***Hina* (ἵνα)**

In English, there are several ways to communicate purpose or intention, just as there are several ways to indicate the results of an action. To communicate purpose we might say, “I read the Bible to grow closer to God,” using the word “to” to show our intention of growing closer to God by reading Scripture. To communicate our emphasis on results we might use a participle, as the word “falling,” in the phrase, “he tripped, falling into the mud.”

There are also several ways Greek grammar communicates purpose and result clauses, and one such way is with the particle *hina* (#2443 ἵνα) occurring in conjunction with a verb in the subjunctive mood. When *hina*, usually translated, “that,” “so that,” or “in order that,” is used with a verb in the subjunctive mood, it can express either purpose, result, or purpose and result simultaneously. Furthermore, *hina* with a verb in the subjunctive mood can be used in command clauses (as well as substantival, epexegetical, and complementary clauses, which we will not cover here.[[1]](#footnote-14794) Since the Greek construction is the same for all these kinds of clauses, it is up to the translator or interpreter to discover the meaning of the phrase from the context and scope of Scripture. In what follows, we will give examples showing how *hina* with a verb in the subjunctive mood can form a purpose clause, result clause, or purpose-result clause. After some discussion, we will also consider command clauses.

These first three clauses all consist of a main verb, the particle *hina*, and a verb in the subjunctive. The explanations have the main verb underlined, the *hina translation* in italics, and the **subjunctive verb** in bold.

(1) A *purpose clause* expresses the *intention* of the main verb, so in these cases, *hina* should be translated *in order that, with the purpose that*.

* (Matt. 19:13). “Then little children were being brought to him *in order that* **he might lay** his hands on them and pray….” The children were brought (main verb) with *the purpose that* (*hina*) Jesus **might lay** (subjunctive verb) his hands on them and pray.
* (Luke 9:12). “Send the crowd away, *in order that* **they may** go into the surrounding villages and countryside, and **lodge** and **get provisions**.” The apostles plead with Jesus to send the people away for the purpose of finding lodging and getting provisions. (Here the verbs in the subjunctive mood are “lodge” and “get provisions,” not “go”).
* (Rom. 1:11). “I long to see you, *in order that* **I may impart** to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.” Paul is expressing his purpose for seeing the Romans; he purposed to impart to them a spiritual gift of strengthening.

(2) A *result clause* expresses the resulting consequences of the main verb when the result is *not intended* to be the consequence of the main verb. In other words, this expresses when a person does something, or an event occurs, resulting in consequences that were not intended. The *hina* should be translated *so that; with the result that*.

* (John 9:2). “And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, *with the result that* **he was born blind**?’” The disciples assumed someone’s sin unintentionally resulted in this man’s blindness (cf. NET translation: “Rabbi, who committed the sin that caused him to be born blind?”).
* (Rom. 5:20). “The law came in *with the result that* the trespass **increased**.” God did not introduce the law with the intention of increasing sin. Nevertheless, this was the result of the law.
* (Gal. 5:17). “For [the spirit and the flesh] are opposed to each other, *with the result that* **you are not doing** what **you want**.” It is not the spirit’s intention in opposing the flesh to prohibit you from doing what you want, but is simply the result of the internal battle between our spirit and flesh.

(3) A *Purpose-result clause* expresses that the subjunctive verb is both the *intention* and *result* of the main verb. The *hina* should be translated, *so that*.

* (John 3:16). “He gave his only begotten Son, *so that* everyone who believes in him **will not perish** but **have** eternal life.” God gave his Son with the *intention* of saving believers from perishing, and having eternal life; simultaneously, the giving of the Son *resulted in* those who believe not perishing and having eternal life.
* (Rom. 3:19, ESV). “Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, *so that* every mouth **may be stopped**, and the whole world **may be held accountable** to God.” The *hina* with a verb in the subjunctive clause shows us that the law speaks with the purpose of stopping every mouth and making the world accountable to God; and furthermore, when it speaks, it results in this purpose being accomplished.
* (Matt. 1:22-23, NET). “This all happened *so that* what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet **would be fulfilled**: ‘Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son….’” God’s bringing about the virgin birth intentionally resulted in the fulfillment of what was spoken by the prophet.

In the REV we have attempted to remain as consistent as possible in the translation of the *hina* in these clauses, although there are exceptions at times. For purpose clauses we say, “in order that”; for result clauses, “with the result that”; and for purpose-result clauses, “so that.” The English translation “in order that” clearly indicates purpose; likewise, for result clauses, what could be more clear than, “with the result that?” “So that,” on the other hand is the best translation for a purpose-result clause precisely because it is ambiguous; it can be read to indicate either purpose or result. For example, the phrase, “he fell back into the snow so that an imprint was left,” could be read to mean he fell “so that” (purpose) he could make an imprint of himself, or it could be read to mean he just happened to fall “so that” (result) an imprint was left on the ground. The context would have to determine whether the “so that” speaks of purpose, result, or purpose-result. When we felt the biblical context demands a purpose-result clause we have rendered the *hina* “so that.”

That having been said, when reading the REV one must be careful not to assume every instance of “so that,” “in order that,” or “with the result that” is a *hina* with a verb in the subjunctive clause. There are also uses of *hina* by itself that warrant the “so that” translation; likewise, there are several other ways Greek can indicate purpose, hence, “in order that” could be due to another of these forms. The same can be said of the phrase, “with the result that,” which is often just a translation of *eis* (#1519 εἰς) or *hōste* (#5620 ὥστε).[[2]](#footnote-31465) The reader must consult the Greek text or the commentary to ensure the translation represents the *hina* with a verb in the subjunctive construction.

Identifying these clauses correctly is of fundamental importance for properly understanding and translating the Bible. Thankfully, in a majority of instances, the type of clause is abundantly clear from the context or the scope of Scripture. Nevertheless, the danger of misidentification is always present, because the Greek form of each construction is precisely the same. This means that in the *hina* with a verb in the subjunctive form, a purpose, result, and purpose-result clause look exactly the same in the Greek. If one calls a “purpose” or “purpose-result clause” what is actually a result clause, he attributes intention when God only meant to speak of what resulted, not what was purposed to happen. On the other hand, if one categorizes a passage as a “result clause,” when it is really a purpose clause, then he has missed the intention that is underlying the action.

For example, the first part of Romans 5:20 is often translated as though it were a purpose clause: “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase” (NASB). This translation ascribes the intention of increasing man’s transgression to the introduction of the law. But surely this is misguided. Can it really be that God introduced the law for the purpose of increasing sin? Why would God *want* sin to increase? This seems to go against Galatians 3:19-24 which indicates that the law came in precisely because there were already many transgressions (See also Rom. 3:19-20). Hence, this verse seems much better suited as a result clause: “But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied” (NRSV). In other words, God gave the Law to help mankind, but people disobeyed with the result that sin increased.

1 John 2:19 is another example of how translating a result clause as though purpose were intended can cause confusion. Speaking of the exodus of false believers from the Church, versions such as the HCSB and NASB translate the verse, “They went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us.” It seems clear that false believers did not leave the Christian fellowship “so that” it would be clear they were not true to the Faith. In contrast, seeing the *hina* clause as a result clause makes sense of the passage: “Their going showed that none of them belonged to us” (NIV).

Lastly, we must also consider how *hina* with the subjunctive can form a command clause. It is vital to properly distinguish purpose clauses from command clauses. A purpose clause indicates *why* something happened, it shows the intention behind the action: e.g., “Children were being brought to him in order that he could lay [Greek=*hina* with a verb in the subjunctive] his hands on them and pray” (Matt. 19:13). A command clause, on the other hand, *issues an order* or command: e.g., “Come, lay [Greek=*hina* with a verb in the subjunctive] your hands on her so that she will be healed and live” (Mark 5:23).

Because the same Greek form of *hina* with the subjunctive can be a purpose, result, or command clause, people sometimes disagree as to which is meant. This disagreement shows up in the varying translations of Mark 5:12, for instance, when the demons plead to go into the herd of swine. Some versions translate the second part of their plea as purpose, “Send us into the pigs *so that* we may enter them” (cf. NASB, HCSB, KJV, ASV), while most modern versions translate it as a command: “Send us into the pigs. *Let us* enter them” (cf. ESV, NIV, NRSV, NET, NAB, NJB). Interestingly, we see precisely the same split between the translations with regard to Titus 3:13, “see that they lack nothing” (command: ESV, NIV, NRSV, NET, NAB, NJB) as opposed to “so that they lack nothing” (purpose-result: NASB, HCSB, KJV, ASV). (See also Rev. 14:13 for similar disagreement between translations).

Understanding how the *hina* construction can indicate a command becomes important for passages such as John 9:3, about the man born blind. Because this verse has *hina* with the subjunctive, we must ask whether it is meant to be a purpose or command clause. It is rendered as a purpose clause in most translations, “He was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him” (NRSV); however, this translation has serious consequences to the meaning of the text because the way it is worded means that the man’s blindness was intentional, so that he could not see for the better part of his life, simply for the purpose of being healed this day—that “God’s works” may be manifest by his healing. Such an interpretation goes against the teaching of Scripture, that God is love (1 John 4:16), does not want to harm his people (Jer. 29:11), or other people (Jer. 18:8), and that it is Satan who is our enemy, the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4) who has the power of death (Heb. 2:14). Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8), his ministry was to heal those oppressed by Satan (Acts 10:38). The Gospels nowhere portray Jesus going around healing people oppressed by God.[[3]](#footnote-31956) Accordingly, a number of scholars agree that John 9:3 should be read as a command clause, “But let the works of God be revealed in him.”[[4]](#footnote-18443)

[For more on *hina* with a verb in the subjunctive mood command clauses wrongly identified as purpose clauses, see commentaries on John 9:3; 13:18.]

1. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 471. [↑](#footnote-ref-14794)
2. Dana and Mantey, *Grammar*, 282-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-31465)
3. See Gregory Boyd, *God at War*, 231-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-31956)
4. Cf. Boyd, *God at War*, 231-34. Boyd also notes M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, 141-42; C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek*, 144-45; Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*, 145ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-18443)