

This translation reflects the suggestion made by Hareuveni. The change involved is the idea of selling charcoal for a living.

3. *šoreš reṭamîm* standing—like a synecdoche (*totum pro parte*)—for another plant which grows from its roots. Translating the couplet we could say:

They pluck saltplant leaves to eat,
even dog's club is their food.

This translation follows Moldenke's suggestion that it is not broom which is meant here but a parasitic plant; the change, then, would concern the names of the plants.

Abbreviations

BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia	FC	Francais Courant
NJPS	New Translation of the Jewish Publication Society	TOB	Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible
BdLP	Bible de la Pléiade	Einh	Einheitsübersetzung
Col	Bible à la Colombe (Segond révisée)	GN	Gute Nachricht
BJ	Bible de Jérusalem	REIB	Revidierte Elberfelder Bibel

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AN EXAMPLE OF GENDER BIAS IN UBS³

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The third edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament designates Matthew 21.28-32 as "The Parable of the Two Sons". Surprisingly, *huios* never appears in the story. The opening line reads *ti de humin dokei; anthrōpos eichen tekna duo*. The initial designation for the two siblings is the neuter *tekna*. The numeral *duo* is indeclinable and has no reference to gender. No manuscript from the textual tradition replaces *teknon* with *huios* in Matthew 21.28. Thus, the story is a parable of two children; it should be read as a generic account which applies equally to male and female.

The neuter designation of the siblings is unusually consistent through the remainder of the parable. The two children are treated separately as *tō prōtō* and as *tō heterō*; both terms refer back to *tekna* and may be read as neuters in the dative case. The story tells first of *tō prōtō*. The elder sibling is addressed in the neuter vocative as *teknon* (21.28). The parent repeats the command to the younger child (21.30). Only the two participles (*apokritheis, metamelētheis*) employ masculine gender for the children in the body of the parable. This use of the masculine is normative in koine Greek and should be read generically.

Jesus' comments on the parable are similarly generic in nature. Jesus refers to the children with two generic terms: *tis* and *tōn duo*. The interrogative pronoun *tis* is both masculine and feminine in gender and must be read generically. The article *tōn* may be masculine or neuter; the number *duo* is indeclinable. Beyond this, the use of *ton duo* recalls the antecedent and implies *tōn duo tekñōn*. Only the response of the disciples employs the masculine (*ho prōtos*). Even for this phrase, the clear antecedent is *tekna*.

Matthew 21.28-32 need not be read as the story of two daughters. The story does not go the extra mile to employ feminine nouns and pronouns in order to create a gender-specific account. At the same time, the story also does not adopt the masculine norm. One may argue quite convincingly that a parable stated grammatically in the masculine is simply normative and should be read as a generic account. The parable in Matthew 21.28-32 is even more generic because of its reliance on gender-neutral forms. Nothing justifies conversion of this story into a tale of two sons. The story is surprisingly gender-neutral in its orientation and must be read as a generic account.

A similar story account from the Gospel of Luke highlights the unusually generic patterns of Matthew 21.28-32. In contrast to the neutral grammatical patterns of Matthew 21.28-32, the parable in Luke 15.11-31 is masculine in style. In Luke 15, the story is told of two *huiōus*. The opening line is almost identical in form to Matthew 21.28 (*anthrōpos tis eichen duo huiōus* in Luke 15.11, but *anthrōpos eichen tekna duo* in Matthew 21.28). Luke 15.11-31 employs *huios* throughout with one exception; the direct address of the father is the neuter vocative *teknon* (14.31). Significantly, this male-orientated parable is balanced by the female orientation of Luke 15.8-10. Thus, Luke 15.11-31 provides the norm for this type of story. Luke 15.11-31 is masculine in its grammatical construction, but this reflects nothing more than the expected norm of its host language. The story is parabolic in nature and should be applied generically, as Luke 15:8-10 demonstrates. When seen against the normative pattern of Luke 15.11-31, the story in Matthew 21.28-32 is exceptional. The parable in Matthew 21.28-32 is surprisingly gender-neutral in its grammatical composition.

A more important factor requires that Matthew 21.28-32 be read in a generic manner—the parabolic nature of the text. Parables by their very nature present a situation which is addressed to all situations. More technically, parables are polyvalent. Thus, parables about Jewish sons (Luke 15.11-31) or Jewish daughters (Luke 15.8-10) or even Palestinian sheep (Luke 15.1-17) may apply to all people—male, female, Jewish, gentile. Matthew 21.23-32 is obviously generic in its outlook. Surprisingly, the story is also generic in its grammatical patterns. Matthew 21.28-32 is clearly the “The Parable of Two Children”. Thus it is written, thus it should be read.

This gender bias has been taken up in the English translations. “Sons” is read into the opening line of Matthew 21.28 by KJV, RSV,

NIV, NAV, TEV, Living Bible, NEB, Jerusalem. In addition, the vocative address to the elder child in Matthew 21.28 is changed to "Son" in KGV, RSV, NIV, NAB, 'TEV, Living Bible, NEB ("boy"), (N)JB ("boy").

Dr. R.G. Bratcher, UBS Translation Consultant, comments on **An Example of Gender Bias in UBS**³

Dr. Broadhead has made a persuasive argument that the text of Matthew 21.28-32 does not warrant the UBS Greek New Testament heading "The Parable of the Two Sons". There are, however, some additional questions which may be asked.

(1) In terms of culture: would a girl be asked to go and work in her father's vineyard? Or wouldn't that more likely be work that a boy would do? Wouldn't the initial command signal at once to the reader that the children are boys?

(2) In terms of grammar: I have difficulty believing that *apokritheis*, and *metamelētheis* (v. 29) would be read as neuters, not masculines; the neuter form was readily available (see Acts 19.15) if the writer had wanted to be precise. I also find it difficult to believe that *tis* (v. 31) *must* be read "generically" and not as masculine; and that *ho prōtos* (v. 31) would be read as neuter, not masculine. In other passages in Matthew where "children" are the subject, the appropriate distinctive neuter forms are used (see 11.16; 19.13-15). It should be noticed that only in v. 28 does the noun *teknon* appear: *tekna duo* "two children"; the vocative *teknon* is a term of endearment that says nothing specific about the sex or age of the one addressed. It seems to me that in verses 29-31 the two children are assumed to be boys, not girls.

(3) In terms of parable as a literary convention: by its very nature a parable is a word picture that is visualized both by the storyteller and the hearers. Does anyone ever tell a story in which the actors are "generic"? Are they not seen as male or female, young or old, black or white or brown or yellow or whatever? I find it difficult to believe that a story is told in which two children are generic, sexless. It seems to me that the two children would be definitely boys or girls (or a boy and a girl). Even though the parable says *tekna duo*, this does not necessarily mean that they are sexually undefined.

It may be that the heading in the UBS Greek New Testament does show gender bias and should be changed to "The Parable of the Two Children". But since the word "children" says nothing about filial relationship, the better heading would be "The Parable of a Man and his Two Children".