

Why is it so important to eliminate Bible poverty? Part 3

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Another reason is that even in the most remote and challenging places where Bible translation is needed, God has already gone ahead of us. Think about the many examples of God going ahead of his people in the Scripture:

? Exodus 23: The Lord instructed Moses to tell the Israelites: I will send my angel ahead of you to guard you as you go into the promised land; I will send my terror ahead of you to throw the nations into confusion, and I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive out peoples.

? Dt 1.33: God himself went ahead of the Israelites on their wanderings in the wilderness ? to search out places for them to camp and to show them the way they should go.

? Dt 9.1: God promised the Israelites that he was going to go ahead of them like a devouring fire as they crossed the Jordan river.

Several years ago, the Samburu and Ilchamus peoples of Kenya both requested help to have their own Bible translation. When John Ommani of Bible Translation and Literacy went to meet with the elders, they told him an amazing story. They had an ancient story about once having a book of God, but a cow ate it. So they have been looking for it ever since. They know now that the Bible was this book.

So when Ommani met with them, they told him, ?We know it costs money to do the work of translating the Bible. We don?t have much, but see those cows there (pointing to a group of cows nearby)? Each of us has agreed to give one of our cows to help get the Bible translated into our language. A cow took away our Bible, so these cows are going to help us get it back.?

Now let?s move to another region in northern Kenya. It?s the end of a long, hot day. A small group of Borana men ?; who are nomadic cattle herders?; are sitting together under the stars to share news and stories. An elder begins to speak: ?Long, long ago, we Borana people had a Book of God. We called it our Boogi Waqa and everyone had a copy. We read it often to learn how to please God. But as the years passed, our books began to wear out until eventually only one remained?;the prized possession of one old man.

?Those were years of drought, and our people struggled to survive. Day after day the old man took his cattle out in search of grass and water. One day he had to leave one of his cows behind that was too weak to keep up with the rest. This cow came upon the last Boogi Waqa as she was looking for something to eat?and devoured it! When the old man came home that night, all he found left were a few pieces of the leather cover of the book scattered on the ground.

Great sadness filled the camp. ?That night an angel appeared to the old man in a dream and told him: ?After many years God will send his book back to you. Watch for a strange man from a faraway country. When he comes, treat him well, for he will bring back your Boogi Waqa.??

Jim and Dorothea Lander, who had come to live among the Borana and help translate the Bible for them, were listening to all this. They were still learning the Borana language, but they understood enough of the old man?s words to marvel at what they heard.

A few weeks later, some Borana men were in the Landers? home. The children were reading a picture Bible in English, and showed it to one of the men, Galgalo. He had served in the Kenyan Air

Force and knew how to read. He read the story of the Tower of Babel, and then told the Borana men what it said in their own language. Together they looked at the pictures in the Bible: "Look, these men dress just like we do, with flowing clothes and turbans! They pack their camels like us too! And this desert looks just like ours!"

Galgalo turned to Jim: "Is this a Borana book? Is it?..could it be..?the Boogi Waqa?? "Yes," said Jim. "This is the Boogi Waqa." Silently the men stared at Jim and then turned back to the book. Long into the night they looked through it, examining the pictures and listening to Galgalo read.

Eventually they came to a picture of the Israelites sacrificing a lamb, as God had instructed them to do in the Old Testament. The men called Jim over: "Our fathers taught us that the Boogi Waqa told how to sacrifice a lamb, so that God would forgive our sins. And here it is in this Boogi Waqa! We still sacrifice animals, but some of the missionaries say we should stop. Why is that?"

Jim took the Bible and turned to Hebrews 10. With Galgalo's help, he explained that God sent his Son, Jesus, to be the perfect sacrifice for sin. They no longer needed to sacrifice lambs every year because now they could find forgiveness of sin and eternal life by putting their trust in Jesus! God left his footprint in the desert sands of Northern Kenya, and he's left it in many other cultures around the world.

[Sources: John Ommani, Jim and Dorothea Lander]