11

*11:1-9* **The Tower Of Babel**

Gen 11:1 **Now the whole earth was one language and the same words.**

**Now**

“Now {at first,}” or “Now {for a while,}” The events in chapter 11:1-9 happened before the people listed in chapter 10 had their own languages and before they spread out over the earth (Gen 10:5, 19-20, 30-32). You could include some of that information in a footnote. (See: grammar-connect-time-background)

**the whole earth**

“all {the people on} the earth” or “everyone on the earth” (See: figs-metonymy)

**was one language**

“had/spoke one language” or “spoke/shared the same language”

**and the same words.**

“and {spoke/shared} the same words/vocabulary.” or “and spoke words everyone knew/understood.” or “so everyone understood each other.” The phrases “one language” and “the same words” are very similar in meaning and emphasize the fact that everyone spoke the same language. Consider the best way to communicate that in your language. (See: figs-doublet)

Gen 11:2 **And it happened as they migrated from the east, then they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.**

**And it happened as**

“After a while, as/when” or “As/When” or “As time passed,” The phrase “it happened that” introduces an important event and helps create suspense so that readers will wonder what the outcome will be. Some translations omit this phrase because it is not natural in their language. Do what is best in your language. (See: writing-newevent)

**they migrated**

“they moved/traveled” or “the people migrated/moved”. Consider whether it is better in your language to use a pronoun (“they”) or a noun phrase (“the people”) here. (See: writing-pronouns)

**from the east,**

“from the eastern {regions},” or “{around} in the eastern {regions},”At first after the flood, people lived in the regions around the mountains of Ararat (where the ark had landed). As they began to migrate and spread out to different places (as God had told them to do), they must have headed south at some point, since they ended up at the plain of Shinar, which was south of where the Ararat Mountains were. The reference to “the east” probably reflects the viewpoint of the author (Moses), since the Ararat mountains and the plain of Shinar were both far to the east of where he was living.

**then they found**

“they discovered” or “they {eventually} came to” or “and {eventually} came to”. Make sure the way you translate this phrase fits with the way you translated the first half of this verse.

**a plain in the land of Shinar**

“a wide/spacious, flat valley/area in the land/region called Shinar”. This plain was a wide, flat area between mountains. Also be consistent here with how you translated “land of Shinar” in Gen 10:10.

**and settled there.**

“and lived/stayed there.” or “and began to live there.”

Gen 11:3 **Then they said to each other, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them with fire.” And they had bricks for stones, and they had tar for mortar.**

**Then they said to each other,**

“Then {one day} they urged each other,” The events that are described below probably did not happen immediately after they arrived at the plain. Consider what is the best way to begin these events in your language. (See: writing-new event)

**“Come,**

“Come on,” Consider whether or not your language has an idiom like this that is used to urge or persuade someone to do something together. (See: figs-idiom)

**let us make**

“let us {work together and} make” or “we should {work together and} make”. The pronoun “us” is inclusive here and refers to the people who are talking to each other. (See: figs-exclusive)

**bricks**

“{some} {clay/mud} bricks/blocks” or “{some} bricks/blocks {from clay/mud}” (See: figs-explicit)

**and bake them with fire.”**

“and harden them with fire.” or “and use fire to bake/harden them.” or “and put/bake them in/over fire {to make them hard/strong}.”

**And they had**

“So {they did that, and} they had” or “They had/used”

**bricks for stones,**

“bricks/blocks {to build with} instead of stone,”

**and they had tar**

“and they used tar {between the bricks/blocks}”

**for mortar.**

“instead of mortar.” or “to hold/stick the bricks/blocks together.”

Gen 11:4 **Then they said, “Come, let us build a city for ourselves and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, so that we are not scattered over the face of the whole earth.”**

**Then they said,**

“Then they said {to each other},” or “Then they urged {each other},”

**“Come,**

“Come on,” See how you translated this idiom in verse 3.

**let us build**

“let us {work together and} build” or “we should {work together and} build”. See how you translated a similar phrase in verse 3.

**a city for ourselves**

“a city for us {to live in}”

**and**

“that includes/has” or “with”

**a tower**

“a {high} tower” or “a {very} tall building”

**with its top in the heavens,**

“that reaches high into the heavens/sky,” or “that reaches up to heaven,”

**and let us make a name for ourselves, so that we are not scattered**

“{We should do that} to make ourselves famous and to keep us from spreading out” or “{That way} we will become well-known/famous, and we will not separate from each other {and live}”. The phrase “make a name for ourselves” is a idiom. Consider whether or not your language has a similar idiom that would work well here. Also see how you translated the word “scattered” in Gen 10:18, 32. (See: figs-idiom)

**over the face of the whole earth.”**

“all over the earth/world.” or “around the world.” (See: figs-idiom)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Paragraph Break\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Gen 11:5 **Then Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower that the sons of mankind had built.**

**Then**

“Then/But {one day}”

**Yahweh came down**

“Yahweh came down {from heaven}” (See: figs-explicit)

**to see the city**

“and looked at the city”

**and the tower**

“and the {very} tall building”. See how you translated this word in verse 4.

**that the sons of mankind**

“that the people”

**had built.**

“were building.” or “had started building.” Make sure the way you translate this verb fits with the fact that the people had not yet finished building the city (verse 8).

Gen 11:6 **And Yahweh said, “Behold, {they are} one people, and they all have one language. So this {is} what they have begun to do, and now everything that they plan to do will not be impossible for them.**

**And Yahweh said,**

“And/Then he said (to himself),” or “He said,” Consider what is the best way to refer to Yahweh here in your language. (See: writing-pronouns)

**“Behold,**

“Look,” This term calls attention to what Yahweh says next. Consider what is the best way to do that in your language.

**{they are} one people,**

The Hebrew text is ambiguous here. It can mean (1) “{they are} one people/ethnic {group},” (2) “the/these people {are} one/united {in what they are doing},”

**and they all have**

“and they all speak/share”

**one language.**

“the same language.” See how you translated this phrase in verse 1.

**So this {is} what they have begun to do,**

“This {is} {only} the beginning of what they can/will do {together}.”

**and now**

“Now/Soon”

**everything that they plan to do will not be impossible for them.**

“nothing that they plan to do will be impossible for them.” or “everything/anything they plan/attempt to do will be possible for them.” or “they will be able to do anything/whatever they plan/try to do.” The words “not” and “impossible” are two negatives that work together to communicate an emphatic positive statement. Consider what is the best way to translate this in your language. (See: figs-doublenegatives)

Gen 11:7 **Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand each other’s language.”**

**Come,**

“{So} come on,” or “{So}”

**let us**

“we must”. Most Bible scholars think this plural pronoun refers here to God and the fact that he is three Persons in one God. So it is best to keep this plural pronoun in your translation. See what you did for similar pronouns in Gen 1:26.

**go down and there**

“go down there {now} and” or “go to them and”

**confuse their language**

“scramble their language” or “mix up their language”

**so that they will not understand**

“so that they will not {be able to} understand” or “so that they cannot understand”

**each other’s language.”**

“what they say to each other.” or “each other.”

Gen 11:8 **Then Yahweh scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city.**

**Then Yahweh**

“Then/So Yahweh {did that and}” or “That is how Yahweh” or “In that way, Yahweh”

**scattered them from there**

“caused the people to leave from there and spread out” or “caused the people to leave from there and settle/live in different places”

**over the face of the whole earth,**

“over the surface of the entire earth,” or “all over the earth/world,” (See: figs-idiom)

**and they**

“so that they”

**stopped building**

“had to stop building/constructing”

**the city.**

“the city {and the tower}.” For some languages it is better to change the order of clauses in this verse (so that events are in the order that they happened) and say, “In that way, Yahweh caused the people to stop building the city {and the tower} and to move away from each other, {so that eventually they lived} all over the world.” Do what is best in your language. (See: figs-infostructure)

Gen 11:9 **For that {reason} they called its name Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of the whole earth, and from there Yahweh scattered them over the face of the whole earth.**

**For that {reason}**

“That is why”

**they called its name**

“people named the/that city” or “the name of the/that city is” or “the/that city was named/called”. Frequently in the Hebrew text, this phrase has a general meaning and does not refer to someone specific.

**Babel,**

“Babel, {which means “confused/mixed-up/scrambled,”}” If you include the meaning of “Babel” here in your translation or in a footnote, be consistent with the way you translate “confused” later in this verse and in verse 7.

**because there Yahweh**

“because that is where Yahweh” or “because {it was} in that city {that} Yahweh”

**confused**

“mixed up” or “scrambled”

**the language of the whole earth,**

“the language that everyone on the earth spoke/shared,”

**and from there Yahweh scattered them**

“and {in that way} Yahweh/he made them spread out from there”

**over the face of the whole earth.**

“over the surface of the entire earth.” or “all over the earth/world.”See how you translated this phrase in verses 4 and 8.

*11:10-26* **Shem’s Descendants Down To Abram**

Gen 11:10 **These {are} the generations of Shem: Shem {was} the son of 100 years, then he fathered Arpachshad, two years after the flood.**

**These {are} the generations of Shem:**

“This/Here is the record/list of Shem’s descendants:” or “This is Shem’s genealogy/family-line:”

**Shem {was} the son of 100 years, then he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood.**

“Two years after the flood {began}, when Shem was 100 years old, he had {a son named} Arpachshad/Arphaxad.” The phrase “after the flood” probably refers to two years after the flood began, not after it ended; see a similar case in Gen 9:28. Also be consistent here with how you spelled “Arpachshad/Arphaxad” in Gen 10:22. (See: figs-infostructure)

Gen 11:11 **Then after he fathered Arpachshad, Shem lived 500 years, and he fathered {other}** **sons and daughters.**

**Then after he fathered Arpachshad, Shem lived**

“After he fathered/had Arpachshad/Arphaxad, Shem/he lived” or “After Arpachshad/Arphaxad was born, Shem lived” or “After Arpachshad/Arphaxad’s birth, Shem lived”. Throughout this section, make sure that names and pronouns (like “he”) are used in a way that is accurate and natural in your language, so that it is always clear who is being referred to. (See: writing-pronouns)

**500 years,**

“{another} 500 years,” or “500 {more} years,” See how you translated Gen 5:7, which has the same sentence structure as 11:11. For some languages, it may be more natural to change the clause order of this sentence and say, “Shem lived 500 {more} years after Arpachshad/Arphaxad was born,...” Do what is best in your language throughout this chapter. (See: figs-infostructure)

**and he fathered**

“and he {also} fathered/had” or “He/Shem was {also} the father of”. Consider whether or not it is better in your language to begin a new sentence here. See how you translated this phrase and the following one in Gen 5:4.

**{other} sons and daughters.**

“{other} sons, as well as daughters.”

Gen 11:12 **And Arpachshad lived 35 years, then he fathered Shelah.**

**And Arpachshad lived 35 years, then**

“When Arpachshad/Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he” or “When Arpachshad/Arphaxad was 35 years old,”

**he fathered Shelah.**

“he fathered/had {a son named} Shelah.”or “he fathered/had {a son he/they named} Shelah.” or “he fathered/had {a son whose name was} Shelah.” See how you translated Gen 5:6, which has the same sentence structure as 11:12.

Gen 11:13 **Then after he fathered Shelah, Arpachshad lived 403 years, and he fathered {other}** **sons and daughters.**

**Then after he fathered Shelah, Arpachshad lived**

“After he fathered/had Shelah, Arpachshad/Arphaxad lived” or “After Shelah was born, Arpachshad/Arphaxad lived” or “After Shem’s birth, Arpachshad/Arphaxad lived”. Be consistent with how you spell the name “Arpachshad/Arphaxad” in the book of Genesis. See Gen 10:22, 24; 11:10-13. (See: translate-names)

**403 years,**

“{another} 403 years,” or “403 {more} years,”

**and he fathered**

“and he {also} fathered/had” or “He/Arpachshad was {also} the father of”

**{other} sons and daughters.**

“{other} sons, as well as daughters.”

Gen 11:14 **And Shelah lived 30 years, then he fathered Eber.**

**And Shelah lived 30 years, then**

“When Shelah had lived 30 years,” or “When Shelah was 30 years old,”

**he fathered Eber.**

“he fathered/had {a son named} Eber.” or “he fathered/had {a son whose name was} Eber.”

Gen 11:15 **Then after he fathered Eber, Shelah lived 403 years, and he fathered {other}** **sons and daughters.**

**Then after he fathered Eber, Shelah lived**

“After he/Shelah fathered/had Eber, Shelah/he lived” or “After Eber was born, Shelah lived” or “After Eber’s birth, Shelah lived”. Be consistent with how you spell the name “Shelah” in Gen 10:24; 11:12-15. (See: translate-names)

**403 years,**

“{another} 403 years,” or “403 {more} years,”

**and he fathered**

“and he {also} fathered/had” or “He/Shelah was {also} the father of”

**{other} sons and daughters.**

“{other} sons, as well as daughters.”

Gen 11:16 **And Eber lived 34 years, then he fathered Peleg.**

**And Eber lived 34 years, then**

“When Eber had lived 34 years,” or “When Eber was 34 years old,”

**he fathered Peleg.**

“he fathered/had {a son named} Peleg.” or “he fathered/had {a son whose name was} Peleg.” (See: translate-names)

Gen 11:17 **Then after he fathered Peleg, Eber lived 430 years, and he fathered {other}** **sons and daughters.**

**Then after he fathered Peleg, Eber lived**

“After he/Eber fathered/had Peleg, Eber/he lived” or “After Peleg was born, Eber lived” or “After Peleg’s birth, Eber lived”. Be consistent with how you spell the name “Eber” in Gen 10:24-25; 11:14-17. (See: translate-names)

**430 years,**

“{another} 430 years,” or “430 {more} years,”

**and he fathered**

“and he {also} fathered/had” or “He/Eber was {also} the father of”

**{other} sons and daughters.**

“{other} sons, as well as daughters.”

Gen 11:18 **And Peleg lived 30 years, then he fathered Reu.**

**And Peleg lived 30 years, then**

“When Peleg had lived 30 years,” or “When Peleg was 30 years old,”

**he fathered Reu.**

“he fathered/had {a son named} Reu.” or “he fathered/had {a son whose name was} Reu.”

Gen 11:19 **Then after he fathered Reu, Peleg lived 209 years, and he fathered {other}** **sons and daughters.**

**Then after he fathered Reu, Peleg lived**

“After he/Peleg had Reu, Peleg/he lived” or “After Reu was born, Peleg lived” or “After Reu’s birth, Peleg lived”. Be consistent with how you spell the name “Peleg” in Gen 10:25; 11:16-19. (See: translate-names)

**209 years,**

“{another} 209 years,” or “209 {more} years,”

**and he fathered**

“and he {also} fathered/had” or “He/Peleg was {also} the father of”

**{other} sons and daughters.**

“{other} sons, as well as daughters.”

Gen 11:20 **And Reu lived 32 years, then he fathered Serug.**

**And Reu lived 32 years, then**

“When Reu had lived 32 years,” or “When Reu was 32 years old,”

**he fathered Serug.**

“he fathered/had {a son named} Serug.” or “he fathered/had {a son whose name was} Serug.”

Gen 11:21 **Then after he fathered Serug, Reu lived 207 years, and he fathered {other}** **sons and daughters.**

**Then after he fathered Serug, Reu lived**

“After he/Reu had Serug, Reu/he lived” or “After Serug was born, Reu lived” or “After Serug’s birth, Reu lived”. Be consistent with how you spell “Reu” in Gen 11:18-21. (See: translate-names)

**207 years,**

“{another} 207 years,” or “207 {more} years,”

**and he fathered**

“and he {also} fathered/had” or “He/Reu was {also} the father of”

**{other} sons and daughters.**

“{other} sons, as well as daughters.”

Gen 11:22 **And Serug lived 30 years, then he fathered Nahor.**

**And Serug lived 30 years, then**

“When Serug had lived 30 years,” or “When Serug was 30 years old,”

**he fathered Nahor.**

“he fathered/had {a son named} Nahor.” or “he fathered/had {a son whose name was} Nahor.”

Gen 11:23 **Then after he fathered Nahor, Serug lived 200 years, and he fathered {other}** **sons and daughters.**

**Then after he fathered Nahor, Serug lived**

“After he/Serug had Nahor, Serug/he lived” or “After Nahor was born, Serug lived” or “After Nahor’s birth, Serug lived”. Be consistent with how you spell the name “Serug” in Gen 11:20-23. (See: translate-names)

**200 years,**

“{another} 200 years,” or “200 {more} years,”

**and he fathered**

“and he {also} fathered/had” or “He/Serug was {also} the father of”

**{other} sons and daughters.**

“{other} sons, as well as daughters.”

Gen 11:24 **And Nahor lived 29 years, then he fathered Terah.**

**And Nahor lived 29 years, then**

“When Nahor had lived 29 years,” or “When Nahor was 29 years old,”

**he fathered Terah.**

“he fathered/had {a son named} Terah.” or “he fathered/had {a son whose name was} Terah.” Consider again how you translated verses 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24, which all have the same sentence structure.

Gen 11:25 **Then after he fathered Terah, Nahor lived 119 years, and he fathered {other}** **sons and daughters.**

**Then after he fathered Terah, Nahor lived**

“After he/Nahor had Terah, Nahor/he lived” or “After Terah was born, Nahor lived” or “After Terah’s birth, Nahor lived” (See: writing-pronouns)

**119 years,**

“{another} 119 years,” or “119 {more} years,”

**and he fathered**

“and he {also} fathered/had” or “He/Nahor was {also} the father of”. Consider whether or not it is better in your language to begin a new sentence here.

**{other} sons and daughters.**

“{other} sons, as well as daughters.” Consider again how you translated verses 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23 and 25, which all have the same sentence structure.

Gen 11:26 **And Terah lived 70 years, then he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.**

**And Terah lived 70 years, then**

“After Terah had lived 70 years,” or “After Terah was/turned 70 years old,” Your translation needs to allow for the fact that Terah’s sons were not triplets (just as Noah’s sons were not triplets; see Gen 5:32), rather he started having children after he turned 70 and his sons were born in different years after that. In fact, Abram was not born until Terah was at least 130 years old (11:32, 12:4-5; Acts 7:4), and he was probably Terah’s youngest son. Abram is listed first (instead of Haran or Nahor) probably because of his importance as the one whom Yahweh made His covenant with. Some of this information could be put in a footnote.

**he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.**

“he fathered/had {sons named} Abram, Nahor, and Haran.” or “he fathered/had {sons whose names were} Abram, Nahor, and Haran.”

*11:27-32* **Terah’s Children, Including Abram**

Gen 11:27 **Now these {are} the generations of Terah: Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot.**

**Now these {are} the generations of Terah:**

“Here/This {is} the history/account/record about/of Terah and his descendants:” This section is different from the previous section. What follows is a history about Terah’s descendants (especially Abram); it is not a genealogy or list of names. See how you translated a similar phrase in Gen 6:9.

**Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran;**

“Terah fathered/had {sons named} Abram, Nahor, and Haran;” or “Terah’s sons were Abram, Nahor, and Haran.”

**and Haran fathered Lot.**

“and Haran fathered/had {a son named} Lot.” or “Haran’s son {was named} Lot.” or “and Haran had a son {whose name was} Lot.”

Gen 11:28 **Later Haran died in the presence of Terah his father, in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Kasdim.**

**Later Haran died in the presence of Terah his father,**

“Later Haran died while he was with his father Terah,” or “While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died”

**in the land of his birth,**

“in the land where he was born,” or “in his native land,”

**in Ur of the Kasdim.**

“in {the city of} Ur which was ruled/inhabited by the Kasdim/Chaldeans.” or “in {the city of} Ur where the Kasdim/Chaldea people lived.” The word “Kasdim” probably comes from the name of one of Nahor’s sons, Kesed (Gen 22:22), and often refers to the Chaldeans who were a people group that lived in the country of Babylonia (where Ur was located).

Gen 11:29 **And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram’s wife {was} Sarai, and the name of Nahor’s wife {was} Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.**

**And Abram and Nahor**

“Meanwhile Abram and Nahor” or “Abram and Nahor”

**took wives for themselves.**

“each married a wife.” or “each got married.”

**The name of Abram’s wife {was} Sarai,**

“Abram’s wife was named Sarai,”

**and the name of Nahor’s wife {was} Milcah,**

“and Nahor’s wife was Milcah.”

**the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.**

“She/Milcah was the daughter of {his/Nahor’s brother} Haran, who was the father of {both} Milcah and {her sister} Iscah.” or “Milcah and {her sister} Iscah were Haran’s daughters.”

Gen 11:30 **But Sarai was barren; she did not have a child.**

**But Sarai was barren;**

“But/Now Sarai was unable to conceive,” or “Sarai was not able to become/get pregnant,” Consider what is the best way in your language to introduce this background information about Sarai. (See: writing-background)

**she did not have a child.**

“{so} she did not have any children.” or “{so} she had no children.” For some languages it may be better to switch the order of the clauses in this verse and say, “But/Now Sarai did not have any children, because she was not able to conceive.” Do what is best in your language. (See: figs-infostructure)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Paragraph Break\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Gen 11:31 **Then Terah took Abram his son and Lot, Haran’s son, his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, the wife of his son Abram, and they went out together from Ur of the Kasdim to go to the land of Canaan. But they came to Haran, and they settled there.**

**Then**

“Then {one day,}” or “{One day,}” Consider what is the best way to begin this new paragraph in your language. (See: writing-newevent)

**Terah took**

“Terah gathered” or “Terah brought/called together”

**Abram his son**

“his son Abram”. Make sure it is clear in your translation of this phrase that “his son” refers to Abram, not another person.

**and Lot, Haran’s son, his son’s son,**

“and Lot, {who was} his son Haran’s son,” or “and his grandson Lot, {who was} Haran’s son,” The phrases “Lot,” “Haran’s son,” and “his son’s son” all refer to Lot. Make sure that is clear in your translation and that it does not sound like three people.

**and Sarai his daughter-in-law,**

“and his daughter-in-law Sarai,” The phrases “Sarai,” “his daughter-in-law,” and “the wife of his son Abram” all refer to Sarai. Make sure that is clear in your translation.

**the wife of his son Abram,**

“who was his son Abram’s wife,” or “who was Abram’s wife,”

**and they**

“and they {all}” or “and {all of} them” or “Then they {all}”. Consider whether or not it is better in your language to begin a new sentence here.

**went out together**

“set out together” or “left”

**from Ur**

“from {the city of} Ur” or “from Ur {City}”. See the note at Gen 10:19 about how to translate the names of cities. (See: figs-explicit}

**of the Kasdim**

“of the Chaldeans” or “where the Chaldea people lived”. See how you translated this phrase in verse 28.

**to go to**

“to travel to”

**the land of Canaan.**

“the region of/called Canaan.” or “Canaan Land.”

**But they came to Haran, and**

“But {on the way there,} they came to {the city of} Haran, and” or ”But {along the way,} when they arrived/stopped at {the city of} Haran,” The city of Haran was not in the land of Canaan, rather it was around 450 kilometers (280 miles) northeast of there.

**they settled there.**

“they settled /stayed there {instead}.” or “they decided to settle/live there {instead}.”

Gen 11:32 **And the days of Terah were 205 years, then Terah died in Haran.**

**And the days of Terah were 205 years,**

“Then {many years later,} when Terah was 205 years old,” or “When Terah reached the age of 205 years,”

**then Terah died**

“he died {there}”

**in Haran.**

“in {the city of} Haran.” or “in Haran {City}.”