shorts," as the context requires.

Here is an example of a good singular/plural shift from the Bible: "Everyone (πας) who competes in the games goes into strict training. They (εκεινοι) do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever" (1 Cor 9:25). Here the shift of number is in the Greek text. It is not manufactured by the translator. EHV reads: "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable victor's wreath, but we do it for an imperishable one."

The issue, however, becomes more complicated when the translator starts casually changing biblical singulars to plurals. In many cases there may be "no harm, no foul," but when the principle is applied indiscriminately, ambiguities and misleading renderings are created, and the linguistic gymnastics necessary to avoid the masculine singular at times border on the silly.[2] Compare these efforts to deal with the masculine singular.

> Revelation 3:20
> NIV1984 If *anyone* hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with
> *him,* and he with me.
> TNIV   If *anyone* hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with
> *them*, and they with me.
> NIV2011 If *anyone* hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with
> *that person*, and they with me.
> HCSB   If *anyone* hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and
> have dinner with *him*, and he with Me.
> CSB   If *anyone* hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and
> eat with *him*, and he with me.
> NRSV   If *you* hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat
> with *you*, and you with me.
> EHV   Look, I stand at the door and I am knocking. If anyone hears my voice
> and opens the door, I will go in with him and dine with him, and he with
> me.

How does NRSV escape the dilemma? Another issue here is whether "anyone" and "everyone" can be treated the same, or is "anyone" more singular than "everyone"?

The statement about "trying to have one's cake and eating it" would seem apropos here. It should, however, be possible for translators, if they wish to avoid masculine pronouns, to do so without irritating readers who have a feeling that traditional rules of agreement still apply to literary prose. Few people will be offended by good grammar.[3]

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[1] I can't say: "Everyone liked the picnic, but he did not like the mosquitoes." Why not say: "All of them liked the picnic, but they did not like the mosquitoes"?

[2] The online learning program which I use regularly sends me messages like this: "Mary has handed in their assignment." Perhaps Mary has a split personality.

[3] We have not even touched upon a couple of other factors involved in this problem, such as the frequency with which Hebrew jumps back and forth between singular and plurals, and the problems caused by the disappearance of the distinction between singular and plural "you" in English. Another issue is the implied plural contained in singular collective nouns: "Israel fled and returned to their tents."

The General Issue of
Attention to Number and Gender

There are other instances, not directly related to the gender neutral issue, in which it would be good if translations would more carefully observe number and gender distinctions. In John 1:11, for example, John says that Jesus came to his own things (τα ιδια), but his own people (οι ιδιοι) did not accept him. Some translations observe the gender distinction; others do not.

Clear distinction of neuter and masculine
NET   He came to *what* was his own, but *his own people* did not receive him.
BBE   He came to *the things* which were his and *his people* did not take him to their hearts.
NRSV He came to *what* was his own, and *his own people* did not accept him.
EHV   He came to *what* was his own, yet *his own people* did not *accept* him.[12]But to all who did *receive* him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Less Clear
NIV   He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.
CSB   He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.
ESV   He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.
NASB He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.
NKJV   He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.
KJV   He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

The distinction is missed
NLT   He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.
MSG   He came to his own people, but they didn't want him.

The Number of God

A special problem with singular or plural arises from the Hebrew idiom of using *elohim,* a plural which normally means "gods," to refer to the one true God. This is sometimes called a "majestic plural." When the Philistines hear that the Ark of the Covenant has arrived in Israel's camp, they say, "*Elohim* has come into the camp" (1 Samuel 4:7). How should this be translated?

NIV   A god has come into the camp.
ESV   A god has come into the camp.
NASB God has come into the camp.
BBE   God has come into their tents.
HCSB The gods have entered their camp!
CSB   A god has entered their camp!
NET   They thought that gods had come to the camp.
NLT   The gods have come into their camp!
MSG   Their gods have come to their camp!
NKJV   God has come into the camp!
NRSV   Gods have come into the camp.
KJV   God is come into the camp.
EHV   A god has come into the camp.

A similar issue exists in the story of the Golden Calf.

Additional Examples of Gender Issues

An interesting test of the tendency of translations to strive for gender neutral language is provided by Hosea 9:7.

> ESV the prophet is a fool; the *man of the spirit* is mad
> NIV84 the prophet is considered a fool, *the inspired man* a maniac
> NIV11 the prophet is considered a fool, *anyone who is inspired* a maniac
> NASB the prophet is a fool, *the inspired man* is demented
> NLT the prophets are crazy and *the inspired men* are fools!
> MSG the prophet is crazy! The *'man of the Spirit'* is nuts
> BBE the prophet is foolish, *the man who has the spirit* is off his head
> NKJV the prophet is a fool, *the spiritual man* is insane
> NRSV the prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad!
> CSB the prophet is a fool, and *the inspired man* is insane
> EHV The prophet is considered to be a fool. The man of the Spirit is called crazy.

> NIV 2011 stands alone here. Even NRSV keeps "man of the spirit." *Spirit* or spirit is, of course, another issue here.

A parallel case is found in Amos 2:11

> NIV84 I also raised up prophets from among your *sons* and Nazirites from among your *young men*.
> ESV I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your *young men* for Nazirites
> NASB I raised up some of your *sons* to be prophets And some of your *young men* to be Nazirites.
> MSG I raised up some of your *young men* to be prophets, set aside your *best youth* for training in holiness.
> BBE some of your *sons* I made prophets, and some of your *young men* I made separate for myself.
> NKJV I raised up some of your *sons* as prophets, And some of your *young men* as Nazirites.
> CSB I raised up some of your *sons* as prophets and some of your *young men* as Nazirites.
> NRSV I raised up some of your *children* to be prophets and some of your *youths* to be nazirites.
> NIV11 I also raised up prophets from among your *children* and Nazirites from among *your youths*.
> EHV I raised up some of your *sons* to be prophets, and some of your *best young men* to be Nazirites.

> The Hebrew word which NIV 2011 translates as "youths" (*bachurim*) means "young men." It often contrasts with *betuloth,* "virgins."

What about when the issue is inspiration of the prophets?

> 2 Peter 1:21

NIV84 prophecy never had its origin in the *will of man*, but *men* (*anthropoi*) spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

NIV11 prophecy never had its origin in *the human will*, but *prophets, though human,* spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

HCSB no prophecy ever came by the *will of man;* instead, *men* spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

CSB no prophecy ever came by the *will of man*; instead, *men* spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

ESV no prophecy was ever produced by *the will of man*, but *men* spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

NASB no prophecy was ever made by *an act of human will*, but *men* moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

NET no prophecy was ever borne of *human impulse*; rather, *men* carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

NLT nor from *human initiative*. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and *they* spoke from God.

MSG it's not something concocted *in the human heart*. Prophecy resulted when the Holy Spirit prompted *men and women* to speak God's Word.

BBE For these words did not ever come through the *impulse of men*: but the prophets had them from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

NKJV prophecy never came by the *will of man*, but *holy men of God* spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

NRSV no prophecy ever came by *human will*, but *men and women* moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

KJV prophecy came not in old time by the *will of man*: but *holy men of God* spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

EHV No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone's own interpretation. [21]In fact, no prophecy ever came by the *will of man*, but *men* spoke from God, as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Which do you like best?

Women

Only rarely do the Hebrew and Greek words for women create an issue (unless there is a choice between "woman" or "wife").[4]

NIV 2011, however, creates an issue in Nahum 3:13 where it translates "women" as "weaklings":
"Look at your troops—they are all *weaklings*!"
    instead of the more literal:
"Look at your troops—they are all *women*!"
EHV reads: Your warriors are like *women* among you in the face of your enemies."
(At least in this case the NIV cannot justly be accused of trying to mollify feminists.) A defense of this translation would be that the point of comparison is women's relative lack of upper body strength compared to men. The only other translation which I found that bought this approach was the Message: "Your warriors are wimps. You're sitting ducks." In this rendering of the Message, as well as in Isaiah

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[4] An example of a different sort occurs when Jesus addresses his mother as "woman." This issue here is not gender but relationship.

19:16, Jeremiah 50:37 and 51:30, and Isaiah 3:12,[5] it is clear that upper body strength is not the only issue. Zeal in war is another part of the picture. Perhaps also blood-thirstiness. Maybe even cruelty—though women are not incapable of cruelty. The intended meaning of a text, however, is at risk when a translator takes it upon himself (or herself or themselves) to "fix" or "improve" points of the text that are an embarrassment to them.

The opposite case of trying to avoid sexual stereotypes is found in 1 Corinthians 16:13.

NIV84 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be *men of courage*; be strong.
NIV11 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be *courageous*; be strong
HCSB Be alert, stand firm in the faith, *act like a man*, be strong.
CSB Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be *courageous*, be strong.
NASB Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, *act like men*, be strong.
ESV Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, *act like men*, be strong.
NET Stay alert, stand firm in the faith, show *courage*, be strong.
MSG Keep your eyes open, hold tight to your convictions, *give it all you've got*, be resolute,
BBE Be on the watch, unmoved in the faith, and *be strong like men*.
NKJV Watch, stand fast in the faith, be *brave,* be strong.
NRSV Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be *courageous*, be strong.
KJV Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, *quit you like men,* be strong.
EHV Keep alert. Stand firm in the faith. Demonstrate manly courage. Be strong.

Is manliness obsolete?

Who was to prepare to go up Mt. Sinai at the giving of the law, all Israelites or just the men?

Exodus 19:15
NIV "Prepare yourselves for the third day. *Abstain from sexual relations*."
NASB "Be ready for the third day; *do not go near a woman*."
ESV "Be ready for the third day; *do not go near a woman*."
NLT "Get ready for the third day, and until then *abstain from having sexual intercourse*."
MSG "Be ready in three days. *Don't sleep with a woman*."
BBE "Be ready by the third day: *do not come near a woman*."
NKJV "Be ready for the third day; *do not come near your wives*."
NRSV "Prepare for the third day; *do not go near a woman*."
KJV "Be ready against the third day: *come not at your wives*."
CSB "Be prepared by the third day. *Do not have sexual relations with women*."
EHV "Be ready by the third day. *Do not come near a woman*."
 Footnote: The prohibition is not limited to sexual intercourse, because even touching a woman during her period made a man unclean. See Leviticus 15:19–24. The command is more comprehensive that a prohibition of intercourse.

In the Ten Commandments the pronouns are masculine singular. Did Israelite women conclude that the commandments did not apply to them? Did the women think the 9th and 10th commandments against coveting did not apply to them?

Another passage which raises the issue of comparison of the sexes is 1 Peter 3:7:

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[5] In Isaiah 3:12 NIV retains "women." Only NET emends away from it.

Greek	living together according to knowledge, as to the *weaker, female vessel*
ESV	showing honor to the woman as the *weaker vessel*
NIV	treat them with respect as the weaker partner
HCSB	live with your wives with an understanding of their *weaker nature*
CSB	live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a *weaker partner*,
NASB	as with someone *weaker, since she is a woman*
NLT	Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be *weaker than you are,* but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life.
MSG	Be good husbands to your wives. Honor them, delight in them. As women *they lack some of your advantages.* But in the new life of God's grace, you're equals. Treat your wives, then, as equals so your prayers don't run aground.
BBE	giving honor to the woman who is *the feebler vessel*
NRSV	paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex
KJV	giving honor unto the wife, as unto *the weaker vessel*
EHV	continue to live with your wives with the knowledge that, as the wife, she is the weaker vessel.

Footnote: *Weaker vessel* is a literal translation. Some understand *vessel* to be a reference to the body (1 Samuel 21:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:4) and to physical weakness. Others understand *vessel* as a reference to God-given roles (Acts 9:15; 2 Timothy 2:20-21) and to more limited authority. It may include both ideas.

What is the point here? It seems most likely Peter is referring primarily to the physical burdens that come to the woman in child-bearing. "Vessel" refers to the body in its sexual and reproductive use. Those who translate literally leave the interpretation to the interpreter. Those who try to explain how the woman is weaker may give offense which the text did not give. NLT and MSG editorialize.

Here is one example of the "woman" or "wife" issue from 1 Corinthians 11:3.

NIV	Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.
NASB	But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.
NLT	But there is one thing I want you to know: The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.
ESV	But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a *wife* is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.
MSG	In a marriage relationship, there is authority from Christ to husband, and from husband to wife. The authority of Christ is the authority of God.
CSB	Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ.
EHV	Christ is the head of every man, and man is woman's head, and God is Christ's head.

Here ESV adopts a translation that establishes a limitation that is not in the text, though it does not make as big a mess as the Message. The translation adopted by the ESV destroys the parallel between man and woman in the following verses.

Another passage concerning roles of men and women which has raised translation issues is 1Timothy 2:12.

NET	But I do not allow a woman to teach or *exercise authority* over a man. She must remain *quiet.*
NIV84	I do not permit a woman to teach or to *have authority* over a man; she must be *silent.*

NIV11	I do not permit a woman to teach or to *assume authority* over a man;[*] she must be *quiet.*
	*Footnote: Or over her husband
HCSB	I do not allow a woman to teach or to *have authority* over a man; instead, she is to be *silent.*
CSB	I do not allow a woman to teach or to *have authority* over a man; instead, she is to remain *quiet.*
NASB	But I do not allow a woman to teach or *exercise authority* over a man, but to remain *quiet.*
ESV	I do not permit a woman to teach or to *exercise authority* over a man; rather, she is to remain *quiet.*
NLT	I do not let women teach men or *have authority* over them. Let them listen *quietly.*
MSG	They should study to be quiet and obedient along with everyone else.
BBE	In my opinion it is right for a woman not to be a teacher, or to *have rule* over a man, but to be *quiet.*
NKJV	And I do not permit a woman to teach or to *have authority* over a man, but to be in *silence.*
NRSV	I permit no woman to teach or to *have authority* over a man; she is to keep *silent.*
KJV	But I suffer not a woman to teach; nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.
EHV	And I do not permit a woman to teach or to *have authority* over a man. Instead, she is to continue *in a quiet manner.*

Complications

This issue is complicated by the fact that gender issues and issues of social status overlap and become entangled. We have an example of this in Luke 22:56-58. The text calls the female person who confronts Peter in the courtyard a girl (παιδισκη). Does this reflect her age or her social status?[6] Seemingly, it is the latter. Peter calls her "woman" (γυναι) when he addresses her. In contemporary informal English we could call her "lady," but this would hardly work in the 1st century, would it? In the next confrontation Peter addresses a male person of undetermined social status as *anthrope*, which all translations render as "man." Why did Peter call the guy an *anthropos* rather than an *aner?* In contemporary English when is it acceptable to address a group of 30-ish female persons as "girls"? When is it not acceptable? When is it acceptable to address an African-American male as "boy"? When is it not?

A similar issue of social tone arises when Jesus addresses his mother as "woman": "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me?" (John 2:4 EHV). This sounds disrespectful to some people. Such English alternatives as "lady," "ma'am," and "madam" have their own issues. Most translations stick with the literal "woman" (ESV, NET, NASB, BBE, NKJV, KJV). CSB, EHV; NIV & NLT try a tweak, "dear woman." MSG corrects Jesus so that his words say, "Is that any of our business, Mother—yours or mine? This isn't my time. Don't push me." Jesus' point here seems to be that Mary can't claim special status as his mother, so the attempted fixes blur the point.[7]

A parallel issue in the Old Testament is whether some Hebrew words for "man" are more manly than others, especially whether *ish* has a stronger connotation than *enosh.* NIV thinks it does. I don't think it does. *Ish* seems to be contracted from *ansh,* which is also the root of *enosh.*

In John 21:5 Jesus calls out to the disciples who are offshore in a boat, "Children" (παιδία). Most translations are content to stay with the literal "children." NIV interprets as "friends," MSG has "Good morning." HCSB has "men." CSB has "friends." Wouldn't the English dynamic equivalent be "Hey, boys"?

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[6] Somewhat parallel would be the English use of "maid," as a young woman or a servant.

[7] The same issue occurs in John 20: 13, 15 with Mary Magdalene. Translations seem less concerned to fix that one.

Humans or Men?

Sometimes boiler plate application of the inclusive language principle produces results that raise as many questions as they answer. One case of this is in Ezekiel 1:5, 10, 26. Do the cherubim have a face and form like a man or like a human being?

> NIV 1984   Each of the four had the face of a man
> NIV 2011   Each of the four had the face of a human being
> ESV   Each had a human face
> CSB   They looked something like a human

Since there is a distinction drawn here between animal and human faces, it is hard to argue against "human face,",but how is the artist to draw that face: male, female, or androgynous? Does the vision of God in verse 26 resemble a man, a woman, or an undifferentiated human?

> EHV reads [5]Each of them had a human appearance
>   [10]Each one had a face like a man's face
>   [26]a figure that looked like a man

Fathers, Sons, and Brothers

Similar issues concerning inclusive or exclusive reference apply to the Hebrew and Greek terms for fathers, sons, and brothers.

Fathers/Parents/Ancestors

The Greek *patres* can mean "parents" but this usage is rare. An example is found in Hebrews 11:23, in which Moses is hidden by his "fathers," that is, his parents. But this may well be a Hebraism since Hebrew has no common word for parents. Greek has a word that could have been used here, *goneis* (Lk 2:27, 21:16).

In some recent translations "fathers" is regularly changed to "ancestors" except in expressions like "God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob." But one needs to be cautious about doing this, because this runs the risk of blurring the reader's understanding of Israel's social structures.

When the heritage of the whole people of Israel is referred to, "ancestors" and "ancestral" may be used on occasion, but "fathers" is often appropriate in genealogical contexts that stress the line of descent of tribes and clans through their patriarchs. The terms *fathers' houses* and *father's house* should be kept in most cases when they are a name for the political/social units of Israel that were traced through a line of male ancestors.

When the term *father* indicates superior social or political status, a footnote may be added if deemed necessary.

"Father" and "mother" may be translated "grandfather" or "grandmother" or "ancestor" when the context requires it.

Sons/Children

The Hebrew *banim* or *bnei* "sons" can sometimes be inclusive of all children or descendants of either sex. The *bnei Yisrael* at the beginning of Exodus 1 are specifically named and enumerated as the twelve sons of Jacob. Throughout most of the Exodus account, when the term refers to the whole nation, the

traditional translation has been "children of Israel," but this runs the risk of presenting a picture of minor children, so "people of Israel" may be more appropriate. Sometimes in genealogies *banim* refers to successive generations of *male descendants.*

An especially noteworthy case of an inclusive rendering is 2 Corinthians 6:18, in which Paul renders the "sons" from 2 Samuel 7:14 as "sons and daughters" in Greek.

An example of a passage in which almost all of our test translations chose "children" rather than "sons" as the translation for *banim* is found in 1 Chronicles 28:8. Although inheritance was normally passed through sons, all of our test translations except NASB refer to a permanent inheritance for their *children* rather than for their *sons*. Why? NIV and Holman have "descendants." Why?

Galatians 3:26 is an interesting case because the issue here is whether "sons" has connotations of both maleness and inheritance.

NIV84 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,
NASB For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
HCSB for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus
CSB   through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus
ESV   For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.
NET   For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.
BBE   Because you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
NKJV For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
NLT   For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
MSG   By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God.
NRSV For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.
NIV11 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith
KJV   For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
EHV   you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Any choices here catch your eye?

Another important example is Galatian 4:4-6. Here the issue is whether "sonship" has the connotation of adoption to full privileges of the family.

NIV84 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the *full rights of sons*. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."
NIV11 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive *adoption to sonship*. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, *"Abba*, Father."
ESV   to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive *adoption as sons*. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
HCSB   to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive *adoption as sons*. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, *"Abba*, Father!
CSB   to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive *adoption as sons*. [6]And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father! "
NASB   that we might receive the *adoption as sons*. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

13

NET   to redeem those who were under the law, so that we may be *adopted as sons with full rights*. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls "Abba! Father!"

NLT   so that he could adopt us as *his very own children*. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father."

MSG   thus we have been set free to experience *our rightful heritage*. You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!"

BBE   that we might be given *the place of sons*. And because you are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, saying, Abba, Father.

NKJV to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the *adoption as sons*. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

NRSV so that we might receive *adoption as children*. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

KJV   we might receive the *adoption of sons*. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

EHV   But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, [5]in order to redeem those under the law, so that we would be *adopted as sons*. [6]And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to shout, "*Abba*, Father!" [7]So you are no longer a slave, but a son.

A case in which "sons" is not a good translation is Luke 20:34. It is clear that this group includes both men who marry and women who are given in marriage.

ESV   And Jesus said to them, The *sons* of this age marry and are given in marriage

NASB Jesus said to them, "The *sons* of this age marry and are given in marriage."

BBE   And Jesus said to them, The *sons* of this world are married and have wives

NKJV And Jesus answered and said to them, "The *sons* of this age marry and are given in marriage."

NET   So Jesus said to them, "The *people* of this age marry and are given in marriage."

NIV   Jesus replied, "The *people* of this age marry and are given in marriage."

NLT   Jesus replied, "Marriage is for *people* here on earth.

MSG   Jesus said, "Marriage is a major preoccupation here

NRSV Jesus said to them, "*Those who belong to* this age marry and are given in marriage;"

KJV   And Jesus answering said unto them, The *children* of this world marry, and are given in marriage

CSB   The *children* of this age marry and are given in marriage.

EHV   The *people* of this age marry and are given in marriage.

"Sons" has another special use. "Sons of" refers to people of a certain type, a "son of perdition" is a person doomed to destruction. In these cases should the idiom be retained? The same idiom occurs with "children" (*tekna*) in Ephesians 2:5.

NET   by nature children of wrath

NIV   by nature objects of wrath.

NASB by nature children of wrath

ESV   by nature children of wrath

CSB	by nature children under wrath
NLT	subject to God's anger
MSG	it's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us.
BBE	the punishment of God was waiting for us
NKJV	by nature children of wrath
NRSV	by nature children of wrath
KJV	by nature the children of wrath, even as others
EHV	by nature objects of God's wrath

Brothers & Sisters

More specific issues arise when translating the Greek *adelphoi* as "brothers and sisters." The term and its Hebrew equivalent *achim* can sometimes have an inclusive sense (Dt 15:12—your brother, a Hebrew male or a Hebrew female", אָחִיךָ הָעִבְרִי אוֹ הָעִבְרִיָּה)**,** but in this case the inclusive sense is specifically indicated in the text. Problems arise, however, when this principle is too casually applied to cases in which there is no clear contextual evidence of the inclusive meaning. The results in such cases may be dubious or may even be doctrinally misleading.

The two extremes in regard to this issue are 1) insisting on always retaining "brothers" unless there is an explicit statement or overwhelming contextual evidence of inclusiveness *or* 2) jumping to the inclusive "brothers and sisters" in spite of a lack of evidence or even in spite of the presence of evidence to the contrary. The heart of the problem is that *adelphoi* is not strictly equivalent to the English "brothers" since it may include females in some contexts, but *adelphoi* is not strictly equivalent to the English "brothers and sisters" or "siblings" since those expressions explicitly include females, whereas *alelphoi* does not. This is a complicated issue which requires its own article. Here are a few of the issues which must be explored.

1) Can we jump to the conclusion that passages which use "brothers" are intended to be inclusive? When New Testament speakers or writers wanted to make it clear that brothers and sisters were involved, they could and did use both words (Mt 13:55,56; Mt 19:29; Mk 10:29; Lk 14:26; 1 Cor 7:15, Ja 2:15, Mk 3:33 see variant).
   - Luke 21:16 is an interesting text since in naming the people who will betray Christians it uses the inclusive word "parents" for father and mother, but then uses the more exclusive term "brothers" in what may be a reference to male and female siblings: "You will even be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends" (ὑπὸ γονέων καὶ ἀδελφῶν καὶ συγγενῶν καὶ φίλων). Only NIV 2011 included *sisters* in this verse.
   - See a similar pairing in Matthew 12:49-50: "Here are my mother and my brothers! [50]For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, that person is my brother and sister and mother." Here "sister" is made explicit in the second reference.

2) Can the term "brothers" include men and women without contextual indicators?

3) Is there any clear case where it can clearly be demonstrated from the context that the term "brothers" is intended to address both the males and any females who may have been present? (An example would be if Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were addressed as "brothers.")

4) Where is the burden of proof? Can we assume "brothers" unless there is clear evidence to the contrary? Or can we assume "brothers and sisters" unless there is clear evidence to the contrary?

Some Cases

In Philippians 1:12-15 NIV 2011 two times renders *adelphoi* as "brothers and sisters," and these brothers and sisters are described as people who proclaim the gospel. Is this verse implying that both

men and women were pastors who preach, or is it referring only to the sharing of the gospel done by all Christians? Verses 15 and 16 seem to suggest that Paul is thinking of public preachers here. CSB has "brothers and sisters" in the first occurrence of the term in verse 12 but not in the second occurrence.

An analogous case occurs in 1 Corinthians 14:39, in which "sisters" are included in the exhortation to "be eager to prophesy" shortly after the women are told to "remain silent" in church. It is true that women "prophesied" in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:5) and also elsewhere (Acts 21:9), but in this context is the addition of "sisters" an safe assumption? NIV and CSB have "brothers and sisters" in this passage.

More questionable is Acts 1:16, in which those who are to participate in choosing a replacement for Judas, are addressed as *andres adelphoi,* "men, brothers," but NIV11 translates *men, brothers* as *brothers and sisters.*[8] It is very likely women were present, but were they asked to participate in the selection of the apostle?

CSB also has "brothers and sisters" in this verse as well as in Acts 2:29; 13:26,38; and 15:7,26.

Acts 22:1 has the triple masculine ανδρες αδελφοι και πατερες for which all the translations retain the masculine.

Is there any reason for NIV 2011 to remove "brothers" from Deuteronomy 18:15, the prophecy of the coming prophets and Prophet? "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites."

NIV 2011 seems to eliminate "brothers" even when most others retain it.

Nehemiah 4:14
NIV84   fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.
NIV11   fight for your people, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.
NRSV   fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.
CSB   fight for your countrymen, your sons and daughters, your wives and homes
EHV   fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives, and your homes [9]

A Complication

A complication in handling such situations of inclusive "men" and inclusive "brothers" occurs when the writer chooses to use the masculine term "man" or "brother" and then makes his own specification that the term is inclusive. An example occurs in Exodus 25 and 35. In Exodus 25 the gift bringers are "every willing man." In Exodus 35:22 the gift bringers are again "every willing man," but this time Moses specifies that this includes women in addition to men. or more precisely men in addition to women (הָאֲנָשִׁים עַל־הַנָּשִׁים).

NIV   All who were willing, men and women alike,
NASB   Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women,
ESV   So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart
NET   They came, men and women alike, all who had willing hearts.

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[8] The ESV has this dubious translation *brothers and sisters* in a footnote.
[9] Other passages to consider: 3 John 3; 1 John 2:9; 1 Peter 3:8; James 3:1; Hebrews 2:11, 12, 17; James 1:8-9.

NLT   Both men and women came, all whose hearts were willing.
MSG   They came, both men and women, all the willing spirits among them,
BBE   They came, men and women, all who were ready to give,
NKJV   They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart,
NRSV   So they came, both men and women; all who were of a willing
KJV   And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted
CSB   Both men and women came
EHV   They came back, both men and women, all those whose hearts were willing

None of the translations reflect the fact that the literal expression in Hebrew is "men *on/after* the women," apparently meaning men as well as women. The expression is not a simple co-ordination with *and*. Does it imply that the men came after the women because the latter had taken the initiative? Does it imply that since the gifts listed immediately after this statement are jewelry, women were the chief donors? It is not clear what differentiation, if any, is being made concerning the roles of the men and the women.

A Peculiar Case

A different sort of gender issue occurs in Judges 11:31 where the decision for the translator is masculine, feminine, or neuter? Jephthah promises to sacrifice "the coming out one" (היוצא). Is this *whoever* or *whatever* comes out of his house?

NRSV NET BBE CSB   whoever
NIV NASB ESV NLT MSG NKJV KJV   whatever
EHV reads: whoever or whatever* comes out from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites will belong to the LORD.

*Footnote: The Hebrew form could include persons or animals. In light of subsequent events it is clear that the wording of Jephthah's vow did not exclude people.

What is wrong with the translation "whoever"?
What is wrong with the translation "whatever"?
How about "the first one to come out of my house"?

Conclusion

The gender issue requires a paper of its own. Here we have to limit ourselves to stating the general principle, "be inclusive where the original is inclusive and exclusive where it is exclusive," and to illustrating a few of the difficulties in applying the principle. Translators should not neglect the cultural situation of biblical times in their rendering of the text. They should try to avoid importing meanings into the text that are not indicated by the context.

Marriage Issues

A related issue for translators is the need to understand and express the ways in which biblical marriage customs differ from ours. We celebrate the legal marriage, the festivities, and the consummation of the marriage in one day. In ancient Israel, the legal marriage usually preceded the festivities and the consummation by some designated time period. So for a considerable amount of time it was possible for a woman to be "married" and "not married" at the same time. Was the man to whom she had been betrothed her husband or her fiancé?

Joel 1:8　　　אֵ֣לִי כִּבְתוּלָ֤ה חֲגֻֽרַת־שַׂק֙ עַל־בַּ֣עַל נְעוּרֶֽיהָ

ESV　　Lament like a *virgin* wearing sackcloth for the *bridegroom* of her youth.

NIV84　Mourn like a *virgin* in sackcloth grieving for the *husband* of her youth.

NIV11　Mourn like a *virgin* in sackcloth grieving for the *betrothed* of her youth.

CSB　　Grieve like a *young woman* dressed in sackcloth, mourning for the *husband* of her youth.

NASB　Wail like a *virgin* girded with sackcloth for the *bridegroom* of her youth.

NET　　Wail like a young *virgin* clothed in sackcloth, lamenting the death of her *husband-to-be.*

NLT　　Weep like a *bride* dressed in black, mourning the death of her *husband.*

MSG　　Weep like a young *virgin* dressed in black, mourning the loss of her *fiancé.*

BBE　　Make sounds of grief like a *virgin* dressed in haircloth for the *husband* of her early years.

NKJV　Lament like a *virgin* girded with sackcloth for the *husband* of her youth.

NRSV　Lament like a *virgin* dressed in sackcloth for the *husband* of her youth.

KJV　　Lament like a *virgin* girded with sackcloth for the *husband* of her youth.

EHV　　Grieve like a *virgin* dressed in sackcloth, grieving for the *husband* of her youth.
　　　　Footnote: The *husband* is the young man to whom she had been pledged as his wife, but with whom she had not yet lived.

Evaluate NIV84, NIV11, ESV, and CSB. An additional issue here is that the husband is called her lord.

Deuteronomy 20:7

NET　　Or who among you has become *engaged* to a woman but has not married her? He may go home, lest he die in battle and someone else marry her.

NIV　　Has anyone become *pledged* to a woman and not married her? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else marry her.

ESV　　And is there any man who has *betrothed* a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her.

BBE　　Or if any man is *newly married* and has had no sex relations with his wife, let him go back to his house, so that in the event of his death in the fight, another man may not take her.

CSB　　Has any man become *engaged* to a woman and not married her? Let him leave and return home. Otherwise he may die in battle and another man marry her.

NASB　And who is the man that is *engaged* to a woman and has not married her? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would marry her.

NLT　　Has anyone here just become *engaged* to a woman but not yet married her? Well, you may go home and get married! You might die in the battle, and someone else would marry her.

MSG　　Is there a man here *engaged* to marry who hasn't yet taken his wife? Let him go home right now lest he die in battle and another man take her.

NKJV　And what man is there who is *betrothed* to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man marry her.

NRSV　Has anyone become *engaged* to a woman but not yet married her? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another marry her.

KJV　　And what man is there that hath *betrothed* a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her

EHV   Whoever is *pledged in marriage* to a woman but has not consummated the marriage, let him go and return to his house so that he does not die in the battle and another man takes her in marriage.

Compare NIV, BBE, and EHV to understand the problem.

Matthew 1:18

NIV   His mother Mary was *pledged to be married* to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

NASB   when His mother Mary had been *betrothed* to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

ESV   When his mother Mary had been *betrothed* to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

NLT   His mother, Mary, was *engaged to be married* to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.

MSG   His mother, Mary, was *engaged to be married* to Joseph. Before they came to the marriage bed, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he didn't know that.)

BBE   When his mother Mary was *going to be married* to Joseph, before they came together the discovery was made that she was with child by the Holy Spirit.

NKJV   After His mother Mary was *betrothed* to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

NRSV   When his mother Mary had been *engaged* to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

KJV   When as his mother Mary was *espoused* to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

CSB   After his mother Mary had been *engaged* to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit.

EHV   His mother, Mary, was *pledged in marriage* to Joseph. Before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

What are the pros and cons of "married," "engaged", and "betrothed"? What is the difference between *pledged to be married* and *pledged in marriage?* What pastoral problem results from the translation *engaged?*

How does social status and polygamy affect the issue? In Exodus 21:4 is the female slave whom a master gives to his male slave to bear children for him by that slave that slave's "wife" or his "woman"? Was Hagar Abraham's wife? Were Bilah and Zilpah wives?

A problem term is *pilegesh,* usually translated "concubine," but what is a concubine? In Judges 19:1 all our test translations translate *pilegesh* "concubine" except BBE which has "servant-wife. The KJV adds the note: Hebrew—"a woman a concubine, or a wife a concubine." Was a concubine a wife? English dictionaries say a concubine may be either a woman who cohabits with a man without being married to him or a secondary wife with fewer legal rights and a lower social status than a full wife. Is *concubine* an adequate translation? Do you have something better?
EHV usually translates this term *concubine*, but occasionally explains the term in a footnote: A *concubine* is a legal wife, but with a lesser status than that of the primary wife or wives.

Another example of a cultural issue that is tricky for the translator is legitimacy of birth. The *mamzer* appears only twice in Scripture (Dt 23:2, Zech 9:6) and translators struggle with it.

NIV No one *born of a forbidden marriage* nor any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation.

ESV No one *born of a forbidden union* may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD.

CSB No one of *illegitimate birth* may enter the LORD's assembly; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, may enter the LORD's assembly.

NASB No one of *illegitimate birth* shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

NLT If a person is *illegitimate by birth*, neither he nor his descendants for ten generations may be admitted to the assembly of the Lord.

MSG No *bastard* is to enter the congregation of GOD, even to the tenth generation, nor any of his children.

BBE One *whose father and mother are not married* may not come into the meeting of the Lord's people, or any of his family to the tenth generation.

NKJV One of *illegitimate birth* shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

NRSV Those *born of an illicit union* shall not be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

KJV A *bastard* shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

EHV A child *born of an incestuous relationship*[*] is not to come within the assembly of the LORD.

*Footnote: The meaning of the term *mamzer* is uncertain. Some interpreters believe it refers to any illegitimate birth or to any birth resulting from prostitution. The other main suggestion, that it refers children born to an incestuous relationship, is supported by the mention of the Moabites and Ammonites in verse 3. See Genesis 19.

Of all of these translations it seems that the ESV, NRSV, and EHV are closest to correct. Children of unmarried Jewish parents were not illegitimate as long as those parents would be suitable subjects for marriage (so "bastard" and "illegitimate" are misleading to English readers). Only children born of the adultery of a married woman or from an incestuous relationship are *mamzer* (so the term "forbidden marriage" is too narrow). The Zechariah reference seems to include offspring from marriages or relationships with women from forbidden nations as does Deuteronomy 23:3. The translator's problem is to understand and communicate the cultural institution in terms his reader will understand.[10]

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[10] A different sort of "political correctness" or "cultural sensitivity" is raised by John's use of the term "the Jews" to refer to Jesus's encounters with his contemporaries. John, himself a Jew, uses the same term whether the encounter is hostile or friendly. In John 9:22, where the encounter is hostile, NET and NLT change "the Jews" to "the Jewish religious leaders" to avoid alleged anti-semitism. In John 11:19, where the encounter is friendly, NET has "the Jewish people of the region" and NLT has "many of the people."

Some relationship terms are ambiguous. In Mark 3:21 the meaning of "the ones next to him," (οἱ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ) is disputed. "When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'" Some translators shy away from the translation "family" apparently because they do not want Jesus' family to call him insane, but we know that his brothers were opponents of this ministry (John 7). His brothers appear at the end of this chapter. In Mark 4:10 "those around him" are Jesus' associates. In Luke 1:58 "those living around" are neighbors rather than relatives. There seems to be a good argument here for "family" but perhaps it includes extended family.

NIV ESV NLT NET NRSV CSB	His family
KJV MSG BBE	His friends
NASB NKJV	His own people
EHV	His own people Footnote: Or his family
Which do you like and why?	

So who was Hobab, the *choten* of Moses? Does *choten* refer to father-in-law, brother-in-law, or is either possible? Contributing to the problem is the fact that Moses' father-in-law Jethro may have been known by more than one name.

Judges 4:11:

NET, NASB ESV NKJV NRSV KJV, CSB	Hobab, Moses' father-in-law
NIV NLT BBE	Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law
MSG	Hobab, Moses' in-law
EHV	Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses
	Footnote: Or *father-in-law*.
	See Numbers 10:29.

In the Old Testament there is also a problem with the terms for organizational levels of the family. Are the terms which are commonly translated "tribe" really parallel to the term "tribe" in anthropology? What is a *mishpachah*? A clan? An extended family? What is the house of his fathers? What is the house of his father?

Numbers 1:2 & 4   כָּל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם

NET   Take a census of the entire Israelite community by *their clans and families*

NIV   Take a census of the whole Israelite community by *their clans and families*

ESV   Take a census of all the congregation of the people of Israel, *by clans, by fathers' houses*.

NASB   Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, *by their families, by their fathers' households*

CSB   Take a census of the entire Israelite community *by their clans and their fathers' families*

NLT   From the whole community of Israel, record the names of all the warriors *by their clans and families*

MSG   Number the congregation of the People of Israel *by clans and families*

BBE   Take the full number of the children of Israel, *by their families, and by their fathers' houses*

NKJV   Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, *by their families, by their fathers' houses*

NRSV   Take a census of the whole congregation of Israelites, *in their clans, by ancestral houses*

KJV   Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, *after their families, by the house of their fathers*

EHV   Take a census of the entire community of the people of Israel, according to their *clans* and their *fathers' houses*.

Footnote: Because Israel's social structure was based on kinship, the *fathers' house* (or sometimes the *father's house*) was one of the basic social units of Israel. The *fathers' house* seems to have been smaller than the tribe and clan but larger than the immediate family. However, the use of the term *fathers' house* does not seem to be consistent. Every level of Israelite social structure was a fathers' house, though they were also called by other names

אִישׁ אִישׁ לַמַּטֶּה אִישׁ רֹאשׁ לְבֵית־אֲבֹתָיו

NIV   One man from each tribe, each the *head of his family*, is to help you.
NASB   With you, moreover, there shall be a man of each tribe, each one *head of his father's household*.
ESV   And there shall be with you a man from each tribe, each man being the *head of the house of his fathers.*
NET   And to help you there is to be a man from each tribe, each man *the head of his family.*
NLT   and you will be assisted by one *family leader* from each tribe.
MSG   Pick one man from each tribe who is *head of his family* to help you.
BBE   And to give you help, take one man from every tribe, the *head of his father's house.*
NKJV   And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of *his father's house.*
NRSV   A man from each tribe shall be with you, each man the *head of his ancestral house.*
KJV   And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one *head of the house of his father.*
CSB   A man from each tribe is to be with you, each one the *head of his ancestral family.*
EHV   A man from each tribe will be with you. Every one of them will be the *head of his fathers' house.*

Why is the translation *his father's house* weak?

Joshua 21:1: literally, "the heads of the fathers of the Levites"
   NIV   the family heads of the Levites
   NASB the heads of households of the Levites
   NET   the tribal leaders of the Levites
   ESV   the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites
   NLT   the leaders of the tribe of Levi
   MSG   the ancestral heads of the Levites
   BBE   the heads of the families of the Levites
   NKJV   the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites
   NRSV the heads of the families of the Levites
   KJV   the heads of the fathers of the Levites
   CSB   the Levite family heads
   EHV   the leading fathers of the Levites
       Footnote: *Fathers* is a common title for the ruling elders among the Israelites.

Another office that comes into question when discussing gender issues is "apostle." Could women be apostles and if so, what kind of apostles? In Romans 16:7 there are three issues. Is the person in question male (Junias) or female (Junia)? Is the person a highly regarded apostle or highly regarded by the apostles (recent research supports this)? What kind of apostle are we talking about?

       Romans 16:7 ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις

NIV84   Greet Andronicus and *Junias*, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They
         are *outstanding among the apostles*, and they were in Christ before I was.

NASB   Greet Andronicus and *Junias*, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are
         outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

MSG   Hello to my cousins Andronicus and *Junias*. We once shared a jail cell. They were
         believers in Christ before I was. Both of them are *outstanding leaders.*

NIV11   Greet Andronicus and *Junia*, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me.
         They are *outstanding among the apostles*, and they were in Christ before I was.

HCSB   Greet Andronicus and *Junias*, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They
         are *outstanding among the apostles,* and they were in Christ before I was.

CSB   Greet Andronicus and *Junia*, my fellow Jews and fellow prisoners. They are
         noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles, and they were also in Christ before me.

ESV   Greet Andronicus and *Junia*, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are *well
         known to the apostles*, and they were in Christ before me.

NET   Greet Andronicus and *Junia*, my compatriots and my fellow prisoners. They are
         well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

NLT   Greet Andronicus and *Junia*, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They
         are *highly respected among the apostles* and became followers of Christ before I
         did.

BBE   Give my love to Andronicus and *Junia*, my relations, who were in prison with me,
         who are *noted among the Apostles*, and who were in Christ before me.

NKJV   Greet Andronicus and *Junia*, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are *of
         note among the apostles*, who also were in Christ before me.

NRSV   Greet Andronicus and *Junia*, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are
         prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

KJV   Salute Andronicus and *Junia*, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are *of
         note among the apostles,* who also were in Christ before me.

EHV   Greet Andronicus and *Junia*, my relatives and fellow prisoners, who are *highly
         regarded by the apostles*.
         Footnote: Or *Junias*, a masculine name. Some ancient interpreters considered Andronicus
         and Junia to be husband and wife.

The Problem of Blunt Language in the Bible

In the fall of 2016 the Wartburg Project offered an online class for high school and college students on the website *Gospel Outreach With Media*. (It should still be posted there, but you can no longer add comments.) The course was titled "Between a Rock and a Hard Place." The basic aim of the course was to help Christian students studying journalism, English, and theology deal with a common dilemma that confronts writers and editors. Very often they find themselves in a situation in which they realize that no matter which of the available editorial options they chose, some of their readers will disapprove.

Often the issues involved are matters of taste or of human rules, and there can be (or should be) no disputing matters of taste. To use the theological term, these issues fall into the realm of adiaphora.

But people sometimes have strong feelings about adiaphora. One area in which this problem commonly occurs involves the difference between formal textbook grammar and informal conversational grammar. If, in one of the Gospels, Jesus says, "Who are you looking for?" some readers will say "Jesus

would not use bad grammar." If Jesus says, "For whom are you looking?" or better yet, "Whom seekest thou?" another set of readers will say, "Nobody talks like that. Jesus would not be so stuffy."[11]

This dilemma for editors of being caught between a rock and a hard place is intensified when they have to deal with sexual language and language for various bodily functions, especially when the book involved is the Bible.

The overall trend in the Bible is to use euphemistic terms[12] for sexual matters (such as *to know* and *to lie with*) as we sometimes do also in English (*to sleep with*), but some of the biblical passages pertaining to sexual conduct or misconduct use very blunt terms in the Hebrew text. English readers are sometimes unaware of these jarring statements because English translations sometimes hide them behind euphemistic softening of the biblical language. But do translators and editors have the authority to censor the Holy Spirit?

Here is a case in which it is very easy for translators to state the proper principle:

> The translator should try to be euphemistic where the original text is euphemistic and blunt or direct where the original text is blunt. Keep the variety and degree of harshness of the Hebrew and Greek terms.

We have no duty, indeed we have no right to be editors of what the Holy Spirit says. We are to say, as best we can, what the Spirit said. Yet this is one of those cases in which it is very easy to *say* what our principle should be, but somewhat more difficult to *practice* it.

We are concerned to do whatever we can to avoid offense that might prevent some people from reading the Bible, but the proper way to do this is not by avoiding the issue or by changing the Bible, but by teaching mature Christian people how to deal with the issue in a proper way. We can say that all Scripture is written for our learning, but not all Scripture is necessarily written for Sunday school or the lectern.

The first attempt to deal with this problem took place already in the pre-translation stage of the transmission of the biblical text. The Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes, who transmitted the Hebrew text in the form in which we have it today, came up this solution: They kept the words which they regarded as offensive in the biblical text, but they wrote a less offensive word in the margin of the text, which was to be used when reading the text out loud. An example of such euphemism occurs in the text of 2 Kings 18:27 and Isaiah 36:12 where the Assyrian envoy hammers the people of Jerusalem with the threat that during the siege of Jerusalem they will have to drink their own *shen* and eat their own *heri*. You can provide your own American equivalents. At any rate, the Masoretes said that what the lector should read was "you will *drink the water of your feet* and eat *what comes out."* Because the Hebrew scribes found the vulgar threat of the Assyrian envoy too crude to be read out loud, they substituted these euphemisms in the margin, but they left the cruder terms in the body of the text.

We cannot determine with certainty whether the words were "proper" when Isaiah wrote them and became crude later, or whether they were already vulgar when the Assyrian envoy spoke them and Isaiah

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[11] A detailed discussion of this issue is included in the afore-mentioned course, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," and in other online materials at our Wartburg Project website.

[12] Euphemism is the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for one that is thought to be too offensive, harsh, or blunt.

quoted them to honestly portray the vulgarity of the Assyrian envoy. That the terms were crude from the beginning seems most likely. The Assyrian thug did not learn his trash talk from Mr. Rogers.[13]

We can sympathize with the rabbis, because they felt a conflict between their duty not to alter the text and their desire to avoid terms that in their opinion would be offensive to readers and listeners. On the one hand, they taught, "Whenever a text is written indelicately, we read it delicately." This is the opposite of the principle we suggested above. We say, "If the text the Spirit gave us is indelicate, we are to translate it indelicately."

The rabbis, however, hedged a bit on their preference for euphemism. R. Nahman said, "All obscenity is forbidden except obscenity at idolatry." R. Huna b. Manoah said, "It is permitted to an Israelite to say to a Kuthean [that is, a Samaritan], 'Take your idol and stick it in your *shintav*.'" Perhaps this second principle of R. Huna will be useful for us to remember when we try to explain Ezekiel's use of very indelicate language. Perhaps the rabbis had derived this rule that obscenity is permitted when describing obscene practices from Ezekiel's example. Ezekiel's harsh language is always directed against idolatry and gross immorality.

We may question the wisdom of the Masoretes' decision, but they do offer us one option to consider as we try to solve our dilemma: Keep the harshness of the biblical text in the translation, but let readers substitute a more euphemistic term in settings in which the strong reading might be too much for the audience, in children's Bible story books, in Sunday services, etc.

Resolving the Problem for EHV

In the spring of 2017 the editors of the EHV presented this problem to a panel of twenty-five reactors. They were asked to respond to the following questions, so that we could use their input to finalize the text of the prophecy of Ezekiel, which has more blunt language than any other book of the Bible. In the following discussion you will have the opportunity to react to the same questions which the panel discussed, to hear some of their input, and to see how we applied their advice to the EHV.

We will deal with the issue by first giving you the opportunity to react to the same questions that the college students in the online course and the panel of reactors responded to. Then we will see how the EHV addressed the very harsh language that confront us in Ezekiel.

We can start by reminding ourselves, "To the pure, all things are pure." Mature Christians can and must deal with these issues, and the church must help our young people navigate the currents of sexuality and vulgar language in our society, and that includes teaching them both the beauty of what God designed, and the ugliness of going against God's will in this area. If our Bible translations and Bible classes do not teach our young people about this issue, the devil will, but his answers will be destructive. We have to teach our people how to properly deal with the beautiful and the ugly.

The Beautiful

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[13] Other examples of such passages which substitute milder terms for harsh terms include these: men forcefully or lustfully *shagal* women; the scribes suggests substituting *lie with* (Dt 28:30, Is 13:16, Ze 14:2, Je 3:2); the besieged people have to eat their own *cheri;* the scribes suggest substituting "eat decayed leaves" (2 Kg 6:25). You can supply your own English equivalents for *shagal* and *cheri*. Others euphemisms are found Dt 28:27, 1 Sa 5:6,9,12, 6:4,5— hemorrhoids;   2 Kg 10:27—latrine; Dt 25:11—private parts.

1) The Song of Solomon describes the beauty of love between a man and woman. The Song of Songs has a tone which is sexual but not crude. It includes lines like:

> Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters.
> I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit.

It is not proper downplay the sexuality in the translation. But how do we use this book to teach a godly view of sexuality?

At what age should students study this kind of text?
A. Late grade school   B. Early high school   C. Late high school   D. College   E. After marriage.

> The answer to this question is, of course, a matter of opinion. In the Jews' very closely chaperoned society perhaps the rabbinic advice, "Don't read the Song until you are thirty," might have worked. But many people feel that in our sex-saturated culture, unless you live on a desert island with no TV and no internet, high school is too late to begin discussing these issues with children. This is an issue our teachers must deal with already in grade school.

The Bodily

In 1 Samuel 25:22 David is guilty of a harsh outburst against a man who has insulted him. David says, "May God punish my enemies severely and double it, if by the morning light I leave alive so much as one person who *urinates against a wall*." In the King James Version David says "any that *pisseth against the wall*." Many recent translations say David threatens "to kill *every male*." Which term would you choose? Why?

A. Urinates against a wall   B. Pisses against a wall   C. Every male

> If your teacher read choice B, which is from the King James Version, in class or your pastor read it in church, would people:
> A) laugh   B) be shocked and angry   C) be surprised at first but support a literal translation

Every male gives the right meaning but hides the emotional impact of the text, so it is not a good translation. *Piss* was considered an acceptable term for the Bible in the 1600s, and the word is in very common use today in most levels of society and among both males and females. *Urinate* is not the way most people converse or threaten people, but maybe it is best for formal writing like the Bible.

How do some popular translations deal with this issue?

The King James has *piss.* Many recent translating including NIV, NASB, ESV, NKJV, NRSV, and CSB[14] have *every male.* In their effort to avoid a word which they think sounds too vulgar, these translations erase the special Hebrew idiom . The EHV reads *who urinates against a wall* with the explanatory note: "It appears that David uses a crude term. He does not use a standard term for *man* or *male.*"

> Our panel was divided. Some felt readers would laugh or be shocked at the word *piss* in the Bible but would understand the explanation of what is happening if the text was allowed to retain its rough edge. Overly sanitizing the text runs the danger of giving the impression that the Bible is remote from the messiness and danger of life in the sinful world. Some teachers would welcome the opportunity to address the issue with high school students.

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[14]CSB adds the footnote *who are urinating against the wall.*

The Most Frequent Issue in Ezekiel

Ezekiel has a favorite Hebrew word for idol, *gillul,* which he uses thirty-nine times throughout his book. *Gillul* is derived from a root that means "round." Some older dictionaries say these idols were called *gillulim* because they were round like logs, but *gillul* is the round thing that comes out of the east end of a west-bound horse.

In looking for the solution to this problem, we started with the assumption that we cannot use the expression that many Americans would use to describe these objects, so would you call them?

   A) idols   B) dung ball deities   C) filthy idols   D) fecal deities

Many contemporary translations go with the colorless "idols," hiding the more specific term that Ezekiel chooses. *Idols* is not a very good translation because it hides the fact that *gillul* is a special, blunt word. *Fecal deities* is the translation of the Concordia Commentary. This is biologically correct, but who talks that way? *Dung-ball deities* may be too colloquial and sounds a bit eccentric, but it is probably the most accurate, and it was the term that the EHV was using in the first drafts of Ezekiel. *Filthy idols* softens the term, but at least it recognizes that this is not a generic word for idols. *Filthy idols* is the term that the EHV is using at the moment. Some reviewers suggested adding *disgusting* in front of *filthy idols.* Many felt that *filthy idols* is too euphemistic, especially if EHV deals honestly with the very harsh sexual language in Ezekiel. Other suggestions from reviewers were *crappy gods* and *turd idols.*

Here is how some common translations handle the issue:
NET, CSB, NIV, NASB, ESV, NKJV, NRSV, and KJV all have *idols,* erasing the Hebrew idiom.

EHV has *filthy idols* with this note at the first occurrence: "~~Gillulim,~~ one of Ezekiel's favorite names for Israel's idols, is a harsh word. ~~Gillulim~~ means ~~idols made from round things.~~ The round things are dung balls, hence the term could be rendered ~~dung-ball deities~~ or ~~horse apples,~~ but even these terms may be too gentle . One of the four-letter words for excrement is closer to the mark." Subsequent footnotes in the EHV refer to "manure gods." *Filthy idols* probably does veer toward the euphemistic end of the spectrum, but since the term *gillul* occurs so often in Ezekiel, including in pericopes used in worship, and since almost every other translation evades the issue completely, it seems wise to not change too abruptly to a totally un-euphemistic rendering.

The Really Ugly

Sometimes biblical language is so blunt that many people are embarrassed to face the issue. In saying Christians need to discuss the issue honestly, we are working with the assumption that "to the pure all things are pure," and the mature (including high school students) can and should discuss these issues.

Issues like this are scattered throughout the Old Testament, but the issue reaches an intensity in Ezekiel which is not found elsewhere in the Bible. The problem occurs throughout the book, but especially in chapters 16 and 23, in which Ezekiel describes Judah and Israel as two prostitutes or whores, who are unfaithful to the LORD. He uses very ugly terms to describe their very ugly behavior.

In Ezekiel 16:25, many translations say that the immoral woman *offers her body* to every passerby. The Hebrew literally says *she is spreading her legs to every passerby*. Which of these translations would you choose? Why?
   A. offers her body to   B. has sex with   C. spreads her legs for   D. lies down with

Discuss:
How would a high school class react to choice C?
Would it make a difference if they were seniors or freshmen?
Would it make a difference if boys and girls were in separate classes?
Would it make a difference how the teacher introduced the discussion?

Choices B and D soften Ezekiel's harsh expression and take some of the sting out of Ezekiel's message. Even example A does not have the full force and offensiveness of choice C. All of the translation options have the same basic meaning, but they do not have the same emotional impact. Such blunt terms as *spreading her legs* cause a negative emotional reaction in many readers, but isn't that Ezekiel's purpose? He is administering a slap in the face or even a punch in the face. He portrays the full ugliness of Israel's behavior. Do translators have the right to censor the Holy Spirit and change his hammer blows to a slap on the wrist? This is the question we must deal with.

The same two chapters also describe the sexual organs of the evil ladies' illicit lovers. How do various translations try to cope with this twin problem of Ezekiel 16:25-26?

Ezekiel 16:25-26—*literal: you spread your feet or lower legs ….your neighbors' great of flesh*

NIV 2011   At every street corner you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, *spreading your legs* with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by. 26You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your neighbors with *large genitals*, and aroused my anger with your increasing promiscuity.

NIV 1984   At the head of every street you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, *offering your body* with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by. 26You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your *lustful neighbors*, and provoked me to anger with your increasing promiscuity.

ESV   At the head of every street you built your lofty place and made your beauty an abomination, *offering yourself* to any passerby and multiplying your whoring. 26You also played the whore with the Egyptians, your *lustful neighbors*, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger.

CSB   You built your elevated place at the head of every street and turned your beauty into a detestable thing. You *spread your legs* to everyone who passed by and increased your prostitution. 26You engaged in promiscuous acts with Egyptian men, *your well-endowed neighbors*, and increased your prostitution to anger me.

EHV   At the corner of every street you set up your pavilion and made your beauty into a disgusting thing. You *spread your legs* for every man passing by, and you multiplied your acts of prostitution. 26You acted like a whore with the sons of Egypt, your neighbors with their *enlarged flesh,** and you multiplied your acts of prostitution to enrage me!
    *In earlier drafts this was translated *large penises*. It was changed, not to make the text more euphemistic, but to bring the translation closer to the Hebrew, which uses the somewhat euphemistic term *flesh.*

If there is any doubt that this passage is blunt, it is removed by the parallel in Ezekiel 23:20, which refers to the lovers who have flesh like horses and emissions like donkeys.

 "Offering your body" and "spreading your legs" refer to the same act, but they are not dynamic equivalents. Our translations should not only be meaning equivalent with the original but also emotional and impact equivalent.

Some observations: The NIV became more blunt in the 2011edition. Most recent translations are quite blunt except for some of those in the King James tradition. Ironically, the KJV itself is fairly blunt:

> Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast *opened thy feet* to everyone that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger.

Another issue in this passage is whether to call the sisters *prostitutes* or *whores.* The context says that they are not really prostitutes since prostitutes get paid for what they do, but the evil sisters pay their lovers. In contemporary English *whore* is usually not an accusation of professionalism but of grossly promiscuous behavior. Is this harsher term justified here?

In these two chapters the EHV remains very blunt because these two chapters are not usually used in worship and the "slap in the face" purpose of Ezekiel is very clear.

There are several more examples of this problem in Ezekiel and other books, but we do not have to look at all of them to consider the principle.

What if we are not sure whether or not the expression in the text is a euphemism? There are some passages which are ambiguous. Should we translate euphemistically unless we are forced to be blunt? Translations are divided on this issue.

> Ezekiel 7:17, translated literally, reads *all knees run water.* The question is do the knees run *like* water or run *with* water? The context is describing the result of the terror that strikes people during the siege of Jerusalem. Do they lose strength or do they lose control?
>
> ESV   All hands are feeble, and all knees turn to water.
> NIV 1984 Every hand will go limp, and every knee will become as weak as water.
> NIV 2011 Every hand will go limp; every leg will be wet with urine.
> HCSB   All their hands will become weak, and all their knees will turn to water.
> CSB   All their hands will become weak, and all their knees will run with urine.
> EHV   All hands will hang limp, and all knees will run with water.*
>   * Footnote: Terror will cause them to wet themselves.

So is there any good reason to present an open discussion of this topic besides to give the EHV editors some cover? Actually there is. This issue provides one of the clearest tests of a translator's faithfulness to the text. Some translators try to make the Song of Songs more graphic than it really is in order to indulge the idea that the Song has roots in some sort of heathen fertility rite. Other translators try to evade the ugly realities described by Ezekiel. Either approach is wrong. The translator's duty is to be gentle and discrete where the Spirit is discrete, and rough where the Spirit uses rough language. There is probably no translation issue that reveals more about translators' tendency either to let the text speak for itself, or to try to "improve" the text to fit in with their sensibilities and the sensibilities of their readers. If translators do not alter the text when it offends them, they will probably not deliberately alter the text anywhere.

An interesting dilemma will arise when we publish online versions of the EHV. Before you can make your e-book live, you have to either check or not check a box that says: "This book contains adult material." If you check the box, the publisher will attach a warning label to your book. Should publishers of Bibles check that box? Well, maybe "yes" because Ezekiel 16 and 23 are not Sunday school material. But maybe "no" because the label "adult content" is one of those misnomers our society likes. The label "adult content" is actually a euphemism for "non-adult, morally immature, trashy content." The Bible

contains two kinds of material, the beautiful content of the gospel and the ugly content set forth by the law. The latter is sometimes expressed in crude words. This is one area in which Bible translators find themselves between a rock and a hard place. But spiritually mature adults have to take the lead in helping people deal with this issue.

At the beginning of this discussion we started the governing principle for the EHV:

The translator should try to be euphemistic where the original text is euphemistic and blunt or direct where the original text is blunt.

How have we applied it? Though this is the chief rubric governing this topic. But there is a secondary concern: to avoid turned away readers by rendering that are too much change too quickly without enough instruction. Overall, we have probably stayed a bit more toward the euphemistic end of the spectrum than our own linguistic preferences would call for, because Bible translation is governed not only by linguistic principles but also by pastoral principles. Our readers who can comfortably handle the harshest language in the Bible will not be harmed if the main text is a bit softer and some of the harsh realities are left in the footnotes for the mature. On the other hand, readers who are not quite ready to handle the sometimes harsh language in the Bible because their previous translations have concealed it from them might be harmed by too much jarring change too fast. A turn toward harsher language in some passages would be more accurate translation, in so far as it more accurately reflects the original text, but too much change too fast might not be the best pastoral approach. In this 500th anniversary of the Reformation we are reminded of the patience of Luther, who understood that even good change calls for time and patience.