



Review of Terms used for God the Father (Old Testament)

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If you have any questions or comments about this guide, please email us at:
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Introduction

Statement of purpose

It is the commitment of Wycliffe Associates to support only Bible translations that use accurate and literal common language terms for “Father” and “Son” when referring to God and Jesus.

The purpose of this guide is to help the church review their Bible translation to check that all instances of the word “Father” that refer to God are translated correctly.

About this review guide

This document provides a table showing every instance of “Father” in the Old Testament that refers to God the Father. Reviewers will check each instance in their translation and record what word was used to translate “Father.”

Different meanings for the word “father”

The word “father” has several meanings in the Old Testament.

1. Biological, male parent

- When used literally, the term "father" refers to a person's male parent.
- Example:
 - Genesis 2:24, “a man will leave his father”
 - Genesis 22:7, “Isaac spoke to Abraham his father”

2. Ancestor

- The terms "father" and "forefather" are often used to refer to a male ancestor of a certain person or people group. This could also be translated as "ancestor" or "ancestral father."
- Example:
 - Ezekiel 20:36, “As I judged your fathers in the wilderness”
 - Zechariah 1:4, “Do not be like your fathers”

3. Someone older

- “Father” is sometimes used as a polite way of referring to an older man.
- Example:
 - 1 Samuel 24:11, “See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand”
 - 2 Kings 2:12, “My father! My father!”

4. God the Father of the Israelites

- The term "father" sometimes refers to Yahweh, the one true God. God is called the father of his covenant people. In the Old Testament his covenant people were the Israelites.
- Example:
 - Deuteronomy 32:6, "Is he not your father, the one who has created you?"
 - Jeremiah 31:9, "I will be a father to Israel"

5. God the Father of a person

- The term "Father" is used to describe God's relationship with a person.
- Sometimes "Father" is used to describe God's relationship with a person like Solomon or some other king who descended from David.
- Sometimes "Father" is used in a prophecy to describe God's relationship that he would have with the Messiah.
- In these verses "Father" may refer to God being the Father of both the Messiah and another person. For example, in 2 Samuel 7:14, God said he would be a Father to David's son, Solomon. It is also a prophecy that refers to God being the Father of the Messiah, who would be born at a later time.
 - 1 Chronicles 22:10, "He will be my son, and I will be his Father"
 - 1 Chronicles 28:6, "Solomon ... I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his Father"

Translating the word "Father"

When referring to God as "Father" it is important that translators use the same word for "Father" as they do when referring to a biological, male parent. As stated above, the word "father" means something different in each case; that is, God did not father the Messiah or any other person in the way that a human male fathers a child. However, God has chosen to use the word "Father" to reveal himself and his character. It is the responsibility of Christian preachers and teachers to explain to their churches the meaning of "God the Father."

“God the Father” terms table

How to use the terms table

This section has every instance in the Old Testament that refers to God as “Father.” As reviewers read through their Bible, they may notice that there are verses with the word “father” that are not in this list. In those verses the word “father” has a different meaning than what is being reviewed here. The purpose of this review is to check the word “Father” only when it refers to God.

The first column in the table includes the verse reference.

The second column includes the Hebrew text. The word for “Father” is in bold letters. The purpose of including the Hebrew is to give a reference for those who can read Hebrew and also to demonstrate that the decision of Wycliffe Associate to use the word “Father” is supported by the original language.

The third column includes the text from the ULB with the word “Father” in bold letters. Usually the complete text of the verse is not included. The phrase that includes “Father” is included. If it is hard to understand the text included in the chart, refer to the source text used for the translation.

The fourth column is for recording how “Father” was translated in each verse of the Bible you are reviewing.

The fifth column is for comments and questions. For each verse, ask the following questions. If the answer is “no” to any of them, write about it in the fifth column. Also if there are questions or issues to discuss with the reviewers, write them in this column.

- In this verse, does the word used in your translation for “Father” normally refer to a literal, biological, male parent?
- In this verse, is this the same word for “Father” that was used in previous passages?
- If it is not the same word, does it also normally refer to a literal, biological, male parent?
- If your language has a way of showing that your word for “Father” refers to God (for example, in English the word “father” is capitalized when it refers to God), has this been done in this verse?
- If you fill this document out on a computer, and you want to write about a verse in the comment section, put your cursor in the comment section. Then hit the ENTER key on your keyboard until the cursor is next to the verse you want to write about. Also, write the verse reference with your comment.

Example of a terms table that has been filled in:

Verse reference	Hebrew	English	Your language	Comments
Deuteronomy 32:6	אָבִיר	Your Father	Dad	17:13 This word is different. Do we need it?
2 Samuel 7:14	לֵאב	A Father	Dad	
1 Chronicles 17:13	לֵאב	Like a Father	Papa	
1 Chronicles 22:10	וְאֶנִּי־לִי לֵאב	I will be his Father	Pops	22:10 I do not think this is appropriate

Terms Table

Verse reference	Hebrew	English	Your language ¹	Comments
Deuteronomy 32:6	אָבִיךָ	Your Father		
2 Samuel 7:14	לְאָב	be a Father		
1 Chronicles 17:13	לְאָב	be a Father		
1 Chronicles 22:10	וְאֶנִּי־לּוֹ לְאָב	I will be his Father		
1 Chronicles 28:6	אֶהְיֶה לּוֹ לְאָב:	I will be his Father		
Psalms 2:7	יִלְדִּיתִיךָ: This word in bold means “I have begotten you” and “I” refers to God the Father.	I have become your Father		
Psalms 68:5	אָבִי תוֹמִים	A Father of the fatherless		
Psalms 89:26	יִקְרָאֵנִי אָבִי אֶתְּה אֱלֹהִי	He will call out to me, 'You are my Father , my God,		
Isaiah 63:16	יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	you, Yahweh, are our Father		

¹ Please look at each verse in the Bible you are reviewing and write how “Father” was translated.

Verse reference	Hebrew	English	Your language	Comments
Isaiah 64:8	יְהוָה אֲבִינוֹ אֶתָּה	Yahweh, you are our Father		
Jeremiah 3:4	אָבִי אֱלֹהִים נַעַרִי אֶתָּה:	'My Father ! My closest friend even from my youth!		
Jeremiah 3:19	אָבִי	my Father		
Jeremiah 31:9	הָיִיתִי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְאָב	I will be a Father to Israel		
Malachi 1:6	וְאִם־אָב אֲנִי אֵינִי כְבוֹדִי	If I, then, am a Father , where is my honor?		
Malachi 2:10	הֲלֹא אָב אֶחָד לְכֻלָּנוּ	Is there not one Father for us all?		