

Introduction for the WELS Website
About the
New International Version (NIV) Translation Suggestions
Submitted in May 2016
By the WELS Translation Liaison Committee

It is well known that the New International Version (NIV) has a 15- person committee to oversee the text of the NIV, and this Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) meets every summer to consider improvements. This is in keeping with the original NIV charter.

In May 2015 the WELS Translation Liaison Committee (TLC) contacted CBT Chairman Douglas Moo to find out if there was any news about the NIV, and to inquire about the possibility of submitting recommendations for improvement from WELS.

Dr. Moo responded that there are no plans to issue another revision in the new future, after the fairly wide-scale revision of 2011. But at some point there undoubtedly will be another revision, and the CBT is continuing to work through its backlog of recommendations. Dr. Moo said that that CBT would welcome suggestions for revision from WELS. Although our recommendations may not be considered immediately, Dr. Moo promised that they would all be considered seriously as time goes along.

In response to this invitation, the TLC began writing up suggestions for improvement in the NIV. In May 2016 we submitted our first 33 recommendations—the result of five committee meetings. These recommendations are posted here to be transparent with our constituents in WELS about what we as a committee are doing.

A glance at these recommendations will reveal that our work as a committee was by no means comprehensive or uniform. Many of these recommendations are minor issues of English style and idiom. Most are not issues of theological substance. But it is a start. In the coming years the TLC hopes to write up more recommendations for the NIV, eventually covering the entire Bible.

WELS people who have a suggestion for the NIV are invited to share their thoughts with any member of the TLC.

Prof. Thomas Nass, chairman
Rev. Brett Brauer
Prof. Kenneth Cherney, Jr.
Prof. Joel Fredrich
Rev. Geoffrey Kieta
Rev. Glenn Schwanke
Prof. Paul Zell

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 2:23

Original text:

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפְעֵם עָצָם מִעֲצָמֵי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לְזָאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לְקָחָהּ זָאת:

NIV rendering:

The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

Suggestion:

The man said,

“This one at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

Rationale:

This rendering, which is similar to that followed by the ESV, the HCSB, and the NET, does a better job of bringing out the contrast in the context between all the animals who were presented to Adam but who could not serve as a “suitable helper” (v. 20), and Eve. Adam’s delight in the unique relationship he will have with Eve is expressed in the Hebrew with the words **זֹאת הִפְעֵם**, which are rendered in the NIV as “This is now.” This choice does not seem to convey the contrast as clearly or as forcefully as the Hebrew does. Even moving the word “now” to the front of the sentence would create a more forceful contrast to the English reader (“Now this one is bone of my bones ...”).

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 17:6

Original text:

וְהִפְרֵתִי אֹתְךָ בְּמֵאֹד מְאֹד וְנִתְתִּיךָ לְגוֹיִם וּמְלָכִים מִמּוֹךְ יֵצְאוּ:

NIV rendering:

I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

Suggestion:

I will make you very fruitful; I will make you into nations, and kings will come from you.

Rationale:

The expression “I will make nations of you” seems unnatural to us in English. In other passages with similar Hebrew, we notice a more idiomatic rendering in the NIV:

- Gen 17:20 – I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation (וְנִתְתִּיו לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל).
- Gen 21:13 – I will make the son of the slave into a nation also (לְגוֹי אֲשֵׁי מְנֶנֶה), because he is your offspring.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 19:38

Original text:

וְהַצְעִירָה גַם־הוּא יֶלֶדָה בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶן־עַמִּי הוּא אָבִי בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן עַד־הַיּוֹם:

NIV rendering:

The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi^a; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.

^a*Ben-Ammi* means *son of my father's people*

Suggestion:

The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi^a; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.

^a*Ben-Ammi* means *son of my people*

Rationale:

We notice that the footnote in NIV84 was “*son of my people*,” and NIV11 changed the footnote to “*son of my father's people*.” We assume the change was made to link the name more clearly with its aetiology. But even beginning Hebrew students will recognize that the word “father's” is not represented in the Hebrew words בֶּן־עַמִּי, so with this change the NIV11 runs the risk of losing credibility with some readers. Since the straightforward translation “son of my people” can be easily explained and is not different conceptually from “son of my father's people,” we do not see the need for, or the benefit of, this change.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 21:18

Original text:

קוּמִי שִׂאִי אֶת־הַנָּעַר וְהִחַזְקִי אֶת־יָדוֹ בְּךָ כִּי־לְגוֹי נָדוּל אֲשִׁימֶנּוּ:

NIV rendering:

Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.

Suggestion:

Help the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.

Rationale:

Our suggestion here, admittedly, is not a large change, but we think it offers a slight improvement. “Lift up” can easily imply picking something up so that it no longer touches the ground. It is unlikely that Hagar picked Ishmael completely off the ground since he was at least 16 years old, and the verse goes on to speak about Hagar taking him by the hand.

A number of modern translations that are sensitive to English idiom translate as we suggest, including GW, HCSB, NCV, and NET.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 23:9

Original text:

בְּכֶסֶף מָלֵא יִתְּנֶנָּה לִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְאַחֲזֵת-קֶבֶר :

NIV rendering:

Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you.

Suggestion:

Ask him to sell it to me in your presence for the full price as a burial site.

Rationale:

We think there are good reasons to take the prepositional phrase בְּתוֹכְכֶם with the verb (יִתְּנֶנָּה) – “let him give it”), rather than with the construct chain (לְאַחֲזֵת-קֶבֶר) -- “for a possession of a grave”).

1) If בְּתוֹכְכֶם were intended to modify לְאַחֲזֵת-קֶבֶר, we would expect the prepositional phrase to be *after* the construct chain (cf. v. 4: אַחֲזֵת-קֶבֶר עִמָּכֶם – “a burial site with you.”). The word order implies that בְּתוֹכְכֶם goes with יִתְּנֶנָּה.

2) In the immediate context there is a very strong emphasis on the fact that the transaction was to be completed in the presence of the Hittite people so that there would be many witnesses. Our suggested translation is in sync with these neighboring passages:

- Verse 10 – Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people (וַעֲפְרוֹן יָשָׁב בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי-חֵת) and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate.
- Verse 11 – “I give it to you in the presence of my people.”
- Verse 12 – Abraham bowed down before the people of the land
- Verse 13 – and he said to Ephron in their hearing,
- Verse 16 – Abraham ... weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites:
- Verse 17-18 – So Ephron’s field ... was deeded to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 29:17

Original text:

וַעֲיִינֵי לֵאָה רַבּוֹת וְרַחֵל הָיְתָה יִפְת־תֶּאֱדָר וַיִּפֶת מִרְאָהּ:

NIV rendering:

Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful.

Suggestion:

Leah's eyes were plain.^a but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful.

^a Or gentle

Rationale:

It is debated what רַבּוֹת means here in the description of Leah's eyes. Most commentators assume that it is a negative remark, referring to Leah's inferior beauty in contrast to Rachel (see Keil/Delitzsch, Matthews, Sarna, Waltke, Wenham, Westermann). A few commentators take it as a positive remark, indicating that Leah had "gentle" or "soft" or "delicate" eyes (Hamilton = the beautiful eyes of a young person).

The problem with the NIV is that "weak" is likely to communicate neither of these two options, but the concept of poor vision. To the average person, "weak eyes" probably describes the person who has 20/100 vision when visiting the optometrist.

We consider it likely, along with the majority of commentators, that the expression in this context expresses an inferior quality of Leah in contrast to Rachel, and we have put our preferred rendering in our suggestion. Perhaps the more positive interpretation could be represented in a footnote.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 33:13

Original text:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲדֹנָי יְדֹעַ כִּי־תִלְדֵם רִכְלִים וְהֵצֵאן וְתִבְקָר עָלֹת עָלַי וְדַפְקוּם יוֹם אֶחָד וּמָתוּ כָּל־הַצֹּאן:

NIV rendering:

But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die.

Suggestion:

But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are not strong and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die.

Rationale:

When the English adjective “tender” is used with people, it commonly has the meaning “loving and gentle, showing affection, sentimental.” So, there is a chance for miscommunication or confusion here. In this context, Jacob is making the point that his children, because they are children, will not be able to keep pace in marching with Esau and his men. We notice that some published translations have the adjective “weak,” which could work and is a way that NIV11 translates רַךְ elsewhere (2 Sam 3:39). The word “weak” is often pejorative, however, so we prefer the expression “not strong” as a way to capture the nuance that is needed here.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016**

Bible References:

Genesis 47:19, 25
Ezra 9:8, 9
Jeremiah 34:9, 10

Original text:

Gen 47:19 – קָנָה אֶת־אֲדָמָתָנוּ בְּלֶחֶם וְנָהָיָה אֲנַחְנוּ וְאֶדְמָתָנוּ עֲבָדִים לְפַרְעֹה
Gen 47:25 – נִמְצָא־חַן בְּעֵינֵי אֲדֹנָי וְהָיִינוּ עֲבָדִים לְפַרְעֹה:

Ezra 9:8 – לְהַאֲרִיר עֵינֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וּלְתַתֵּנוּ מַחִיָּה מְעַט בְּעַבְדָּתָנוּ:
Ezra 9:9 – כִּי־עֲבָדִים אֲנַחְנוּ וּבְעַבְדָּתָנוּ לֹא עֲזָבָנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Jeremiah 34:9 – לְשַׁלַּח אִישׁ אֶת־עַבְדּוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶת־שִׁפְחָתוֹ הָעִבְרִי וְהָעִבְרִיָּה חַפְּשִׁים לְבִלְתִּי עֲבָד־בָּם
בִּיהוּדֵי אֶרְצוֹתָיו אִישׁ:
Jeremiah 34:10 – וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כָּל־הַשָּׂרִים וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ בְּבְרִית לְשַׁלַּח אִישׁ אֶת־עַבְדּוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶת־
שִׁפְחָתוֹ חַפְּשִׁים לְבִלְתִּי עֲבָד־בָּם עוֹד

NIV rendering:

Gen 47:19 – Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh.

Gen 47:25 – “May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh.

Ezra 9:8 – and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage.

Ezra 9:9 – Though we are slaves, our God has not forsaken us in our bondage.

Jeremiah 34:9 – Everyone was to free their Hebrew slaves, both male and female; no one was to hold a fellow Hebrew in bondage.

Jeremiah 34:10 – So all the officials and people who entered into this covenant agreed that they would free their male and female slaves and no longer hold them in bondage.

Suggestion:

Gen 47:19 – Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be slaves for Pharaoh.

Gen 47:25 – “May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be slaves for Pharaoh.

Ezra 9:8 – and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our slavery.

Ezra 9:9 – Though we are slaves, our God has not forsaken us in our slavery.

Jeremiah 34:9 – Everyone was to free their Hebrew slaves, both male and female; no one was to hold a fellow Hebrew in slavery.

Jeremiah 34:10 – So all the officials and people who entered into this covenant agreed that they would free their male and female slaves and no longer hold them in slavery.

Rationale:

The NIV has the expression “in bondage” six times in the OT. We suggest that this be changed for two reasons. First, we do not think it is idiomatic English, since it is more natural to say “be slaves” or “be in slavery.” Second, the word “bondage” has taken on new connotations since the NIV was published. According to the Urban Dictionary, bondage “has come to mean sexual slavery, particularly dealing with the simple practice of restraining one’s partner.” It seems quite easy to us to make some simple improvements.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 47:21

Original text:

וְאֶת־הָעָם הֶעֱבִיר אֶת־ךְ לְעֲבָדִים מִקֶּצֶה גְבוּל־מִצְרָיִם וְעַד־קֶצֶהוּ:

NIV rendering:

and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other.

Suggestion:

and Joseph made the people slaves, from one end of Egypt to the other.

Rationale:

It seems unidiomatic and archaic to say that Joseph “reduced the people to servitude.” We notice that this is the only time that the NIV uses the word “servitude.”

What we are suggesting is simpler and clearer, and is the rendering in the NIrV and many other translations. It dovetails with our suggestion for Genesis 47:19, 25 (“be slaves” rather than “be in bondage”).

We are fine with the fact that the NIV follows the alternate reading of the Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint in this passage. We are also fine with the current NIV footnote, which we did not bother to duplicate above.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 49:10

Original text:

לֹא יִסּוּר שֵׁבֶט מִיְהוּדָה וּמַחְקֵק מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו עַד כִּי־יָבֹא שִׁילָה וְלֹן יִקְהֶת עַמִּים:

NIV rendering:

The scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he to whom it belongs shall come
and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

Suggestion:

The scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he to whom it belongs will come
and the nations will obey him.

Rationale:

The expression “the obedience of the nations is his” seems unnatural and awkward in English, and possibly confusing. We would never say: “The obedience of the students is his.” We would say: “The students obey him.” For purposes of clarity and English style we recommend a change.

In addition, we do not see a reason for the shift from “will” (“the scepter will not depart”) to “shall” (“until he...shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his”) in the verse.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Genesis 49:14

Original text:

יששכר חמור נָרָם

NIV rendering:

Issachar is a rawboned^a donkey
^aOr strong

Suggestion:

Issachar is a sturdy donkey

Rationale:

The translation “rawboned” suffers from two weaknesses. First, very few English readers will be acquainted with the word, which according to the dictionary means “having a lean, gaunt frame with prominent bones.” Second, it is not at all certain that this is what is intended with the Hebrew word נָרָם in this context. The other word in Hebrew for “bone” (עֲצָם) commonly means strength, and it is often assumed that נָרָם may function the same way.

We think that it would be reasonable to put the NIV footnote “strong” into the text. However, “strong” is a bit bland, with less color than the Hebrew original. So we recommend “sturdy,” which describes quite well what a donkey with strong bones would be like.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016**

Bible Reference:

Genesis 50:10, 11

Original text:

- 10 וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד-נָגֶרֶן הָאֲטָד אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּסְפְּדוּ-שָׁם מִסָּפֵד גָּדוֹל וַיִּכְבְּדוּ מְאֹד וַיַּעַשׂ לְאָבִיו אָבֶל שִׁבְעַת יָמִים:
- 11 וַיֵּרָא יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֶת-הָאָבֶל בְּנֶגֶן הָאֲטָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ אָבֶל-כָּבֵד זֶה לְמִצְרַיִם עַל-כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ אָבֶל מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן:

NIV rendering:

¹⁰ When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning for his father. ¹¹ When the Canaanites who lived there saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “The Egyptians are holding a solemn ceremony of mourning.” That is why that place near the Jordan is called Abel Mizraim.

Suggestion:

¹⁰ When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, across the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning for his father. ¹¹ When the Canaanites who lived there saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “The Egyptians are holding a solemn ceremony of mourning.” That is why that place across the Jordan is called Abel Mizraim.

Rationale:

We are surprised that the NIV translates בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן as “near the Jordan”—since the Hebrew word בְּעֵבֶר means “on the other side of,” and Hebrew has other ways of saying “near.” Very likely the NIV made this decision because בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן is tricky in that it often refers to the area “east” of the Jordan (see Josh 1:4, etc.), and sometimes to the area “west” of the Jordan (Josh 5:1, etc.). In this context, that decision is avoided by translating “near the Jordan.” However, the decision could also be avoided by translating as we suggest, and letting the interpreter go from there. The NIV translates בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן as “across the Jordan” in Deuteronomy 3:20 and 1 Samuel 31:7.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Exodus 16:31

Original text:

וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְּיַד יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־שְׁמוֹ מַן וְהוּא כְּזֶרַע גֹּדֹל לֶכֶן וְשַׁעֲמוֹ כְּצַפְיֹת בְּדָבָשׁ:

NIV rendering:

The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.

Suggestion:

The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was like coriander seed, but white, and tasted like wafers made with honey.

Rationale:

Many commentators indicate that coriander seed is not white (see Durham, Propp, Sarna), and pictures of coriander seed on the internet look gray or light brown. So it seems best not to take “white” as the *tertium comparationis* with coriander seed here, but rather as a separate modifier. The Hebrew word order also would give a slight preference to that understanding. If the intended meaning were “white like coriander seed,” the more natural Hebrew word order would be וְהוּא לֶכֶן followed by כְּזֶרַע גֹּדֹל. We assume that manna was like coriander seed in size and shape, not in color.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible References:

Exodus 20:4
Deuteronomy 5:8

Original text:

Exod 20:4 – לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה-לָךָ פֶּסֶל וְכָל-תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם
מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ:

Deut 5:8 – לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה-לָךָ פֶּסֶל כָּל-תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם
מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ:

NIV rendering:

Exod 20:4 – You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

Deut 5:8 – You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

Suggestion:

Exod 20:4 – You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in the heavens above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

Deut 5:8 – You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in the heavens above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

Rationale:

The English expression “in heaven” (without the definite article) suggests to us the place where God lives. The English expression “in the heavens” (with the definite article) suggests the place where the birds and stars are—the place where idolaters find models for their images. For that reason, we would prefer “in the heavens” here. We notice that the NIV uses the expression “the heavens” regularly in this way.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible References:

Exodus 33:4,5,6
2 Samuel 1:24
Jeremiah 2:32

Original text:

Exod 33:4 – וַיִּשְׁמַע הָעָם אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וַיִּתְאַבְּלוּ וְלֹא־שָׁתוּ אִישׁ עֲדָיו עָלָיו: –
Exod 33:5 – וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲמַר אֶל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתֶּם עִם־קִשְׁי־עֵרֶף רַגַע אֶחָד אֲעִלֶּה –
בְּקַרְבְּךָ וְכִלְיֹתֶיךָ וְעֵתָה הוֹרֵד עֲדָיֶךָ מֵעֲלֶיךָ וְאַדְעָה מָה אֲעֲשֶׂה־לָּךְ:
Exod 33:6 – וַיִּתְנַצְּלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עֲדָתָם מִהָר הַהוֹרֵב: –
2 Sam 1:24 – בָּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־שָׂאוֹל בְּכִינָה הַמְּלַבְּשֵׁכֶם שָׁנִי עִם־עֲדָנִים הַמְעִלָּה עֲרֵי זָהָב עַל־
לְבוּשְׁכֶן:
Jer 2:32 – הַתְּשַׁבַּח בְּתוֹלָה עֲדָיָה כִּלְיָה קִשְׁרִיָּה וְעַמִּי שָׁכַחוּנִי יָמִים אֵין מִסְפָּר: –

NIV rendering:

Exod 33:4 – When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments.
Exod 33:5 – For the LORD had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.’”
Exod 33:6 -- So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.
2 Sam 1:24 – Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.
Jer 2:32 – Does a young woman forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.

Suggestion:

Exod 33:4 – When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any jewelry.
Exod 33:5 – For the LORD had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your jewelry and I will decide what to do with you.’”
Exod 33:6 – So the Israelites stripped off their jewelry at Mount Horeb.
2 Sam 1:24 – Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with golden jewelry.
Jer 2:32 – Does a young woman forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding sashes? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.

Rationale:

It seems odd to us that the NIV in several places uses the word “ornaments” as a general word for adornments on human beings. No English speaking husband would say to his wife: “I like your ornaments” or “Why don’t you put on your nice ornaments?”

“Jewelry” is not a perfect equivalent for the Hebrew word **עֲרִי**, because the word **עֲרִי** can be broader. Still, “jewelry” seems to us to be the best English equivalent in most cases. We notice that the NIV already translates the Hebrew as “jewelry” in four passages (Jer 2:32; Ezek 7:20; 16:11; 23:40).

For **קַשְׂרֵיהֶן** in Jeremiah 2:32 we recommend the English equivalent offered by HALOT and used by the NIV for the same word in Isaiah 3:20: “sashes.”

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible References:

Numbers 35:20
Deuteronomy 4:42; 19:4, 6
Joshua 20:5

Original text:

Num 35:20 – ואם בשנאה יהדפנו או השליך עליו בצדקה נִמְתָּ: –
Deut 4:42 – לָנֶס שָׁמָּה רוֹצֵחַ אֲשֶׁר יִרְצַח אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ בְּבַל־יִדְעַת וְהוּא לֹא־שָׂנֵא לוֹ מִתְּמוּל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם וְנָס – אֶל־אַחַת מִן־הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְחָי:
Deut 19:4 – וְזֶה דְבַר הַרְצַח אֲשֶׁר־יָנוּס שָׁמָּה וְחָי אֲשֶׁר יִכֶּה אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ בְּבַל־יִדְעַת וְהוּא לֹא־שָׂנֵא לוֹ – מִתְּמוּל שְׁלֹשָׁם:
Deut 19:6 – פְּוִי־יִרְדֹּף גֹּאֵל הַדָּם אַחֲרָי הַרְצַח כִּי־יָנֹחַם לְבָבוֹ וְהִשִּׁיגוּ כִּי־יִרְבֶּה הַדֶּרֶךְ וְהִכְהוּ נַפְשׁ וְלוֹ – אֵין מִשְׁפַּט־מוֹת כִּי לֹא שָׂנֵא הוּא לוֹ מִתְּמוּל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם:
Josh 20:5 – וְכִי יִרְדֹּף גֹּאֵל הַדָּם אַחֲרָיו וְלֹא־יִסְגְּרוּ אֶת־הַרְצַח בְּיָדוֹ כִּי בְּבַל־יִדְעַת הִכָּה אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ – וְלֹא־שָׂנֵא הוּא לוֹ מִתְּמוּל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם:

NIV rendering:

Num 35:20 – If anyone with malice aforethought shoves another or throws something at them intentionally so that they die
Deut 4:42 – [Moses set aside three cities] to which anyone who had killed a person could flee if they had unintentionally killed a neighbor without malice aforethought. They could flee into one of these cities and save their life.
Deut 19:4 – This is the rule concerning anyone who kills a person and flees there for safety—anyone who kills a neighbor unintentionally, without malice aforethought.
Deut 19:6 – Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage, overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbor without malice aforethought.
Josh 20:5 – If the avenger of blood comes in pursuit, the elders must not surrender the fugitive, because the fugitive killed their neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought.

Suggestion:

Num 35:20 – If anyone in hatred shoves another or throws something at them intentionally so that they die
Deut 4:42 – [Moses set aside three cities] to which anyone who had killed a person could flee if they had unintentionally killed a neighbor without hating the person previously. They could flee into one of these cities and save their life.
Deut 19:4 – This is the rule concerning anyone who kills a person and flees there for safety—anyone who kills a neighbor unintentionally, without hating the person previously.

Deut 19:6 – Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage, overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbor without hating the person previously.

Josh 20:5 – If the avenger of blood comes in pursuit, the elders must not surrender the fugitive, because the fugitive killed their neighbor unintentionally and without hating the person previously.

Rationale:

We are worried that the phrase “malice aforethought” will not be understood by modern readers, especially younger people. In addition, we understand that even in legal circles the term is not used as widely as in previous generations, and it is subject to differing definitions.

Our rewording is similar to the way the concept is handled in other modern English translations, and it is quite close to the wording of the Hebrew.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible References:

Judges 9:27
Isaiah 63:2-3

Original text:

Judg 9:27 – וַיֵּצְאוּ הַשָּׂדֵה וַיִּבְצְרוּ אֶת־כַּרְמֵיהֶם וַיִּדְרְכוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ הַלְוִיִּם וַיָּבֵאוּ בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵיהֶם –

Isa 63:2-3 – מִדְּוֵעַ אָדָם לְלִבּוֹשָׁךְ וּבִגְדֶיךָ כְּדֶרֶךְ בְּנֹתַי
פִּוּרְהוּ דְרָכַתִּי לְבִדְי וּמַעֲמוּם אֵין־אִישׁ אִתִּי וְאֶדְרְכֶם בְּאַפִּי וְאֶרְמָסֶם בְּחַמְתִּי

NIV rendering:

Judg 9:27 – After they had gone out into the fields and gathered the grapes and trodden them, they held a festival in the temple of their god.

Isa 63:2-3: Why are your garments red,
like those of one treading the winepress?
“I have trodden the winepress alone;
from the nations no one was with me.
I trampled them in my anger
and trod them down in my wrath;

Suggestion:

Judg 9:27 – After they had gone out into the fields and gathered the grapes and trampled them, they held a festival in the temple of their god.

Isa 63:2-3: Why are your garments red,
like those of one trampling the winepress?
“I have trampled the winepress alone;
from the nations no one was with me.
I trampled them in my anger
and stomped them down in my wrath;

Rationale:

We can certainly empathize with the difficulty this construction creates in English. We have to admit that “trodden” is technically the correct English form. Our problem is that we don’t think many people will know that. We suspect that most English readers will stumble over “trodden” and lose the train of thought while they puzzle over whether that is a real English word or not. Possibly they will stumble over “trod” as well. We think that it will be even more confusing for people who speak English as a second language, a target audience of the NIV11.

In general, the NIV has used the idiom “tread the winepress” and “tread out the grapes” for the Hebrew word דָּרַךְ in these kinds of contexts. We count at least nine instances of this translation decision, and we are not arguing that a general change needs to be made. It is understandable and flows smoothly most of the time. However, in Micah 6:15, we note that the expression אֶתְּהוּ דָּרַךְ-נֵיִלְתָּ is translated “you will press olives.” While it is not exactly the same idiom, it does offer the opportunity to consider a different way of rendering the verb in English. Of course, in Isaiah 63:2-3, דָּרַךְ occurs three times, and in the third instance, the NIV renders it “trample” instead of “tread.”

A quick scan of the internet indicates that “treading out the grapes”/“treading the winepress” is not the only way this activity is described. It is also frequently referred to as “trampling the grapes” or “stomping the grapes.” We suggest using either “trample” or “stomp” in place of “trodden/trod” in these two passages. Our suggestion shows one way it could be done. In Isaiah 63 our suggestion keeps the same English equivalent (“trample”) for all three occurrences of דָּרַךְ, while offering a different English equivalent (“stomp”) for רָמוּס.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

1 Samuel 8:15

Original text:

וְזָרְעֵיכֶם וְכַרְמֵיכֶם יַעֲשֶׂה וְנָתַן לְסָרִיסָיו וְלַעֲבָדָיו:

NIV rendering:

He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants.

Suggestion:

He will take a tenth of your grain and of the produce of your vineyards and give it to his officials and attendants.

Rationale:

This is the only place where the NIV uses the English word “vintage,” and we are not sure that the average reader will understand it correctly. The word commonly occurs in modern English referring to the year that a bottle of wine was made or as a synonym for “classic,” as in “vintage car.”

We notice that the NIV and other translations simply use “grapes” as the English equivalent. This gives a clearer meaning, but it may be too restrictive. Would a king only take freshly cut grapes as his tax on vineyards, and not wine?

Our suggested rendering, like the NET, is broad enough to include freshly cut grapes at harvest time, as well as wine throughout the year. It also has the advantage of keeping the word “vineyards,” in harmony with the Hebrew original.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016**

Bible Reference:

1 Samuel 14:26, 27

Original text:

1 Sam 14:26 – וַיָּבֹאוּ הָעָם אֶל-הַיַּעַר וַהֲגִיחַ הַדָּבָשׁ וְאֵין-מִשְׁיג יָדוֹ אֶל-פִּיו כִּי-יָרָא הָעָם אֶת-
הַשִּׁבְעָה:

1 Sam 14:27 – וַיִּזְנַתָּן לֹא-שָׁמַע בְּהַשְׁבִּיעַ אָבִיו אֶת-הָעָם וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת-קֶצֶת הַמַּטֵּה אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ וַיִּטְבֵּל
אוֹתָהּ בְּיַעַר הַדָּבָשׁ וַיָּשֹׁב יָדוֹ אֶל-פִּיו וַתִּרְאָנָה עֵינָיו:

NIV rendering:

1 Sam 14:26 – When they went into the woods, they saw the honey oozing out; yet no one put his hand to his mouth, because they feared the oath.

1 Sam 14:27 – But Jonathan had not heard that his father had bound the people with the oath, so he reached out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it into the honeycomb. He raised his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened.

Suggestion:

1 Sam 14:26 – When they went into the woods, they saw the honey oozing out; yet no one put any of it in his mouth, because they feared the oath.

1 Sam 14:27 – But Jonathan had not heard that his father had bound the people with the oath, so he reached out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it into the honeycomb. He put it to his mouth, and his eyes brightened.

Rationale:

The Hebrew expression “put one’s hand to one’s mouth” seems to be an idiom for eating something. This combination of words, however, does not communicate the same idea in English. So to translate literally could open the door to miscommunication. To “put one’s hand to one’s mouth” in English can convey the idea of *covering* one’s mouth so as not to speak or eat.

Our suggestion retains the word “mouth.” It also creates an expression in English that is understandable, but isn’t routine or ordinary—perhaps like the Hebrew idiom.

There are numerous other ways that the same idea could be communicated, as is evident when other published translations are consulted.

- CEB: no one ate any of it.... he ate it
- ISV: no one put his hand to his mouth to eat it....he brought it back to his mouth
- NIV: no one put any of the honey in his mouth...he put some honey in his mouth

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

1 Samuel 18:16

Original text:

וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוּדָה אָהָב אֶת־דָּוִד כִּי־הוּא יוֹצֵא וְבָא לִפְנֵיהֶם:

NIV rendering:

But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.

Suggestion:

But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in as their leader.

Rationale:

NIV's paraphrase here conveys the main thought well. Our only reason for preferring a more literal translation in this instance is to facilitate comparison with the more literal translation we are recommending for Acts 1:21 ("Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out as our leader,..."). If our recommendation for Acts 1:21 is adopted, the rationale provided there shows that "he went out and came in" is sufficiently idiomatic by the NIV's own standards (cf. Num. 27:16,17 NIV) and that it is desirable to let readers see the similarity between 1 Samuel 18:16 and Acts 1:21. Just as Israel and Judah loved David, who went out and came in as their leader, so the Twelve thought of Jesus, the Son of David, as the one who went out and came in as *their* leader. But if our recommendation for Acts 1:21 is rejected, we don't think much will be gained for readers of the NIV through a revision of 1 Samuel 18:16.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible References:

Jeremiah 32:12; 38:19; 40:11,15; 43:9; 44:1, 26, 27; 52:28, 30

Original text:

Jer 32:12 – וְאַתָּן אֶת־הַסֵּפֶר הַמִּקְנָה אֶל־בָּרוּךְ בֶּן־נְרִיָּה בֶן־מַחְסֵיָה לְעֵינָי תִּנְמָאֵל דְּדָי וּלְעֵינָי הָעֵדִים –
הַכֹּתְבִים בְּסֵפֶר הַמִּקְנָה לְעֵינָי כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּחֻצַּר הַמִּטְרָה
(Similar are 38:19; 40:11; 43:9; 44:1; 52:28, 30)

Jer 40:15 – וַיּוֹחֲזֵנוּ בֶן־קִרְיָח אָמַר אֶל־גְּדַלְיָהוּ בְּסֹתֵר בְּמִצְפָּה לֵאמֹר אֵלֶיךָ נָא וְאַכְהֶה אֶת־יִשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־
נְתַנְיָה וְאִישׁ לֹא יֵדַע לְמַה יִּכְפֹּה נַפְשׁוֹ וְנִפְצוּ כָּל־יְהוּדָה הַנִּקְבְּצִים אֵלָיֶךָ וְאַבְרָהָה שְׂאֵרֵית יְהוּדָה
(Similar are 44:26, 27)

NIV rendering:

Jer 32:12 – and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard.

Jer 40:15 – Then Johanan son of Kareah said privately to Gedaliah in Mizpah, “Let me go and kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah, and no one will know it. Why should he take your life and cause all the Jews who are gathered around you to be scattered and the remnant of Judah to perish?”

Suggestion:

Jer 32:12 – and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the men of Judah sitting in the courtyard of the guard.

Jer 40:15 – Then Johanan son of Kareah said privately to Gedaliah in Mizpah, “Let me go and kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah, and no one will know it. Why should he take your life and cause all the people of Judah who are gathered around you to be scattered and the remnant of Judah to perish?”

Rationale:

Ten times in Jeremiah 32-52, the NIV renders two expressions (יְהוּדִים and יְהוּדָה) as “Jews.” While most translations are not completely consistent in this and it certainly could be debated, we suggest that it is best to reserve the words “Jew” and “Jewish” for the inhabitants of Judea after the exile. We note that in several places (2 Kings 16:6, 2 Kings 25:25, Jeremiah 34:9; 41:3 for example), the NIV has chosen to use either “men of Judah” or even “Hebrew” instead of “Jews.” We also note that in Jeremiah 41:3, the 1984 edition had “Jews” but the 2011 edition changed to “men of Judah.” Likewise in 34:9, the 2011 edition changed “Jew” to “Hebrew.” We would like to see changes like that consistently followed throughout the book of Jeremiah—the only book in which the NIV uses “Jews” or “Jewish” to refer to the people of Judah before the exile. We note that the JPS translation—which presumably reflects modern Jewish usage and sensitivity on this issue—renders all the passages in Jeremiah “Judeans” or “men of Judah,” reserving the term “Jew” for postexilic works.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Hosea 12:4 [H5]

Original text:

וַיִּשְׂר אֶל-מַלְאָךְ נִיכֹל בָּכָה וַיִּתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ בֵּית-אֵל יִמְצְאֵנּוּ וְשָׁם יִדְבַר עִמָּנּוּ:

NIV rendering:

He struggled with the angel and overcame him;
he wept and begged for his favor.
He found him at Bethel
and talked with him there—

Suggestion:

He struggled with the angel and overcame him;
he wept and begged for his favor.
He found him at Bethel
and talked with him^a there—
^a Septuagint and Syriac; Hebrew *us*

Rationale:

When the NIV follows a reading from the ancient versions that is different from the Masoretic Text, it generally indicates the source in a footnote. We are surprised that there is no footnote here, and we recommend that one be added. The alternate reading is not just a matter of different vowel pointing, but involves a consonantal change (MT עִמָּנּוּ = us; עִמּוֹ = him).

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Hosea 14:8 [H9]

Original text:

MT – אִפְרַיִם מַה-לִּי עוֹד לְעַצְבָּיִם –

LXX – τῷ Εφραιμ, τί αὐτῷ ἔτι καὶ εἰδώλοις;

NIV rendering:

Ephraim, what more have I^a to do with idols?

^a Or Hebrew; Septuagint *What more has Ephraim*

Suggestion:

Ephraim, what more have I^a to do with idols?

^a Hebrew; Septuagint *What more has Ephraim*

Rationale:

It seems to us that the NIV footnote has a typo here.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Joel 1:8

Original text:

אֵלֵי כַּבְתוּלָה חִנְרַת־שֶׁק עַל־בְּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ:

NIV rendering:

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

Suggestion:

Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth
grieving for the young man she was pledged to marry.

Rationale:

Interpreters and translators need to make an interpretive decision here. Does כַּבְתוּלָה refer to a married woman (not a virgin) who loses her husband shortly after marriage? Or does it refer to a betrothed woman (still a virgin) who loses the man she is pledged to shortly before they get married?

We are happy enough with the NIV11's interpretive decision, but the way the NIV11 has translated בְּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ seems difficult. We wonder what the average reader will make of “the betrothed of her youth.” Our suggestion is a clearer, more modern way to say the same thing. It also is harmony with the NIV11 in other places. We notice that the NIV11 regularly has the expression “pledged to be married” for a betrothed woman—note, for example, the descriptions of Mary in Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:27, and Luke 2:5.

Since the Old Testament practice of “betrothal” was different in some ways from our modern practice of “engagement,” we also recommend steering away from modern engagement language.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Joel 2:13

Original text:

וְקָרְעוּ לְבָבְכֶם וְאֶל־בְּגָדֵיכֶם

NIV rendering:

Rend your heart and not your garments.

Suggestion:

Rend your heart and not just your garments.

Rationale:

This is an example of the Semitic idiom that can be called “dialectical negation.” When a person says I love x and not y, it means he loves x more than y. He still loves y, but he especially loves x. He loves x and *not just* y.

In Jeremiah 7:22 where there is another example of dialectical negation, the NIV added the word “just” to make the meaning clearer in English:

MT – כִּי לֹא־דַבַּרְתִּי אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים בְּיוֹם חוֹצֵיא אֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם עַל־דְּבַרִּי
עוֹלָה וְזֶבַח

NIV – For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices.

We think that a similar addition could make Joel 2:13 clearer. Certainly God wants the heart of his followers first and foremost. But from Joel 2:12 it is evident that God also appreciates outward expressions of repentance. He encourages “fasting and weeping and mourning.” So “rending garments” can be God-pleasing. It’s just that God doesn’t want garment rending alone without devotion in the heart.

Translations that do the very thing we are suggesting include HCSB, NET, and NIV.

Articles on dialectical negation that we have found useful are the following:

Andrew H. Bartelt, “Dialectical Negation: An Exegetical Both/And,” p. 57-66 in “*Hear the Word of Yahweh*”: *Essays on Scripture and Archaeology in Honor of Horace D. Hummel*, ed. Dean O. Wenhe, Paul L. Schrieber, and Lee A. Maxwell. St. Louis: Concordia, 2002.

Heinz Kruse, “Die Dialektische Negation’ als semitisches Idiom,” *Vetus Testamentum* IV (1954): 385-400.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Joel 2:23

Original text:

וּבְנֵי צִיּוֹן גִּילוּ וְשִׂמְחוּ בִּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כִּי־נָתַן לָכֶם אֶת־הַמּוֹרָה לְצַדִּיקָהּ וַיּוֹרֵד לָכֶם גֶּשֶׁם מוֹרָה וּמִלְקֹשׁ בְּרֵאשִׁוֹן:

NIV rendering:

Be glad, people of Zion,
rejoice in the LORD your God,
for he has given you the autumn rains
because he is faithful.
He sends you abundant showers,
both autumn and spring rains, as before.

Suggestion:

Be glad, people of Zion,
rejoice in the LORD your God,
for he has given you the autumn rains
because he is faithful.^a
He sends you abundant showers,
both autumn and spring rains, as before.
^a Or given you / the teacher for righteousness

Rationale:

The thinking of NIV translators has obviously progressed with this verse. Note the previous presentations:

NIV78

Be glad, O people of Zion,
rejoice in the LORD your God,
for he has given you
a teacher for righteousness.^a
He sends you abundant showers,
both autumn and spring rains, as before.
^a Or / in righteousness the autumn rains

NIV84

Be glad, O people of Zion,
rejoice in the LORD your God,
for he has given you
the autumn rains in righteousness.^a
He sends you abundant showers,
both autumn and spring rains, as before.
^a Or / the teacher for righteousness

We can understand the reasons why NIV84 and NIV11 put “autumn rains” into the text, but we think the NIV11 has gone too far by eliminating the other interpretive option altogether. We would prefer to keep the other option in the footnote as a possibility.

First, there is the historical argument. For many centuries this verse was looked upon as a messianic prophecy by both Jews (cf. Ibn Ezra, Rashi) and Christians. It seems that the Qumran community understood מוֹרֶה as “teacher.” Are we positive that these people were in the dark about the true meaning? Do we want to sweep the understanding of previous generations completely out of sight?

Second, not all the linguistic and contextual arguments are on the side of “autumn rain.” Yes, מוֹרֶה with the meaning “rain” is in the immediate context. But sometimes a play on words is accomplished by using the same word in a tight context with two different meanings, and “teacher” is a well-established meaning for מוֹרֶה. Everyone acknowledges that the expression לְיָדָקָה is easier to understand with “teacher” than with “autumn rain,” and the Targum, Vulgate, and Symmachus translated that way. There are other places in the OT where teaching is mentioned together with the coming of rain (e.g. 1 Kgs 8:36; Isa 30:20-23). And, there are other messianic prophecies that seemingly come out of the blue, without extensive preparation or follow-up (e.g. Num 24:17; Isa 8:12; 28:16; Mic 2:13).

We notice that there still are respected commentators who either favor the “teacher” interpretation (Ahlström, Garrett, Kaiser, Keil, Laetsch, Merx, Van Groningen) or at least allow it as a possibility (Allen, Dillard, Finley, Pohlig). We recommend that the possibility remain in the NIV as a footnote.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Joel 2:29 [H3:2]

Original text:

וְגַם עַל-הָעֲבָדִים וְעַל-הַשְּׂפָחוֹת בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה אֲשַׁפֹּךְ אֶת-רוּחִי:

NIV rendering:

Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Suggestion:

Even on slaves, both male and female,^a
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
^a Hebrew; some Greek manuscripts and Vulgate on my servants, both men and women,

Rationale:

Do the words הָעֲבָדִים and הַשְּׂפָחוֹת refer to actual slaves here?

The way the NIV reads, one would assume that these words do not refer to actual slaves. The term “my servants” implies “God’s servants,” and this is a familiar label among New Testament Christians for all believers in Jesus, regardless of social status. In the Old Testament, “my servants” is frequently a label for God’s prophets.

The NIV therefore seems to contradict itself with its cross references. Joel 2:29 has the following cross references, both of which talk about *actual slaves* as believers in the Lord:

- 1 Cor 12:13 – For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
- Gal 3:28 – There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Since the Hebrew definite article is not normally looked upon as carrying the force of a possessive pronoun (Hebrew has abundant use of its possessive suffixes instead), we assume along with the majority of English translations and commentators that the Hebrew verse is talking about actual slaves. This concept fits nicely into the context. Joel predicts that the Spirit will be poured out on “all flesh”—on both genders (“your sons and daughters”), on all age groups (“your old men” and “your young men”), and then also on people of all social strata (even “slaves”). This understanding fits nicely with the new and startling nature of the future outpouring of the Spirit, since in the OT there never is any mention of any slaves having the Spirit poured out on them.

The NIV undoubtedly is steered into its rendering by the way Peter quotes this passage in his Pentecost sermon:

- Acts 2:18 – **καὶ γε ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους μου καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας μου ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου, καὶ προφητεύσουσιν.**
- NIV – Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Peter was possibly following a Greek version that included the personal pronouns. On the origin of these pronouns Wolf writes: “*G* corresponds originally (according to G^{WS*VB}) to *M*. But the later *G* tradition generally inserts (cf. Justin, Tertullian, and Augustine) a reinterpreting μου (“upon *my* manservants and *my* maidservants”), as does *L* (*super servos meos et ancillas meas*).”

Given this evidence, we think the best way of presenting the verse is as we suggest—to translate the Hebrew MT as it presents itself, and not to read the NT quotation back into it. Also in other places (see Amos 9:12 and Acts 15:16), the NIV does this, letting the MT stand by itself, putting the Septuagint/NT option into a footnote. In our opinion, it is not troubling if the Holy Spirit led NT authors to present OT passages in a slightly different way than the MT.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Jonah 1:3

Original text:

וַיִּקְּם יוֹנָה לְבָרַח תַּרְשִׁישָׁה מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּרֶד יָפוֹ וַיִּמְצָא אֹנִיָּה בָּאָה תַרְשִׁישׁ וַיִּתֵּן שְׂכָרָהּ וַיֵּרֶד בָּהּ
לְבוֹא עִמָּהֶם תַּרְשִׁישָׁה מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה:

NIV rendering:

But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Suggestion:

But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for Tarshish. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Rationale:

The Hebrew verse has the word “Tarshish” three times in quick succession. The NIV apparently looks upon this repetition as redundant and unidiomatic in English, so it removes one of them. By replacing “Tarshish” with “that port,” however, the NIV could give the impression that Tarshish is a port city. That would be misleading, since most scholars assume that Tarshish was a region and not a port city. In short, we don’t think the expression “that port” follows well after “Tarshish.” If we said, “I am taking a cruise to Alaska” (a region), we would not follow it with: “When I arrive at *that port*.”

Our preferred solution is simply to include the word “Tarshish” again, which is not problematic in our opinion and which is what most translations do. Another possibility would be to say: “a ship going there.”

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Acts 1:21

Original text:

δεῖ οὖν τῶν συνελθόντων ἡμῖν ἀνδρῶν ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ ᾧ εἰση̄λθεν καὶ ἐξῆ̄λθεν ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς,

NIV rendering:

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us,

Suggestion:

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out as our leader,

Rationale:

Our suggestion seeks greater accuracy in translating ἐφ' ἡμᾶς and greater transparency in connecting Acts 1:21 with its OT background.

It is surprising that so many English translations blur the point of ἐφ' ἡμᾶς here. Frederick Field's celebrated *Notes on the Translation of the NT* pointed out the correct understanding over a century ago. Only in a rare combination of circumstances is it appropriate to translate ἐπί + accusative as "among." When the sower sows seed "among the thorns" (Matt 13:7), there is motion toward a stationary point of reference, a circumstance which does not apply to Jesus' coming and going in reference to the disciples. He is not being pictured as coming in to them and going out from them while they remain stationary. But there are good examples of ἐπί + accusative in the sense "over," i.e., an official or ruler being in authority "over" others. Field cites Luke 12:14 and Acts 7:27; BDAG s.v. ἐπί 9c cites numerous other passages.

By contrast, when Luke wants to say "go in and out with" people, he uses a different preposition, as in his description of Saul in Acts 9:28 (ἦν μετ' αὐτῶν εἰσπορευόμενος καὶ ἐκπορευόμενος).

Since "went in and out *over us*" is not particularly idiomatic, we recommend the paraphrase, "went in and out as our leader" (Field offered the paraphrase "as our head").

Speaking of idiom, we note that a number of OT passages bring together forms of **בַּיָּד** and **בָּיָד**, and that the combination can have various nuances of meaning. Sometimes NIV paraphrases these passages, but sometimes it retains the more literal *go out* and *come in*, as in Numbers 27:16,17, "May the LORD...appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them..."; cf. also NIV's "come in and...go out" in Deuteronomy 28:6,19, "you come and go" in 2 Kings 19:27 and Isaiah 37:28, and "your coming and going" in Psalm 121:8. We assume therefore that our suggestion for Acts 1:21 ("went in and out as our leader") is sufficiently idiomatic for the NIV.

If there remains nonetheless an impression that "went in and out as our leader" is a somewhat unusual expression, that impression is both true to Luke's style and helpful for the reader of Acts in English. Luke's style is often flavored with echoes of the OT in Greek. Here at Acts 1:21, the commentary by Lake and Cadbury has the translation "went in and out" and the comment, "The expression is apparently Semitic." Lake and Cadbury provide about ten OT examples. (Keener adds a few more in his Acts commentary). We know of no close parallels in non-biblical Greek.

There is no need for a reader of the NIV to connect Acts 1:21 with all the OT passages that talk about *going out* and *coming in*, but it would be good for readers to hear an echo of two particularly relevant OT passages. In the Numbers 27:16,17 passage mentioned above, we hear Moses pray for a successor who would be "over this community to go out and come in before them," and the prayer is answered through the appointment of Joshua. Now in Acts 1:21 the new Joshua (Ἰησοῦς) is described in a similar way. In 1 Samuel 18:16 we learn from the Hebrew that all Israel and Judah loved David because he went out and came in as their leader, and so it would be pleasing to read in Acts 1:21 that Jesus "went in and out as their leader." That way, readers might see a parallel between Israel and Judah's love for their leader David and the Twelve's love for *their* leader, the Son of David. Unfortunately, the NIV's paraphrase in 1 Samuel 18:16 makes it difficult to make the connection. Accordingly we are submitting a separate recommendation on 1 Samuel 18:16.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016**

Bible Reference:

Acts 2:24

Original text:

ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου, καθότι οὐκ ἦν δυνατὸν κρατεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ·

NIV rendering:

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Suggestion:

But God raised him from the dead, causing Death's labor pains to end in a delivery, because it was impossible for him to be held by Death.

Rationale:

The correct exegesis of Acts 2:24 begins with the recognition that the primary meaning of ὠδῖνας, "labor pains," deserves consideration before the secondary, generalized meaning, "pains, agony." The aptness of the primary meaning is evident when we look at the combination of the verb λύειν with ὠδῖνας as its direct object. As Frederick Field (*Notes*) points out, that idiom occurs in three applications. When the birth takes place, one can say that the pregnant woman ends (looses) her own labor pains, or that the baby ends them, or that the midwife or other assisting person ends them. The last is the usage that accounts for Acts 2:24. Death is like a pregnant woman in labor, God is like a midwife, and the risen Christ is like a newborn baby. Death cannot hold Christ in any more than a woman in labor can stop the birth of her child, "because it was impossible for him to be held by Death."

Frederick Field (*Notes*) understood this passage well. Unfortunately, with his highly conservative approach to Bible translation and fondness for the KJV, he hesitantly recommended something like the KJV's translation despite its inadequacy. He writes of the KJV rendering, "Having loosed the pains (R. V. pangs) of death' certainly fails to suggest the idea of *death in labour, and his pains relieved by the birth of the child*. Perhaps the slight alteration, 'Having put an end to the pains (Gr. *pains as of a woman in travail*) of Death' (with a capital letter) might afford a hint of the true meaning." But even with the capital letter as a hint, few readers will get the right idea unless there is some clear indication in the text that the pains are labor pains.

Thus we find NIV inevitably misleading in this passage and doctrinally problematical. NIV seems to imply that during the time Jesus was dead he was in pain, right up to his resurrection. We cannot reconcile such an idea with our understanding of Jesus' declaration on the cross, "It is finished!" The suffering by which he vicariously atoned for the sins of the world ended with his death. Confessional Lutherans see his descent into hell as part of his exaltation, a proclamation of his victory to the spirits in prison (1 Pet 3:19), not as part of his suffering.

Field's exposition has been adopted by scholars representing various denominations and theological tendencies. It is unfortunate that Barrett's influential ICC volume misrepresents Field and perhaps for that reason draws faulty conclusions.

How the early Christians came up with the striking image, "loosing/ending the labor pains of Death," is an interesting question, but the main point is that they applied it to the resurrection of Christ, and so the task of a translator is to convey that striking image clearly. That accounts for our preference for a full, explicit rendering. The personification of Death accounts for the capital letter. Since we want to bring out that personification, we find it a bit awkward to refer to Death with the impersonal "its" used in NIV, and so we suggest returning to the passive construction of the original (κρατεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ) and replacing "its" with an explicit mention of Death at the end of the verse.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Acts 9:13

Original text:

ἀπεκρίθη δὲ Ἀνανίας, Κύριε, ἤκουσα ἀπὸ πολλῶν περὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τούτου ὅσα κακὰ τοῖς ἁγίοις σου ἐποίησεν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ

NIV rendering:

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem.

Suggestion:

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard from many people about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem.

Rationale:

The Greek here does not actually imply “reports” but rather “people.” While it is obviously true that the people were giving accounts (reports) of what Saul had been doing in Jerusalem, Ananias references the fact that people were giving those reports when he objects to healing Saul, presumably people who have become Christians. We also suspect that the expression “many reports” may have an implication of formality in English that is not in the Greek. We note that the ESV, the HCSB and the NET all use the approach that we are suggesting here.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Galatians 5:22

Original text:

ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἀγάπη χαρὰ εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία χρηστότης ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις

NIV rendering:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Suggestion:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Rationale:

In every case of μακροθυμία the previous edition of the NIV translated the Greek word as “patience.” In this one case of the word’s occurrence the 2011 edition switched to “forbearance.” Other passages with μακροθυμία (such as 2 Corinthians 6:6, Ephesians 4:2 and 2 Timothy 3:10) retain the English translation “patience” or “patient.” While “forbearance” is present in two other passages (Romans 2:4 and 3:25, as the translation of ἀνοχή), translating so here does not seem like a great improvement, especially in such a well-known verse. Preachers, Bible class leaders and Bible readers would probably go automatically to “patience” when wondering or hearing “What does ‘forbearance’ mean?” So we suggest reverting back to the translation in the previous edition.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2016

Bible Reference:

Revelation 7:14

Original text:

καὶ εἶρηκα αὐτῷ, Κύριέ μου, σὺ οἶδας. καὶ εἶπέν μοι, Οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἐρχόμενοι ἐκ τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης καὶ ἔπλυναν τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐλεύκαναν αὐτὰς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου.

NIV rendering:

I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Suggestion:

I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are those who come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Rationale:

The Greek here is not a perfect construction. It is a present participle, as some other translations note (ESV, HCSB, NCV for example). This pericope has been widely used and widely controverted in different doctrinal traditions. We believe the natural understanding of the question in verse 13 (“These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”) is that the elder was asking John for the meaning of what he saw, rather than a simple description of where they had come from within the vision itself. The difference, then, between saying that those dressed in white robes are those who have come out (something finished in the past with the effects carrying forward) or those who come out (something that is an ongoing process) is significant. This seems like a context in which a translation should try to avoid even the appearance of injecting a theological bias. Using a present tense, as the Greek does, accomplishes that goal.

We also find “These are they” to be a somewhat awkward thing to say. This passage is widely used in funeral liturgies and in lectionaries. We notice that the NIV renders the same expression as “These are those” in Revelation 14:4, so we suggest that here as a slight improvement. Another possibility would be “These are the ones.” We believe most people who are called to read Scripture in public will appreciate a change.