



At the Well

Tim and Lisa Beckendorf, LBT missionaries in Botswana



Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 4:13, 14 (NIV)

Picture this . . .

Recently I worked with the Wayeyi translators on the Gospel According to Luke. As we progressed through the Gospel, there were some pauses for long discussions where I tried to describe the context or the image that was portrayed in the Gospel. For example, in chapter 4 verse 29 when the people became angry with Jesus, they pushed him out of the town toward the edge of the cliff so that they could throw him down. The translators were wondering what this could look like. Most of Botswana is flat, and where there are some hills cities aren't built on top with cliffs at the edge. Where we and the Wayeyi live there are no hills, so there really is no touch point for visualizing the landscape of Israel. Here is where a picture can be a wonderful addition to the translation and can be added when the book is prepared for printing.

Before printing the final version, however, there are a lot of checks that take place and one of those is at the community level. After the translators have translated and team checked a book they will have it printed and take it to one of the communities so that they can read it and offer comments and suggestions for possible improvement. Lately, Lisa has been helping the Wayeyi typesetting those booklets for printing so that the community can use them for checking. This is the best time for adding pictures that the translators suggest, so that the community can see the illustrations with the translation and assess whether it is helpful and appropriate.

The software that Lisa uses for typesetting has a couple of great developers working closely with the user community to make sure it meets the needs of the people who use it. With previous versions adding a picture was not the easiest thing to do. At one point I had even figured out and written a tutorial for adding illustrations. With the latest version of the software, however, the task has been

simplified, making it much easier. For that we are most thankful!

Here is one example where no picture was needed (at least not for the translators, but I've included one for your benefit): In Luke 3:5 there is a quotation from Isaiah:

*"Every valley shall be filled in,
Every mountain and hill made low.
The crooked roads shall become straight,
The rough ways smooth."*

The last phrase was a bit awkward in the translation so I started to ask questions of what this would look like and they weren't sure. I began giving them the idea of what a "rough way" was and how it would become smooth. One of the translator's eyes lit up, "You mean like the road to Shakawe from Sehithwa?" That is the road up to where we live and one which the Wayeyi often travel. It is notoriously bad, with many holes in the road and a crumbling road surface.



A view of our road

Once the translators had a solid image from their experience, it became simple to translate.

Dust to . . . ?

I have also been working with the translators in Sierra Leone on the Themne Bible translation going over the books of 1 & 2 Samuel. In 1 Samuel chapter 2, Hannah prays to the Lord and in verse 8 most translations follow the Hebrew and translate:

“He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap”

For most of the poetry in this prayer the translators had been using the same or similar idioms and expressions as the Hebrew, since they made good sense in Themne. However, in this verse they had not translated the idioms but had made them explicit:

“The LORD he lifts up the poor from the
poverty of theirs;
He lifts up the needy from the
sorrow of theirs”

So, naturally, I asked why they had made the idioms explicit in their translation. Quite matter of factly one of the gentlemen said, “In Themne this would not make any sense. Everyone from rich to poor is dusty.” This made good sense to me since, when I visited with them one January, the sky was full of the dust that blows in from the Sahara that time of the year.



Dust creates a haze over the village of Makeni in Sierra Leone.

It is always a real pleasure to work with different translators, getting to know them and also to have a glimpse of their world as they translate God's Word into their languages.

We give thanks for all of the translators that we are privileged to work with and we pray for their protection and good health.

Dedication

Prayers have certainly been answered as the Khwedam Bibles have not only been printed, but have arrived in Botswana where they are currently at the Bible Society. The next step is for the community to plan for their dedication, which for Westerners would be an easy step. Not so here, where things move at glacial speed. The people are very good at coming up with ideas of what the dedication should include and who needs to be invited and contacted, etc. but implementing those ideas is challenging. For folks who live from day to day their family needs consume all of their time. I am working with Splash to help move things forward and hope that things will start to come together soon.

Please pray for good progress as the community plans for the dedication of their Bible.

Correspondence and Support Information

You may support this ministry with gifts payable to Lutheran Bible Translators and indicate that they are for the Beckendorf Ministry. They may be mailed to:

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Your servants in Christ,

Tim, Lisa, Aaron, and Andrew Beckendorf