The Impact of Discourse Functions on Rendering the Biblical Hebrew Noun אִישׁ in a Gender-Sensitive English Translation

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The publishers of the two Hebrew-to-English Bible translations that I have worked on describe them as "gender-sensitive" or "gender-accurate."[1] One distinguishing feature of all such translations is how they handle אִישׁ—a noun that in the Torah (Pentateuch) alone refers to persons a total of 552 times.[2] Of course, in Ancient Hebrew other nouns likewise signaled that their referent is within the semantic domain of human beings. They include: נֶפֶשׁ 'person', אָדָם 'earthling', גֶּבֶר 'he-man', and אֱנוֹשׁ 'human being'. Of these, אִישׁ is the only one with a feminine counterpart. Whenever the composers of the Hebrew Bible labeled someone in a general way, they implicitly made a choice within this cohort of nouns. Most of the time, they chose אִישׁ—which means that translators must spend a lot of time reckoning with this noun.[3]

To illustrate the gender issue at stake for translators, let us consider the treatment of the ritual impurity that results from touching a corpse (an act that was often necessary, or merely accidental). According to the book of Numbers, both men and women are susceptible to such impurity, which threatens communal well-being (5:2–3). In one passage in that book, Israel's deity pronounces the following stricture (19:20), for which I cite two translations.

וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִטְמָא וְלֹא יִתְחַטָּא וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מִתּוֹךְ הַקָּהָל

And a man who becomes unclean and does not cleanse himself,
that person shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly.…"   (Alter)

If anyone who has become impure fails to undergo purification,
that person shall be cut off from the congregation.…"   (CJPS)

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1. This is to be distinguished from a "gender-inclusive" or "gender-neutral" translation, which elides the differences between men and women according to the norms of ancient Israelite society. On the publishers' distinction between "gender-sensitive" and "gender-accurate," see below, note 11. For definitions of other key terms, see the Abbreviations and the Glossary at the end.

2. Counting both the grammatically masculine singular (אִישׁ) and plural (אֲנָשִׁים) forms in the Masoretic Text (Stein 2020b, Table 3). Although the biblical corpus seems to provide us with only a limited sample of what Ancient Hebrew must have encompassed, it reliably reflects the ancient Israelites' actual use of that language's highest-frequency words, such as אִישׁ (Stein 2020a:11).

3. In the Torah, our noun אִישׁ, including its feminine form אִשָּׁה and their plurals, refers to persons 817 times, which is more than four times the *combined* total of 187 references to persons using the other four general human nouns. On communicative and cognitive preferences for אִישׁ, see below.

Like Robert Alter, many other translators have recently rendered the singular noun אִישׁ here as 'a man' or 'the man' (e.g., Fox, NKJV, KJ21, LEB, MEV, ESV, NET). One reason for doing so is to maintain a consistent word-for-word correspondence wherever possible, as one aspect of faithfully reflecting how the Bible's composers expressed themselves.[4]

In contrast, many translations of this verse render אִישׁ with a gender-neutral English term.[5] The indefinite pronoun 'anyone' in the rendition above is typical.[6] Some of these translations make no special effort to attend to social gender; they simply render the noun's contextual denotation in a thought-for-thought manner.[7] Others among these translators are motivated by a stated goal to not obscure when women are in view.[8] In any case, given the conventional use of 'man' as a default rendering for אִישׁ, it appears that any decision not to do so here is preceded by a conclusion that this verse *does not specify* the referent's social gender.[9] Thus to render as *man* would be awkward, due to its normative meaning (nowadays) of "adult male."

The present chapter addresses translation projects of the latter type—namely, all those for which אִישׁ, in a context as in the above example, might be rendered by something other than 'man'. (In such translations, word-for-word rendering is a secondary goal.) In this chapter, I reassess how the key Hebrew term אִישׁ was handled in one such work: the translation that the

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4. Biblical lexicographers working in English have considered *man* to be the most broadly applicable single-word equivalent (Stein 2019, Excursuses 3 and 8). Notably, however, many dictionaries present the attribute of maleness/manliness—if at all—only *after* indicating the noun's application to human beings in general. Taken together, biblical dictionaries are *vague* about the nature of אִישׁ with regard to gender (ibid.). Unfortunately, the traditional dictionary format is poorly designed to account for how referential gender functions in Biblical Hebrew (Stein 2011). On the meaning potential of אִישׁ in Ancient Hebrew according to the biblical evidence, see below.

5. Among the Hebrew Bible's influential ancient translations, in the Greek version (Septuagint) ἄνθρωπος 'human being' corresponds to אִישׁ in the Masoretic text here (Tov and Polak 2009), while the Latin version (Vulgate) reads *quis* 'any' (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata* 2007).

6. So already NJPS in 1962; similarly TLB, NRSV, NCV, ERV. Translators have adopted other equivalences: demonstrative pronoun ('those', NLT, NABRE, NIV); personal pronoun ('you', CEV); another noun ('a person' or 'the person', HCSB, ISV, MSG, CSB); and more ('any person', AYB, CEB).

7. See the discussion of NJPS in Stein 2006b:vi–vii.

8. This chapter will not attempt to classify the dozens of English-language Bible translations published during the past half century, nor evaluate their various competing (and even contradictory) claims of accuracy, sensitivity, neutrality, and inclusiveness with regard to social gender. In general, translators differ about the gender implications both in the Hebrew and in English. That is, disagreements are partly about what the source text was conveying with regard to the social gender of its human or divine figures, and partly about what the English noun *man* and the third-person masculine pronouns (*he/him/his/himself*) mean in various contexts of use.

9. On the difficulty in inferring what any translator was thinking about gender, see Stein 2009a.

then-prolific Bible blogger John Hobbins called "an inevitable point of departure in future discussions of gendered language used of human beings . . . in the Hebrew Bible" (2007). This translation was issued by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) as *The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation* (Stein et al. 2006). Its scholarly abbreviation is CJPS (already cited above). As the book's title suggests, we editors based it upon the respected NJPS ("New JPS") retranslation, which is a contextual rendering of the Hebrew text's plain sense into idiomatic English.[10] At the same time, the CJPS effort was also an extension—in both breadth and depth—of a revised translation in *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (Plaut and Stein 2005), issued a year earlier by a cooperating publisher.[11]

1. The Distinctive CJPS Treatment of אִישׁ and of *Man*

In supplementing the earlier adaptation project, we CJPS editors paid special attention to the instances of אִישׁ. We analyzed most of them at length.[12] As noted in an appendix titled "Dictionary of Gender in the Torah" (Stein 2006c:394):

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10. The NJPS translation was formerly known as the New Jewish Version (NJV). Its first volume, *Torah* (The Five Books of Moses), has undergone four significant revisions—in 1967, 1985, 1992, and 1999. Its translation committee, which was responsible also for the first two revisions, strove to establish the text's plain sense as the biblical composers meant to convey it to the canonical Torah's presumed first audience, while taking into account postbiblical Jewish interpretation. The translators explicitly valued clarity of expression, and they sought to emphasize a religious message. See further Jewish Publication Society 1999 (1985):xxiii–xxvii; Orlinsky 1970:3–40.

11. The 2005 revised edition of a 1981 work newly incorporated a "gender-accurate" translation, with a 1999 rendition of Genesis by Chaim Stern. The publisher, URJ Press, had intended for Stern to translate the entire Torah, but he passed away in 2001. For the remaining books, the Press engaged me to adapt the translation in the commentary's first edition, namely NJPS. Our editorial adaptation team included Hara Person (Press editor-in-chief), Ellen Frankel (JPS editor-in-chief), and Bible scholars Carol Meyers and Adele Berlin as consulting editors. See further Stein 2005:xxv–xxxi.

    By "gender-accurate," the publisher meant that the rendering of terms referring to human beings (as distinct from God-language) accurately reflects the understanding of the text's ancient audience, given their likely assumptions regarding social gender. In turn, for the 2006 rendition, JPS preferred the term "gender-sensitive" to "gender-accurate" out of an abundance of caution, so as not to "claim too much authority" for the somewhat innovative methodology. That publisher viewed CJPS as complementing rather than replacing the NJPS translation (Ellen Frankel, personal communication, Feb. 14, 2006).

    On the CJPS treatment of its God-language (not discussed in the present chapter), see Stein 2006a; 2006b:xxvi–xxviii; 2008b. For errata, see Stein 2020c.

12. Our understanding of the meaning potential of אִישׁ was based upon a pioneering study by Alison Grant (1977). For a discussion of Grant's findings, see Stein 2008a; 2020a:8, 17–18; 51–52. For my

> the present translation takes as the primary sense of אִישׁ . . . 'a representative
> member of a group: a member who serves as a typical or characteristic example.'
> Thus this term exemplifies the group-oriented thinking found throughout the
> ancient Near East. . . . The term אִישׁ presumes an inseparability from a larger
> entity.

Our focus on אִישׁ had actually been prompted by our decision to restrict the use of *man* in English to mean 'adult male human being', absent a more salient relational meaning in context. Concomitantly, for all other nuances of אִישׁ, we would employ other English terms, as contextually appropriate. We adopted this stricture in service of a larger goal: for a given usage of אִישׁ, to make clear to our readers when womanly gender is also in view (Stein 2006b: xxiv–xxv; xxxi).

Our construal of אִישׁ and our constraint on the meaning of *man* would have far-reaching and provocative consequences. Ultimately, out of 458 instances of masculine singular אִישׁ in the Pentateuch, only 62 (less than 14%) were rendered as 'man'.[13] Our approach, and this striking result, became the main distinguishing feature of our revised translation within its gender-sensitive cohort. As the biblical lexicographer Reinier de Blois noted upon the book's publication (personal communication), the way that CJPS handled אִישׁ was "unconventional, innovative, and worthy of serious consideration." As such, it would be subject to future review and revision. The present chapter now begins to undertake such a review. To anticipate my conclusion, I find that our previous analyses do warrant some refinement.

2. The Need for a Reassessment

Since the publication of CJPS fourteen years ago, I have continued to study how אִישׁ was employed in Ancient Hebrew.[14] These efforts culminated in a doctoral dissertation (Stein 2020a). It employed a novel, communication-oriented and cognitive approach to explaining the full range of usages of אִישׁ. The resulting insights have shed light not only on the nature of אִישׁ,

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translator's notes for Exodus through Numbers, see Stein 2014 (on the translation in Plaut and Stein 2005 and its later printings).

13. In all 62 cases, the qualities of adulthood and maleness were evident from the context, thus constraining the audience's interpretation anyway to referents with those qualities. More than 90% of these cases involve reference to a nonspecific type of adult male (Stein 2020a:19).

14. Stein 2007, 2008a, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2009a, 2009b, 2013a, 2013b, 2015, 2018a, 2018b, 2019. Many of my studies have included also the feminine form אִשָּׁה, as well as its plural form נָשִׁים. These forms behave nearly the same as the masculine ones. However, with respect to translation, their gender implications are clear-cut, whereas the masculine forms are often ambiguous—and thus in need of careful analysis. Consequently, this chapter dwells upon the masculine terms.

but also of *man* in the target language. For I showed that both terms are similarly distinctive within the cohort of general human nouns that exists in each of their respective languages.[15]

We cannot fully grasp how אִישׁ (or correspondingly *man*) functions if we rely upon conventional wisdom, such as the notion that its meaning revolves around 'adult male'.[16] Even the more generic concept of 'human being' is seldom in the foreground of what אִישׁ contributes to an utterance's meaning.[17] Nor is אִישׁ among the nouns that the Bible uses to indicate a figure's human-like appearance (Stein 2018b; 2020a:175n29; forthcoming).

Significantly, in the vast majority of cases, the use of אִישׁ must be conveying something other than gender information.[18] For in those cases, the referent's gender is actually precluded from being specified by the linguistic reference.[19] According to one tally, it appears that referential gender is communicated by only 31% of the Bible's instances of masculine singular אִישׁ (Stein 2020a:18).

If, in Ancient Hebrew, אִישׁ seldom means 'adult male' or 'human being', then how is it being used? The most profound lesson to emerge from my studies—and the one that undergirds this chapter—is that like all nouns used as a label, אִישׁ is always used to manage the speaker's communication with an audience;[20] yet unlike other noun labels, אִישׁ is employed almost solely for this purpose. That is, the key to understanding אִישׁ is the *discourse function* that it serves. During communication, the speaker's task is not only to inform the audience, but also

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15. The same kinds of distinctiveness appear to apply to *homme* 'man' with respect to its cohort in French. My dissertation therefore treated the three terms as a category, which I called "workhorse human nouns." I did not explore the workhorse phenomenon in any other languages.

16. Psycholinguists have found that during actual communication, audiences do not process a word on the basis of its "dictionary definition"—also known as its *residual* (or citation) meaning. This claim is especially true of general human nouns. Given their highly mutable nature (i.e., context dependence), their residual meaning is hardly relevant. See further below, and Stein 2020a:25–26.

17. This conclusion follows from the competition posed by other general nouns in the human domain that more readily serve to indicate a human being as such (Stein 2020a:25). It is reinforced by analogy from linguists' observation that *man* in English and *homme* in French are seldom used to classify their referent as a human being (ibid., 34–35, 76–77).

18. English idiom leads me to depict speakers as "conveying" informational "content." More precisely, however, in actual language use, a speaker's utterance prompts an audience to construct meaning by making inferences. Words *evoke* meaning in the audience's mind (Stein 2020a:16).

19. One of the basic properties of Hebrew is that *manly* referential gender is a function of the reference's *specificity*. When it is employed in *nonspecific* reference, a grammatically masculine singular noun is generally agnostic as to its referent's social gender (Stein 2008c; 2013a; 2020a:17–19).

20. For consistency, I discuss all communication (including between the biblical text and its readers) as involving a "speaker" and an "audience." Both parties are styled in the grammatical singular.

to make sure that the audience is properly tracking the speaker's descriptions and references. In that regard, our noun אִישׁ plays a distinctive yet conventional role.

In the next section, I will explain the preferential place of the nouns אִישׁ and *man* in the management of discourse in their respective languages. I will show how this concept has revised my understanding of the meaning of אִישׁ in use, as well as my view of the suitability of *man* as an English rendering. Then for illustration I will treat four passages from the book of Genesis, with respect to issues of abiding concern to translators, especially the representation of gender. I will discuss each passage in light of not only the CJPS rendering, but also the original NJPS rendering, as well as other English translations—especially those that have paid special attention to gender representation, such as the NRSV, which is widely used in academia.

3. Discourse Functions of אִישׁ and of *Man*

3.1 Viewing a Noun Label in the Context of Communication

During communication, while a speaker depicts some situation, an audience evidently forms a mental representation of that depiction.[21] Scholars call the latter a "discourse model" or "situation model" (Stein 2020a:15). It is populated by participants whom the audience must keep track of. I think of it like a puppet theater. As the speaker telegraphs words from a remote location, a mental puppeteer attempts to faithfully portray the depicted situation on the stage.

Communication is thus a matter of synchronization between speaker and audience. The speaker must successfully manage the audience's "puppet" characters, including how they relate to the scene. As the linguist Knud Lambrecht observed, "Informing a hearer of something means informing him or her of some state of affairs, i.e. of something which necessarily involves not only participants but also something to participate in" (1994:46).

Ultimately, a situation and its participants are interdependent. Nonetheless, a speaker can construe the same scenario in different ways, so as to emphasize either the overall situation or a certain participant. Compare the following two biblical treatments of homicidal assault (Exod 21:12 and Lev 24:17):[22]

מַכֵּה אִישׁ וָמֵת מוֹת יוּמָת:

A dealer of death to another party shall be doomed to die.

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21. Ideally, the following explanation would be directly linked to the human brain's neurological functioning. For simplicity, it is undertaken at a less detailed level of analysis that nonetheless suffices to account for the linguistic usages in question.

22. Here my renderings emulate the Hebrew text's alliteration. Cf. Alter 2004:21 (on Gen 2:17). On the importance of alliteration in the Bible, see Rendsburg 2019:72–127.

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וְאִ֗ישׁ כִּ֤י יַכֶּה֙ כָּל־נֶ֣פֶשׁ אָדָ֔ם מ֖וֹת יוּמָֽת׃

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Any party who kills any of humankind shall be doomed to die.

The first case opens by casting the perpetrator solely in terms of the problematic act. In contrast, the second case starts with an unadorned individual, who only then gets into trouble. Thus the first construal is *situation*-oriented (akin to "*When* someone kills . . ."), whereas the second is *participant*-oriented ("*Regarding* someone *who* kills . . .").[23]

Typically, the speaker's task in managing the discourse model involves cueing the audience to mentally perform any of the following four acts. For this purpose, the speaker's main linguistic device is a noun—judiciously deployed as a label within a noun phrase.

1. *Framing a Situation.*[24]   Sometimes a speaker wishes to present the overall situation, rather than focus on one (or more) of its participants. In such a case, the speaker needs to describe the participants in only a schematic manner—merely indicating their existence, plus how they are related to the other elements in the situation of interest.

2. *Situating a New Participant.*   When a specific intended referent is not yet active in the discourse, the speaker needs to prompt the audience to "open a file" for that participant within its discourse model.

3. *Elaborating upon a Participant.*   In order to add some data about a participant (e.g., an aspect of character), the speaker needs to induce the audience to "access the file" that has been created for the participant in question; that way, the new data can be reliably attached to the proper file.

4. *Re-situating a Participant.*   As the depicted situation develops, the speaker may need to cue the audience beforehand to "re-open its file" for a participant of interest, so as to update its discourse model accordingly. Alternatively, the speaker may prefer to cue the audience to treat one of the participants as if fixed in place—as a handy point of reference—while focusing attention on the re-situation of another participant.

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23. In the first case (Exod 21:12), the heinous act is indicated indirectly, via a substantival participle. Situation focus is even more obvious when the speaker uses a finite verb to mention the act first, as in Exod 21:18, 20, 26. Meanwhile, some utterances, when read in isolation, cannot be readily classified as emphasizing either the situation or its participant(s). For example, the hypothetical statement "I see two women playing chess" would be an acceptable response to either of the following questions: "Is anyone in the courtyard?" (a *participant* focus) or "What's going on in the courtyard?" (a *situation* focus). Hence in many cases we must consider the context of use.

24. This type of usage was not a category of analysis in my dissertation. However, I have since found that such framing is the most frequent motivator for our noun's deployment (Stein 2020b).

The above considerations thus enable us to identify four main discourse functions for a noun label:[25] frame; situate; elaborate; and re-situate. A tally of the Torah's 570 instances of אִישׁ (singular and plural, including 20 non-personal referents) confirms that each of them is deployed to carry out one of those four discourse functions (Stein 2020b, Table 1). Of these, *framing a situation* accounts for nearly two-thirds of the instances of אִישׁ (ibid., Table 2).[26]

More importantly, our noun appears to be *the default term* for carrying out such discourse functions (Stein 2020a:105–63). The next section explores why that is so.

3.2 The Most Efficient Noun Label for Communicating about Situations

Imagine that you are a speaker, standing in front of an audience. You want to communicate something about a certain participant in a situation of interest. What would be the most efficient (least-cost) way for you to ensure that the audience divines your intended message?

As I mentioned, a noun will play a key role in signaling your intent. Presumably the *ideal* noun to use for such a signal would be a simple, straightforward, and streamlined word. That is, it would exact a low cost for you as the speaker to articulate: it would consist of just one syllable that is easy to pronounce, rather like a beep. And that would make it easy for the audience to process mentally. Rather than describing its referent's intrinsic qualities (as most nouns do) it would be understood to mean simply "Create a file for a new participant, please"; or "Go back to that file, please." This signal would have no other informational content that could distract from its discourse-focused impact.

Most of human cognition and communication is devoted to the activity of *situating and re-situating depicted participants* (Stein 2020a:58–61). Consequently, the posited kind of efficient signal should be in high demand. Countless instances of linguistic communication presumably produce a modest yet relentless pressure to minimize the effort involved by both parties.

I submit that in some languages, a word that resembles our ideal signal has indeed come into existence. In Ancient Hebrew, it was אִישׁ (including what would eventually become that noun's irregular plural and feminine forms). In English, the noun *man* (including *woman*, which

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25. More precisely: for an entire referring expression—and not only the noun as its head term. Herein I follow the lead of a corpus linguist: "The functions are not fulfilled by the noun alone, but for the sake of brevity I will talk about the noun having a particular function" (Mahlberg 2005:107).

26. As is widely recognized, in the Bible our noun אִישׁ in the singular regularly carries out two schematic functions: distribution and reciprocation. (For extensive discussion, see Stein 2020a:197–212.) I have found that either construction can be employed in service of the *framing* or the *re-situating* discourse functions described above (Stein 2020b). Because their English renderings are rarely controversial, I will not discuss distribution or reciprocation further in this chapter.

is a contraction of *wifmann* 'womanly participant') has long played that same role. That is, these nouns' use has been optimized for a vital task: the speaker's management of the participants in the audience's discourse model. This was my dissertation's hypothesis.

The hypothesis has important implications. When these special nouns are employed as the signal for the audience to locate (or re-locate) participants within a situation, *those participants are defined primarily in terms of their participation in that situation*. It is fair to say that 'participant (in a situation)' is the prototypical meaning that is evoked by the use of these nouns. This distinctive feature makes such a noun the appropriate—that is, the expeditious and thus expected—label to use whenever the spotlight is either on the *overall situation*, or on the *situated* participant as such.

My dissertation tested its hypothesis by validating a number of its resulting predictions. I found that throughout the Bible, אִישׁ is the default label when a new participant is introduced (e.g., Lev 24:17, above), as well as when depicting situations where two parties' interests conflict (e.g., Exod 21:12, above). As illustrated below, I documented that אִישׁ is often employed (and even preferred) as a label when the speaker wishes to supplement the data about a discourse-active participant, or to "reset" a participant's standing in the audience's discourse model, or to offer a reference point for some other aspect of the situation under discussion. Conversely, I showed that אִישׁ is *not* used in similar contexts when those discourse functions are not called for. And I demonstrated that in the Bible, such usage patterns are *consistent* across both its narrators and its narrative characters.[27]

Furthermore, the hypothesis proved to have explanatory value: it accounted for the use of אִישׁ in dozens of passages where its presence had puzzled previous scholars; and I applied it to resolve longstanding interpretive cruxes (Gen 4:1; 18:2; 30:43; Exod 2:14; 10:7; 1 Sam 26:15; Isa 66:13; Jer 38:7; Neh 1:11). Meanwhile, it proved consistent with the documented behavior of the corresponding term *man/woman* in English (and *homme/femme* in French).

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27. Crucially, the hypothesis is confirmed in the speech of characters that is nested within the narration. In those cases, the speaking characters are directly addressing their own audience within the story, rather than the text's audience per se. Even so, in order for those characters' speech patterns to have seemed *plausibly realistic* to the text's ancient audience, they must have resembled Ancient Hebrew as it was spoken. After all, the text's audience would predictably interpret that reported speech according to normal usage—while expecting each audience *within* the story to do the same.

    The overall finding of consistency in usage regardless of speaker thus validates the hypothesis as a characteristic of the Ancient Hebrew language—and not merely a narrative convention, or even the idiolect of a few narrative voices (see further Stein 2020a:105; 2020b). Consequently, this chapter's examples are drawn from both narration and reported speech.

On account of all these validations, in this chapter I treat that hypothesis as fact. To wit, the prototype meaning of אִישׁ and of *man* is to indicate participation in the depicted situation.

3.3 Differential Lexical Gender and Age Specialization

Above I have described the classical meaning of both אִישׁ and *man*. Yet significantly for Bible translators, the latter noun has undergone a dramatic semantic change. To return to our initial example about remedying one's contact with a corpse (Num 19:20), the Authorized Version's rendering in 1611—'But the man that shall be unclean…'—was surely construed as gender-inclusive, given the normal usage of *man* in English at the time.[28] In contrast, Alter's nearly identical rendering in 2004 presumably prompts the contemporary reader to wonder whether women are indeed in view. The predictable impact of *man* upon the reader is quite different.

The gradual lexical gendering of *man* over the centuries, along with a decrease in its use for certain discourse functions, is well documented.[29] Among many English speakers, *man* has newly come to be perceived as presupposing a male exemplar, and as excluding women from its denotation in a wider range of usages.[30] Nowadays few native speakers can even imagine that *man* used to evoke only the most minimal degree of lexical gender, and that it was formerly used almost entirely for other purposes than labeling gender.

In short, the use of *man* without regard to gender—such as for discourse functions—is increasingly unthinkable. Meanwhile, already for centuries, its denotation has been limited to

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28. For evidence, cf. 'the man' in KJV to render the gender-inclusive Hebrew personal nouns אָדָם and אֱנוֹשׁ in similar situations (a general statement with nonspecific reference): Isa 56:2; Ps 32:2; 84:6; Job 5:17. Likewise, less than a decade after the KJV's publication, the Anglican clergyman Joseph Hall, while reflecting upon the verse in which Micah mentions his mother's cursing (Jud 17:2), was able to moralize as follows: "A carnall heart … cannot foregoe that wherein it delights … without curſes [curses]: whereas the *man* that hath learned to inioy [enjoy] God … cannot curſe" (emphasis added; 1620:939). Presumably the author was commenting upon *human* nature, thus including women (exemplified by Micah's mother) in his intended referential scope of *a carnall heart* and its counterpart term *the man*. See also *OED*, "man, n.1 (and int.)," s.v. I.1.b 'a person'.

29. For references and on the linguistic connection between those two trends, see Stein 2020a:225–27. See also Baron 1986:138–40. On the lexical gender of nouns as a matter of degree, see Stein 2019.

    This transformation—from a largely gender-neutral term (while *man* was mostly being used to indicate participation) to a solidly gendered one—was anticipated already in Hebrew. Compared to the patterns of usage in the Bible, the Rabbinic Hebrew of Late Antiquity came to employ masculine singular אִישׁ far more often in gendered contexts, and used it to make sharper gender distinctions; meanwhile, some of the biblical discourse functions of אִישׁ were picked up instead by a cohort noun (Stein 2019). A parallel transformation is found in French with *homme* if we take the Latin *homo* 'participant, human being' as the starting point (Stein 2020a:25).

30. *OED*, "man, n.1 (and int.)."

adults (versus children), as discussed below. Let me now show how these shifts challenge the translators of biblical texts involving אִישׁ, in terms of the four main discourse functions.

4. Framing a Situation (Gen 4:1)

After Eve has birthed her first child, she offers an explanation for his newly bestowed name. Although her audience is not explicitly named, it must be Adam—the only other person alive.

$$\text{וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יהוה:}$$

…she…bore Cain, saying, "I have gained a person with the help of יהוה."[31]   (CJPS)

"…a life…" (Speiser)
"…a male child…" (NJPS)[32]
"…a man…" (NRSV)

For centuries, this naming statement has been an interpretive crux. As noted by the commentator Claus Westermann, it poses a challenge partly because אִישׁ is normally not a label for a newborn infant (1984:289–90).[33] Speiser's rendering accords with the view of some interpreters, including the 12th-century commentator Abraham Ibn Ezra, who have pointed to a spotlight on human mortality in the previous paragraph (3:22–24). In that context, Eve as a new mother must be calling attention to the perpetuation of humankind. However, if that were truly her intent, then we might expect instead the label נֶפֶשׁ 'person, life' or אָדָם 'earthling'.

For its part, NJPS expresses the view of many lexicographers, who construe אִישׁ in this verse as specifying a *male* child (e.g., Bratsiotis 1970:239). True, Eve is speaking about her son uniquely; and in unique or specific reference, the Hebrew language requires our noun's users to match its referent's social gender, by choosing either the masculine or feminine form. Thus Eve's use of אִישׁ is indeed expressing a non-womanly referential gender (Stein 2008c; 2013a). However, that linguistically constrained fact is only incidental. Nothing in the context suggests

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31. Throughout CJPS, the tetragrammaton is reproduced using Hebrew letters, so that it functions as a name. Thus, too, the translation avoids recourse to an epithet that would limit the conception of God to a single quality (Stein 2006a; 2006b:xxvi–xxvii).

32. Speiser's translation of Genesis was published just a year prior to the first rendition of NJPS. He served on the NJPS translation committee for the Torah—and was apparently outvoted in this case.

33. The precise thrust of Eve's point has likewise been debated, for both her verb and her preposition are ambiguous in this minimally constrained context. (See Westermann, ibid.) However, below I suggest that Eve's utterance is best construed as intentionally schematic rather than precise.

that Eve is proffering a contrast on the basis of gender (or sex).[34] Furthermore, if she were seeking to specify that she did not bear a daughter, arguably another label would have been more conventional, namely בֵּן 'son' (Gen 4:25–26; 16:11, 15; 35:17; Exod 1:16, 22; Judg 8:31; 1 Sam 4:20; Isa 9:5; and many others—but cf. Jer 20:15, an apparent counterexample) or even יֶלֶד 'boy' (Exod 1:17–18). Hence the NJPS construal is hard to justify.

Meanwhile, NRSV matches the view of some scholars, such as the 13th-century commentator Moses Naḥmanides, who construe our noun as meaning 'an adult male *in potential*'. Granted, an audience will adopt a metonymic construal like that when a more direct reading is too implausible.[35] Here, that view assumes that Eve is looking beyond her immediate experience of the miracle of birth—producing the very first human being to ever be born. Is the prospect of his *adulthood* really what leaves the biggest impression on her?

Happily, a readily coherent and informative construal[36] emerges upon recognizing that, as noted above, אִישׁ is the default term for schematically framing a situation (a function that meanwhile accounts for the majority of the Torah's instances). It is the most efficient label for situating its referent within any audience's model of a described situation. With that utterly conventional usage in mind, Eve's remark becomes the epitome of framing a new situation of interest—using the language's default term for this purpose. In other words, she profiles the referent of אִישׁ simply as *a party whose presence defines the situation*.[37] Her utterance's verb-first syntax focuses on *depicting the unprecedented situation* as she sees it (in order to explain how it inspired her son's name), rather than on her offspring per se.[38]

Notably, future adulthood is not in view. Indeed, the well-known nuance of adulthood is *not* part of the basic meaning of אִישׁ; rather, it is the result of a connotation that is evoked in certain

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34. This fact may explain why the Septuagint here reads ἄνθρωπον 'human being' (Tov and Polak 2009), while the Vulgate reads *hominem* 'human being' (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata* 2007).

35. Granted, too, in Job 3:3 גֶּבֶר 'he-man' does seem to be employed in a similarly anticipatory manner in a birth-announcement setting. However, that instance prompts the question as to why that label was not used here, instead of אִישׁ.

36. In language processing, humans favor the construal that *readily yields a coherent and informative result* (Stein 2018b:551). Consequently, I adopt these criteria to decide among construals of a text.

37. For similar constructions used for framing, see, e.g., Gen 39:14; 42:30; Num 16:30; 2 Chr 2:12. Here I am revising my earlier proposal that Eve was attending to the dramatic increase in human population, based upon the usage of אִישׁ elsewhere to mean a 'member [of the human species]' (Stein 2008a:23). Membership is a much less frequent, and thus less cognitively available, meaning of our noun. In contrast, framing a situation draws upon the word's prototypical meaning.

38. Thus Eve piously frames the momentous situation as resulting from a collaboration with her deity.

settings. This noun can be used to indicate that its referent is *consequential* in the discourse; similarly, an adult is someone whose presence matters (Stein 2020a:83, 96, 102).[39]

With regard to translation, if 'party (to the situation)' is indeed the (informational-level) meaning of אִישׁ in this verse, then what is the best rendering into English? The earliest translations, such as Wycliffe and Purvey (Later Version, 1395; from Latin) and the Authorized Version (1611), rendered it as 'a man'—but in an era when using *man* to denote a child was unremarkable.[40] Given that range of meaning, 'man' would have been construed in terms of participation in the depicted situation (Stein 2020a:81–85).

Although אִישׁ often corresponds to English *man*, nowadays a semantic void exists here between those two nouns. Whereas the biblical term אִישׁ is not age-restricted, *man* has come to be so; in a specifying reference, the English noun's denotation is restricted to adults. To that extent, 'man' is nowadays a misleading rendering in this case.[41]

Meanwhile, to render אִישׁ as 'person' (as in CJPS) carries a disadvantage: it represents Eve as focusing on that newborn participant, rather than on her main interest: the situation as a whole (Stein 2020a:82–83, 89). To that extent, 'person' is likewise a misleading rendering.

Let me suggest that the best available idiomatic English equivalent would be a combination of terms: 'someone new'. In that phrase, the indefinite pronoun serves to individuate the referent, while the adjective appropriately calls attention to the remarkable situation.

5. Situating a New Participant (Gen 24:65)

A camel caravan bearing Rebekah and her maids from Haran is approaching the vicinity of Abraham's encampment. Seeing someone on foot who is heading straight for them (namely Isaac), she dismounts and asks the servant in charge:

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39. See the analysis in Stein 2020a:5–6; 99–102; 129–31. To insist that Eve is construing her son as an adult (in potential), as some interpreters do, involves an added cognitive step. That extra processing makes such a construal highly unlikely, so long as a simpler construal (as posited here) is available. On this verse, see Stein 2020a:108, 114.

40. Witness an *OED* attestation from 1578, describing pagans in the New World: "Their Priests sacrificed ten children of *three yeares of age*, … fiue [five] of these children were *menne*, and the other fiue wemen" (emphasis added; "man, n.1 (and int.)," s.v. 4.e). *OED* glosses the earliest usages of this very frequent noun as denoting a person "irrespective of … age"; attested applications to a child extend at least to 1651 (ibid.). Thus it is highly unlikely that any English audience in 1611 would have construed the KJV's 'man' in Gen 4:1 as designating an adult; see also the previous note.

41. At the same time, in some other instances where אִישׁ is likewise used for framing a situation, a restoration in CJPS of the NJPS 'man' does seems justified. These include Gen 24:58 (in lieu of 'emissary'), 37:15 ('someone'), 42:13 ('householder'), and 42:30 ('official').

מִי־הָאִישׁ הַלָּזֶה הַהֹלֵךְ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִקְרָאתֵנוּ

"Who is that dignitary walking in the field toward us?"   (CJPS)

"…that man…"   (NJPS)

As with Eve's reference to Cain in 4:1, here with Rebekah's reference to Isaac as אִישׁ, the social gender that is signaled is merely incidental. Either masculine or feminine form is required only by Hebrew's need to accord with the social gender of any specific referent; that referent's manliness is not actually at issue.[42] So what does it actually mean when Rebekah labels him as אִישׁ?

In the ancient Near East, relative social status was always being noted and acknowledged in encounters. Such considerations would have been evident here. The fact that the figure was walking directly toward them was a sign of his high status. (A mere servant would run home to inform the master that a caravan was approaching.) Presumably his dress and his bearing would have indicated such status, as well. Likewise, the caravan's presumed halt signaled his importance.[43] Tellingly, the servant answers her question not in terms of the figure's name but rather his position of authority: אֲדֹנִי 'my master' (v. 65b).

With this context in mind, I as CJPS revising translator recalled that אִישׁ could signify a person of consequence.[44] I believed that in this case, the context of use would have reliably evoked that admittedly unusual sense of אִישׁ.[45] That conclusion can now be corrected.

How Rebekah references the distant figure (to whom everyone in the caravan seems to be reacting) is best arrived at by considering the available alternative labels. On the one hand, her question does not employ a demonstrative pronoun ("Who's *that* . . . ?"—cf. Isa 63:1; Song 3:6), nor a definite participle ("Who's the *walking-one*?"—cf. Exod 10:8; 1 Sam 11:12; Mal 3:2). Both of those methods would have been easy both to articulate and to apprehend, while spotlighting the observed activity (in this case, the fellow's movement). On the other hand, Rebekah could have referred to the approaching figure as a dignitary per se,[46] or indeed by any especially contentful term, but does not do so. Instead, her chosen label is relatively vague.

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42. This fact may explain why the Septuagint here reads ἄνθρωπος 'human being' (Tov and Polak 2009) and the Vulgate reads *homo* 'human being' (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata* 2007).

43. When Isaac was spotted, the caravan must have paused on its route. Rebekah would hardly have stopped to dismount on her own (v. 64) while the caravan kept going without her.

44. For the status construal of אִישׁ, the biblical *locus classicus* is Num 13:3. This sense also accords with the pre-Israelite Canaanite usage of a cognate term (Stein 2020a:6, 43–44, 48–51, 177–78).

45. To her credit, our Genesis consulting editor (Carol Meyers) was not convinced by this argument.

46. Such as the terms שַׂר (e.g., Gen 50:7; Num 22:40), גָּדוֹל, (e.g., 2 Kgs 25:9; 2 Kgs 10:6), or נְשׂוּא־פָנִים (e.g., 2 Kgs 5:1; Isa 9:14).

Yet it is adequate to the task. Given my new understanding of אִישׁ, I now see that Rebekah profiles the approaching figure simply as *a participant in the situation at hand*. That is, the most straightforward explanation for her recourse to אִישׁ is that it serves a standard discourse function. She has a communicative need to activate this participant within the servant's mental model of the described situation, so that he can be readily *situated* therein—and thus in her own mental model. She uses the default term for doing so efficiently.[47] Because this is the proto-typical meaning of אִישׁ, it would have been highly available to the text's ancient audience, so as to readily yield a coherent and informative utterance. Thus they would construe that Rebekah's interest was on the figure's established relationships—how he is situated socially—which is precisely what the label אִישׁ brings to the fore.[48]

Regarding the translation of this usage into English, as noted above *man* corresponds to אִישׁ as a default term for introducing a discourse participant. The nearly universal rendering here as 'man' (including NJPS) relies upon that equivalent status in English. Thus 'man' accurately reflects the semantically streamlined (or vague) nature of Rebekah's chosen label.

The question is: as its lexical gender has intensified over time, has *man* continued to carry out that classical function? When we label someone across the field as 'that man', does it still invite a situated perspective—or is it construed more as calling attention to his intrinsic manly features? The use of 'man' here even in recent translations that strive to be gender-sensitive suggests that such usage is indeed still normative in English.[49] If so, then a reversion to 'man' in this case in CJPS is warranted—recognizing the vital role of *man* in signaling the audience to situate a new (male) participant.

6. Elaborating About a Participant (Gen 6:9)

At the beginning of the Flood Story, a narrative spotlight shines upon one particular individual, who had been previously introduced. . . .

<div align="center">

נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק

Noah was a righteous personage . . .   (CJPS)

…a righteous man…   (NJPS, NRSV)

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47. For similar instances of the situating of an identifiable participant via our noun, see, e.g., Gen 19:5; 34:21; Num 22:9; Josh 2:3. Meanwhile, in other cases, אִישׁ is used to introduce a specific participant who is not previously identifiable to the audience, as in Gen 38:1; 1 Sam 1:1; Job 1:1.

48. For other instances of the interrogative personal pronoun מִי to inquire about someone's *relation-ships* (rather than their identity per se), see Num 22:9–11; Josh 9:8–11; 2 Kgs 10:13; Ruth 3:16.

49. See NRSV (1989), TNIV (2005), Stern (Plaut and Stein 2005), and CEB (2011).

In this verbless clause, our noun operates as the head term of a predication. For CJPS, we construed this predication as identifying Noah as a person of status or consequence.[50] At the time, I had no other answer for why our noun was invoked in this passage, rather than using a more simple predicate adjective. The apparently conspicuous presence of אִישׁ implied a heightened meaning on the informational level. Now I see that I misinterpreted the coincidence that the Bible's only other instance of the predicated phrase (אִישׁ צַדִּיק) in fact refers to a prince (Ish-Bosheth, the son and heir of King Saul, in 2 Sam 4:11).[51] High status seemed to fit here, too: Noah would soon display the economic and political wherewithal that befits a grandee.

Now, in light of my new awareness of discourse functions, I perceive this instance as an exemplar of employing אִישׁ to elaborate upon a discourse-active participant. Our noun is the default term for prompting one's audience to access its existing "file" for the character in question. On the discourse level of communication, it means: "get ready to modify your file for this participant—details to follow." As such, אִישׁ then introduces a simple statement of characterization.[52] In such usage, this label—by virtue of its being a noun—lends its air of permanence to the adjective's ephemeral attribution; a noun casts the referent as possessing the stated quality in an abiding fashion (Stein 2020a:66n19, 125). As the late biblical scholar Francis Andersen astutely noted (1994:106): "*Everything in a text does something. . . .* What seems redundant on one level might be doing something extra on another level."

What is the best rendering for אִישׁ here in idiomatic English? In that target language, the mission of opening the mind's door to admit a statement of elaboration about someone is most readily accomplished by *man*.[53] For that task, this noun seems to be better suited (cognitively speaking) than its alternatives—both pronouns and other nouns. Like אִישׁ, the noun man applies to the participant as already situated, with minimal articulation effort and processing load, so the predication is readily construed as a statement of character (Stein 2020a:87).

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50. On this sense, see above, note 44.

51. In 2006, I construed אִישׁ in 2 Sam 4:11 as 'leader', whereas I now see it as performing its prototypical function of labeling the participants in a situation as such. Our noun is the default term within juridical pronouncements, such as the king is making in that verse (Stein 2020a:149, 151).

52. A diagnostic for when אִישׁ (or in English, *man*) is serving the discourse function of elaboration is that the noun is employed in predication yet itself discloses no new information about its referent (Stein 2020a:85–86). Examples include Gen 27:11; 41:38; Exod 4:10; 15:3; Num 13:32.

53. In Modern English, common examples include: "he's a man with a mission"; "he's a man without shame"; "he's a man of his word" (Stein 2020a:30). Such usage of *man* to support the elaborating function is attested already in Old English, when—strikingly to us today—it was normal to apply *man* for this purpose even to people of womanly gender (Stein 2019).

I know people who avoid labeling anyone as a man, as if to do so would reinforce male dominance in society. In a case like this, they would prefer to render the clause in question as 'Noah was a righteous *person*'. Nonetheless, the apparent communicative and cognitive advantage of *man* is not easily dismissed. When a predication's subject is both specific and already identified as an adult male—as in this verse—it seems best to use *man*. For CJPS, doing so would mean reverting to the NJPS rendering, both here and in some other cases of elaboration.[54]

7. Re-situating a Participant (Gen 30:43)

Near the end of Jacob's sojourn in Aram, the narrator describes the cumulative results of the protagonist's contract with his uncle, regarding the breeding of sheep (Gen 30:42–43):

וְהָיָה הָעֲטֻפִים֙ לְלָבָ֔ן וְהַקְּשֻׁרִים לְיַעֲקֹב׃

…Thus the feeble ones went to Laban and the sturdy ones to Jacob.

וַיִּפְרֹץ הָאִישׁ מְאֹד מְאֹד

So as a householder he grew exceedingly prosperous…   (CJPS)

Thus the man grew exceedingly prosperous…   (NJPS)

In this way Jacob became very rich.…   (NCV)

Unlike in the previous example, here אִישׁ heads a referring expression. Its referent is a known adult male; it is not informative in that respect. No gender contrast is in view.[55] So why was this noun used here? Three aspects of its deployment demand explanation. First, why was a noun label used at all? Arguably the verb's masculine inflection alone would have sufficed to enable the audience to fix the reference. Apparently for this reason, Claus Westermann remarked (1985:484) that "there is no reason for the designation" here as הָאִישׁ.

The second puzzle is a converse of the first: why was the employed noun label such a vague one? In this context, the referring expression is semantically underspecified: it does not distinguish Jacob from his rival Laban. In contrast, using Jacob's name would have been unambiguous (as the NCV translation illustrates).

And of all the vague (general human) nouns available, why was אִישׁ the preferred choice? That is the third aspect that needs to be accounted for. In 2006, because this usage of אִישׁ was so conspicuous, I concluded that its context must have evoked a specific sense of our noun. Given Jacob's expressed desire earlier, as he negotiated the business deal with Laban ("When

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54. Those other cases include Gen 25:27; 39:2; Exod 4:10; and Num 27:18.

55. This fact may explain why the Septuagint here reads ἄνθρωπος 'human being' (Tov and Polak 2009), while the Vulgate reads *homo* 'human being' (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata* 2007).

shall I make provision for my own household?"; v. 30, CJPS), the relevant sense of אִישׁ here in verse 43 seemed to be "head-of-household."[56] This is reflected in the CJPS rendering.

Revisiting this case now in light of communicative and cognitive considerations, a different understanding comes to the fore.[57] A noun label is called for because—as has been noted by discourse analysts—when a noun is used to refer to a discourse-active participant, it distinctively prompts a re-situating of that referent within the audience's discourse model.

Meanwhile, a vague designation suffices because, given the narrated events leading up to the present situation, and given the narrative conventions of Hebrew, the target audience could reliably infer that only Jacob is the intended referent. And as scholars of linguistic pragmatics have noted, speakers are normally expected *not* to articulate what can be reliably inferred.

Furthermore, the preferred noun is אִישׁ because that label prototypically profiles its referent *in terms of the situation*—as a participant in the situation at hand—rather than in terms of some pre-existing role, status, or relationship to others. Our noun thus has the cognitive advantage of maintaining the audience's attention on the overall situation.[58] Such a trait is helpful when the speaker is summing up a long and complex process, as in this case. Thus this verse's sudden change in designation for Jacob is meaningful: it quietly presents the depicted action (namely, the gaining of wealth) as being *the direct result* of the previously described situation.[59]

Given the Hebrew text's wording, what is the best rendering for אִישׁ here? Classically, the most efficient noun label in English for the "re-situate the participant" function appears to be *man/woman* (Stein 2020a:90–91). Like אִישׁ, *man* distinctively keeps attention on the situation. Although the NCV rendering shows that *man* is no longer a totally reliable signal of narrative development, it has retained some currency for such usage (ibid., 82–83). This favors 'man' as the preferred equivalent here.[60] Consequently, a return to the NJPS rendering is warranted.

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56. In Ancient Israel, the household was the society's basic unit of economic production. The household's head controlled its assets as a kind of trustee and allocated those resources on a daily basis. In the Bible, the default term for referring to householders is אִישׁ. This usage makes sense because: (1) householders were the society's *participants par excellence*; and (2) they were indispensible—and thus cognitively highly available, so a vague label sufficed to evoke their presence efficiently.

57. For documentation of the following assertions, see Stein 2020a:68–70, 76, 80–81, 82–83, 125–28.

58. In contrast, other referring expressions (such as a name, or a distinguishing epithet) would evoke additional semantic information, which would then focus relatively more attention on the referenced participant—while detaching that participant from the situation.

59. The narrative device of אִישׁ as a changed label—that is, its substitution for the given participant's default referring expression—likewise occurs in, e.g., Gen 20:8; 24:21; 26:13; 34:7; Exod 2:21.

60. So, too, in other re-situating clauses, such as Gen 26:13 and Exod 2:21.

8. Summary and Discussion

A concern for the accurate representation of social gender in the Bible's translation has stimulated a discovery about the operation of some languages—including both Ancient Hebrew and English—with regard to a distinctive and unusually frequent noun in that language: it is the default noun for communicating about participants in situations.

Back in 2006, I had concluded that אִישׁ does not behave like an ordinary noun. That basic conclusion appears to have been accurate. Nonetheless, until this past year, I (like prior scholars) overlooked the active role played by אִישׁ on the discourse level of meaning. Now, rather than positing that "the noun denotes relationship either to a group or to another party" (2008a:2), I would instead assert that the usual purpose of this noun's usage is to manage the comings and goings of the participants within the audience's discourse model.

Twelve years ago, I told a roomful of Bible translators that the English noun *man* is an inadequate equivalent for אִישׁ, because it overtranslates social gender (Stein 2008d). I confess a new appreciation for just how well *man* tracks the behavior of the Ancient Hebrew אִישׁ. With regard to discourse functions and in many usage settings, *man* is a natural translation equivalent for אִישׁ.

Nonetheless, in these two terms' gender (and occasionally age) connotations, a significant dissonance persists—and it continues to grow. Thus as our first example showed (Num 19:20), rendering אִישׁ in English as *man* can make the Hebrew Bible seem more focused on gender than is actually the case.[61] In that instance, the referent was *non-specific*. In contrast, however, in other instances such as the latter three discussed herein—in which אִישׁ was used with respect to *specific figures who are known to be adult males*—an allowance for discourse functions appears to justify the use of *man*. This is the case even though in the local context of the discourse, gender is not at issue.

Notably, in one example (Gen 4:1), the rendering offered herein as optimal ('someone new') arguably applies to all translations into English—not only the gender-sensitive ones—due to a differential between what אִישׁ means in context and what *man* is nowadays capable of conveying. In the other three cases (6:9; 24:65; 30:43), the preferred rendering turns upon the question of just how "male" a term *man* has become. Nowadays the answer may be a function of the

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61. Ironically, a parallel situation obtains in English itself, regarding earlier manifestations of *man*. When Old English texts have been translated into contemporary English, sometimes the noun *mann* (as it was then spelled) has been rendered mechanically with *man*, which is ostensibly the same word. Yet scholars of Old English have repeatedly cautioned that this practice makes those texts sound "much more male-oriented" than intended by their authors (Rauer 2017:143–44, 154–55).

translation's target audience. I judged that for the audience of CJPS, *man* is still acceptable in all of these types of usage. Meanwhile, among many of the Torah's other instances of אִישׁ that involve a specific male character(s), upon considering the discourse function involved, I have concluded that its optimal rendering newly appears to be 'party', 'participant', 'agent', 'house-holder', 'guy', 'one', or various additional contextually appropriate adjustments.[62]

9. Conclusion

If translation is to be faithful to its source text, we must take note not only of which aspects of meaning are more accurately conveyed by making clear when women are in view, but also which aspects may be lost along the way. Taking into account the concept of discourse functions alters our understanding of the role of אִישׁ in biblical texts. Consequently, it can affect how a given passage is rendered into other languages, such as English. Thus my translator's criteria for an idiomatic rendering of this noun now includes a new explicit goal: achieving a functional equivalence in meeting the relevant discourse-management need(s).

As we have seen, the concern to manage discourse can intersect with a concern for gender implications. That is because our noun אִישׁ and its counterpart English term *man* embody both aspects. Both play a unique role as harbingers of participation. Consequently, with regard to communication about specific male figures—even though their gender is not at issue—there is still a place in translation for the noun *man*. In those cases, employing *man* as a rendering promises to enable the Hebrew Bible's message to be grasped more readily by the target audience. At the same time, in many other cases, especially when אִישׁ is employed in making non-specific reference, rendering as *man* distorts the Bible's meaning.[63]

Abbreviations

AYB	Anchor Yale Bible (see Levine 1993)
CEB	Common English Bible (2011)
CEV	Contemporary English Version (1995)
CJPS	Contemporary Jewish Publication Society translation (2006)

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62. For a tally of the Torah's 570 instances of אִישׁ according to discourse function, see Stein 2020b. For a tabulation of my proposed corrections to CJPS regarding אִישׁ (and other errata), see Stein 2020c.

63. I am grateful to Adele Berlin, Reinier de Blois, Kenneth Cherney, Sabine Dievenkorn, Vivie Mayer, Gary Rendsburg, and Daniel Rodriguez for their insightful remarks on an earlier version of this chapter.

CSB	Christian Standard Bible (2017)
ERV	Easy-to-Read Version (2006)
ESV	English Standard Version (2001; 2016 edition)
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible (1999; 2009)
ISV	International Standard Version (1995; 2014)
KJV	Authorized (King James) Version (1611)
KJ21	21st Century King James Version (1994)
LEB	Lexham English Bible (2012)
MEV	Modern English Version (2014)
MSG	*The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (1998–2002)
NABRE	New American Bible, Revised Edition (2010)
NCV	New Century Version (1987, 1991)
NET	New English Translation (1998)
NIV	New International Version (1973; 2011)
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society translation (1999 revision)
NKJV	New King James Version (1982)
NLT	New Living Translation (1996)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version translation (1989)
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* (online, accessed in 2019)
TLB	The Living Bible (1971)
TNIV	Today's New International Version (2005)

Glossary

Coherence   The ability of a text or utterance to make sense in terms of the audience's familiar experience and expectations. A text that readily makes sense is perceived as *coherent*.

Construal   The human ability to conceive and depict a given situation in alternate ways. Also, the constructed result of that process of interpretation.

Default   During interpretation of an utterance, the noun sense to be tried first, as being the most cognitively accessible or entrenched. The expected label (if one is warranted) for a referent. Compared to other possible labels, it is considered to be unmarked.

Discourse   Speech or text consisting of at least one sentence, which is used to communicate between a speaker and an audience.

Lexical gender   A noun's semantic gender specificity, which is a matter of degree: it can vary according to the type of usage, and it can change over time.

Metonymy   An associative mental process that links a whole with its parts, and thus the parts with each other, enabling the most salient one to stand for the other(s) in an utterance.

Participant   A person who takes part in the situation of interest. Participants inhabit the mental model of discourses, during which the speaker is depicting either the real world or an imagined one.

Referential gender   An utterance's characterization of a referent as being socially gendered (or not). A function of the specificity of the reference. (In historical linguistics, this concept has been called "notional gender.")

Situation   The setting in which an object of our regard is placed (physically or metaphorically) in some relation to its surroundings or circumstances. Situations consist of elements that are configured in relationships with each other.

Social gender   The culture's continual construction of womanliness/manliness.

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