

* And the disciples, by bearing much fruit, will show forth the true nature of God (15.8).

The most difficult passage of all is Jesus' prayer: "Father, glorify your name" and God's response, "I have glorified it and I will glorify it again" (12.28). Perhaps the following may serve as a translation: "Father, reveal your true self"... "I have revealed it, and I will reveal it again."

So I wish to end this study with a modest proposal. It is firstly that translators and translation consultants seriously consider the possibility of using "divine nature" or "divinity" or "God-likeness" as a translation of *doxa* and *doxazo* in many passages in the Gospel of John. And secondly, I suggest that in future editions the standard lexicons and dictionaries of biblical Greek give "divine nature," "divinity," as one of the meanings of *doxa* and *doxazo* in the New Testament.

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THE SPECIAL FEATURES OF A STORY: A study of Judges 3.12-30

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The story of Ehud in the book of Judges has a number of interesting features. In this article I will focus on these features, in order to indicate what translators need to be aware of in preparing a translation which effectively renders the various shades of meaning present in the text.

Scholars begin their work on the book of Judges with a common basic understanding of how it came to be written. This is that the original stories of the "judges" which were recited throughout the oral period have been embedded within a framework of later construction. That is to say, an editor whose basic theological views were shaped by the ideas now found in the book of Deuteronomy, gathered the stories of a number of Israelite heroes, or heroes who served Israel's interests, and set them within a framework reflecting the views found in that circle.

It is still a comparatively simple matter to separate this later editorial material from the original stories of each judge's exploits. Each story shows quite distinctive features, and although there are some similarities in some of their details, we can generally recognise that each story has its own history from its origin up to the time it was incorporated into the final form of the book. For our present purposes it will not be important to focus upon the framework material, as its function is to link the individual stories so that an overall view of the period of the "judges" is presented.

The story

The story of Ehud begins in 3.12-14. These opening verses have been interwoven with the frame material and serve now as the introduction or background notes to the story. Within this introduction there is little of

outstanding literary note apart from the name of Eglon, which means "little calf", or "fat cow". Its purpose is to set up a caricature of the enemy king. In doing this the reader or hearer is given an important clue as to how the story should be understood: it is a humorous story, one which makes fun of a fat foreign king. At the same time it has a serious intent, showing how God is at work through his chosen servant Ehud. One other feature of the literary structure of the passage is found in this opening note as well: the repetition of the Hebrew verb *nakah* "strike" or "defeat" (TEV) in verses 14 and 29 serves as the inclusion, or bracketing device, for the story as a whole.

The story proper begins with the mention of Ehud, whose name means "majestic", and who is described as a "deliverer" or "saviour" of the people of Israel. He is the bearer of tribute to Eglon, the Moabite king and overlord of Israel, who is presented as God's means of punishing Israel. We follow Ehud's departure for Moab in his dual role as the bearer of Israel's tribute and as God's appointed deliverer of his people.

In verses 15-16 we have two asides or "narrative comments"; the first describes Ehud as left-handed, or restricted in his right hand; the second mentions his manufacture of a two-edged sword and the fact that he carries it hidden under his cloak. These two facts are important to the discourse because they interrupt its flow, though at this moment the readers or hearer cannot know their full significance. However, they do begin to suggest that there is some darker purpose in Ehud's visit to Moab. These we may call "asides" as they anticipate major components of the story to follow.

Ehud arrives in Moab and presents the tribute to Eglon. In another "aside" we are informed that Eglon the Moabite king was very fat. This fits with the mention of his name in the introductory verses 12-14; but here it helps to build tension, as do the other asides. It inevitably causes the readers or hearers to question in their minds what purpose these apparently minor facts have. In this manner the editor or storyteller is preparing the audience for what is to come.

After presenting the tribute, Ehud departs; but then he goes back to the king, who apparently has accompanied the group from Israel. Ehud tells Eglon that he has a secret message for the king's hearing only.

The scene then changes in verse 20 as Ehud and Eglon, the only two persons mentioned by name throughout this entire episode, are alone in the king's penthouse. Ehud repeats the news that he has a message for the king. It is at this point that we reach the climax of the story. The significance of the asides is seen. Ehud whips out his home-made sword carried on his right side and drives it deep into the belly of the overfat Eglon. A vivid and detailed description of this event suggests that the storyteller delighted in providing these gruesome details. After dispatching the king, Eglon slips away.

Another change of scene takes place in verse 24 as Eglon's servants arrive at the door of the king's penthouse. Some time has passed; the men wait, but the king fails to appear. They discuss what may have happened as they continue to wait, though the readers or hearers already know that they wait in vain. The human and humorous dimension of the story is

obvious as the men stand outside the royal toilet wondering what the king is up to. After waiting well beyond the time necessary for even a very fat king to relieve himself, the servants finally pluck up enough courage to break into the royal “throne room” only to find their leader dead on the floor.

Meanwhile Ehud has made good his escape and rallied his troops, in the same way as Eglon had rallied Moab and Ammon against Israel at an earlier time. Preparations for an Israelite attack proceed very swiftly and the Moabite soldiers are routed. Israel now enters a period of 80 peaceful years.

The story thus flows in good narrative style, pushing ahead quickly to the main point, which is the death of Eglon and victory for Ehud. The narrative slows down at those points which are of embarrassment to the foreign ruler and oppressor. These are also the points at which the Israelite audience would be hanging on every word. As we look in more detail at the rhetorical or literary features of this story, we can appreciate better how the story is told, and thus take care to convey the same shades of expression in our translation.

Special oral features of the story

The story line of the Ehud saga is enhanced by a number of storytelling devices. These provide clues to the readers or hearers to ensure that they catch the message and intent of the story. In translation we should note these features and try to match them with appropriate devices in our own languages, so as to ensure that our audience is also able to appreciate the story in all its beauty.

In verses 12-14 the Hebrew letter *‘ayin* appears frequently, giving a certain sound to the material. This would have been readily noticed by the hearers, though what this particular sound may have conveyed is difficult to ascertain. More than likely, the sound pattern is simply one of the elements which makes the story more “attractive” to the ear rather than having any deeper significance. It is hardly likely that this feature can be reproduced in translation.

Verse 15 not only begins the story proper, it also contains several key words which play an important role in the telling of the first half of the story. The words are: “right” (verses 15, 16, 21), and “hand” (verses 15, 16, 21, 28, 30), and “send” (verses 15, 18, 21).

“Hand” is perhaps the most important of these key words in terms of the number of times it occurs; and its meaning and application are varied. In combination with the verb “send” it carries the sense of agency—Ehud carries tribute to Eglon, as well as a sword. It occurs also in connection with the reference to Ehud being left-handed.

“Right” in the sense of right-hand side (Hebrew *yemin*) is used with a double meaning. In verse 15 Ehud is described as a Benjaminite, a “son-of-the-right-hand.” But Ehud was *not* right-handed; rather, he was left-handed, expressed as “restricted in his right hand.” It is in this expression that we encounter the first of several puns, or plays on words, which feature

in this story and are part of its generally humorous intent. In fact, irony may well be the most important storytelling feature of this narrative. For the translator this is probably not good news, because any pun is incredibly difficult to render. If an explanation of the pun is required, then we have effectively destroyed the pun. Our difficulty is in the fact that as translators we are probably required to explain the pun—if we are to be faithful to our intent to make the translated version of the story convey at least something of what the original hearers experienced when they heard or read it.

When we are considering a translation for the audio medium the Hebrew key words may well lose most, if not all, of their significance. We can illustrate this by a quick look at the way in which the TEV has rendered the various uses of the word “hand.” Its metaphorical uses have all been rendered in terms of the sense of the expression rather than in terms of its function as a Hebrew key word. This is only to be expected, but it raises for us the question of whether in any translation the key word approach of the Hebrew can play any part at all.

Apart from the three frequently-used key words, verse 15 contains another important term, *minhah* “tribute” (RSV) or “gifts” (TEV). We note that the term is found also in verses 17 and 18. Apart from its regular meaning, there is also an element of irony in this term, for immediately after mentioning that Ehud is the bearer of Israel’s tribute, the narrator describes the sword that Ehud has made and which he carries concealed on his right side. It is this sword which becomes the final “gift” from Ehud to Eglon.

From the outset, then, we are introduced to the major rhetorical or literary features of this story: terms with double meanings and irony.

We have already mentioned the asides in verses 16 and 17b. Further, in verse 17b we note an unusual noun clause construction. Most of the narrator’s sentences are verbal, carrying the swift-moving action of the narrative. Thus, this noun clause assumes a greater significance by drawing attention to itself—it highlights the king’s size. The change from a verb clause to a noun clause means that the action or the flow of the story stops for a moment. Translators face the challenge of matching the flow of their account in this same manner, or at least of using a device which can draw attention to this sudden halt to the narrative flow.

Perhaps it is the haste with which the storyteller wishes to reach the high point of the story which accounts for some confusion in the details of verses 18-19. It is difficult to know exactly who is in focus in these two verses, since the Hebrew does not indicate who are the subjects of the verbs. In verse 18b we might presume that it is Ehud who sends away the men who have accompanied him as bearers of the tribute to Eglon, but this is not certain. Who is the subject of the action in verse 19a? Who returned from the “sculptured stones”? Who is it who commanded “Silence!”? Subjects are not identified. In all probability the version of the story preserved here has become corrupted at some point and some important details are now lost. An adequate rendering of the story may require a decision about who the speakers or actors were; but with no indication in a corrupted text,

the translator must make some assumptions on the basis of the logic of the situation. Whether the translator is justified in "clarifying" a problem passage such as this is a matter for debate, and not all will agree that it is justified. A solution may be to retain the unclear text, but to indicate in a footnote that there is a problem here, but suggest a possible solution.

In verse 19 we have another phrase, almost identical to one in verse 10, where irony and pun are remarkable. Ehud, when alone with Eglon in his summer penthouse says, "I have a secret message for you, O king." The phrase "secret message" (RSV) is *debar-seter*, literally "a word of hiding." When we recognise that this can also mean any thing which is hidden, Ehud's double meaning is clear. He may be referring to the spoken word, to some secret message which he has brought from Israel, but he is also referring to the secret **thing**, the dagger hidden under his cloak. In verse 20 a similar phrase is repeated with the meaning "something divine" or a "word from God." This too is a play on words.

The description of the left-handed "son-of-the-right-hand" is now spelled out in the drama of verse 21. The key verb "send" with the other key word "hand" is repeated. The left-handed Ehud draws the dagger from its hiding place on his right thigh and "delivers" it to Eglon. This and the following verse 22 provide a step-by-step description of the attack and of what happened to the Moabite king. At this point the story moves into slow motion, suggesting that we are now at the high point of the story from the teller's and the hearers' points of view. The deliberate slowing down of the action in order to give full details of the slaying indicate that these are the details which both teller and hearer delight in. Any adequate presentation of this scene must reflect this rhythm in order to be considered faithful to the original.

In verses 22-23 we note the repetition of the phrase *yisgor be*, "close on him(it)." TEV suggests "covered it." The two different contexts, namely the fat stomach of Eglon enclosing the hilt of the dagger and the hand which holds it, and of Ehud closing the door to escape, are again a feature of the multiple senses of terms used in this story. In addition, there is in these two verses what is probably a rhyming phrase in Hebrew, though most commentators view it as a textual error. The two phrases are sufficiently alike to raise the possibility of textual corruption, but they are also distinctive, suggesting that they may well be deliberately present in the text. The phrase "the dirt came out" (verse 22) is *wayyetse' happarsedonah*, while verse 23 begins with the phrase *wayyetse' ehud hammisderonah*, "Ehud went out into the vestibule." Given the playful use of phrases throughout this story, we can well argue that these two phrases are original and are part of the literary artistry of the storyteller. I suggest that there is no need to make any change in the text. In translating the phrases it would be ideal if some kind of rhyming expression could be found to match the storyteller's skill.

Then the servants of Eglon come on the scene. Suddenly there is another change of style, heightening the suspense. The teller of this tale draws his hearers further into the story by the use of a series of three phrases

each constructed from the term *hinneh* “behold” plus a participle (verses 24-25). Each phrase forms a part of the description leading up to the climax of this section, the discovery that Eglon the king is dead. Throughout, we can note the Hebrew sense of humour—a king in the toilet. There is, of course, nothing unnatural about that, for even kings have to have “a time for everything under the sun.” However, we note from 1 Kg 18.27 in a context mocking the Baals that a reference to being on the toilet expresses contempt. This underlying tone and meaning should be conveyed clearly, though to do so is quite a challenge to the creative talent of the translator.

The three *hinneh* plus participle phrases probably are intended to convey a three-fold awakening on the part of the Moabite servants: the king’s door is locked; the servants dare not open it because they are embarrassed and do not wish to show disrespect for the king; finally they open the door only to find their king dead on the ground. The repeated use of this construction draws the hearers deeper into the story, making them witnesses with the king’s servants of all that was happening. The Hebrew participle marks a present activity, and so the readers or hearers are transported into the scene. The translator is challenged to find markers or forms which can allow the present reader to enter into the scene as well.

Within these verses there is also a repetition of the verb *yatsa’* “come out” (verses 22, 23, 24). It refers to whatever it was that came out of Eglon, and to Ehud’s escape from the summer palace. It is difficult to see any particular significance in this repetition, but as keywords they are an important feature of the Hebrew presentation.

The euphemism in verse 24, “relieving himself” (RSV), is literally “covering his feet” (see also 1 Sam 24.3). Most languages have euphemistic phrases for referring to these physical functions.

What seems to be a newly-coined word is to be found in verse 26. The verb *hitmahmeham* seems to be constructed from a reduplication of the interrogative *mah* “what.” It follows the preposition *ad* which can mean “as far as,” or “up until.” RSV renders this as “while they delayed,” but it is also possible that the unusual phrase is part of the author’s store of witty forms with a possible meaning “as far as what’s-its-name,” a possible reference to Gilgal, the location of the so-called “sculptured stones” (verse 19).

From verse 26 onwards we note the use on three occasions of the verb *malat*, “to escape.” This verb represents the primary focus of the concluding verses. The Israelites went to the crossing of the Jordan to prevent the Moabite troops from crossing over to attack. In the concluding verse we note the use of the noun *yad*, “hand,” twice. God gives the Moabites into Israel’s hand, and Moab succumbs to the hand of Israel. Here both uses of the noun “hand” have the sense of power rather than of agency, and both serve as the closing inclusions for the story as a whole.

The use of the number “10,000” to identify the number of warriors killed by the Israelite troops is part of the storyteller’s art. This numeral is frequently used in Judges to identify the number of troops—see 1.4; 4.6, 10, 14; 7.3 and so on. It is almost certainly not intended as a precise figure, but simply portrays a huge number; and so it may well be rendered

by an equivalent representative number.

The full extent of the victory which Ehud and his troops gained over the fat Eglon and his army is the point of this description. The number and the skill of those who oppressed Israel was great, but they were soundly defeated by Ehud. Ultimately, however, the real victory belongs to the LORD, as Ehud has stated in verse 28. Thus from the point of view of the details of the story, the main focus is on Ehud the saviour, the only Israelite mentioned by name. However for the editor and recorder of this story, there is now a more important detail, namely that the ultimate source of victory was the LORD.

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FOOTNOTES AND GLOSSARIES

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This article brings together some thoughts on the compiling of footnotes and glossaries, based on the experience of translation teams in eastern Africa.

The use of footnotes in new translations varies from none at all right up to the full-scale entries found in a version such as the Bible in *Français Courant*. Some translators feel that the inclusion of explanatory notes is not helpful for readers who are not accustomed to finding their way through additional notes, or to relating such notes to the relevant points in the text. Others, especially in interconfessional projects which often have the services of quite scholarly translators, want to include as many notes as possible with their new translation.

The first approach can result in notes being omitted where they could, in fact, be helpful to some of the readers. In this case those who would benefit from some additional information do not find it, in order that others who will not appreciate it will not be confused. The second approach can result in a piling-up of all kinds of notes; and even though many of them will be relevant and interesting, they may not include those notes which would apply directly to that particular translation.

Before addressing the main question of how we decide what footnotes to include, two practical issues with regard to their presentation could be mentioned. Firstly, translators have sometimes thought that, because footnotes have gone over onto the wrong page in the draft printouts, they should delete some of them so that the remaining notes will stay on the same page as the verse(s) to which they relate.

This is not really a problem at all, and certainly not one which should influence the number of desired footnotes. Not all print programmes can regulate the footnotes so that each one appears on the same page with the verse to which it relates. And this is particularly true when more than three or four text notes (as opposed to cross-references) are included for