



Review of terms used for the Son of God (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 “son” that refer to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, are translated correctly.

About this review guide

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

Different meanings for the word “son”

The word “son” has several meanings in the Old Testament. Here is a list of the most common definitions and examples of each.

1. Biological, male offspring

- The male offspring of a man and a woman is called their "son."
- Examples:
 - Genesis 4:17, “he named it after his son Enoch”
 - 1 Chronicles 1:4, “The sons of Noah were Shem, Ham, and Japheth”

2. Descendant

- "Son" was often used figuratively in the Bible to refer to any male descendant, such as a grandson or great-grandson. It may also refer to an entire nation that descended from someone. When used of a whole group of people it also refers to the women of that group.
- Examples:
 - Judges 20:19, “sons of Israel”
 - Malachi 3:3, “sons of Levi”

3. Someone younger

- “Son” is sometimes used as a kind way of referring to a boy or man who is younger than the speaker.
- Example:
 - 1 Samuel 3:6, “I did not call you, my son”

4. Angels

- “Sons of God” is sometimes used to refer to angels or other spiritual beings.
- Examples:
 - Job 1:6, “the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh”
 - Psalm 29:1, “you sons of God”

5. One who displays a characteristic

- Sometimes the words “son of” are used in a figure of speech to talk about someone having a particular characteristic. So “sons of pride” refers to people who are prideful, and “sons of wickedness” refers to people who are wicked. This can be used for a mixed group--both males and females.
- Examples:
 - Job 41:34, “sons of pride”
 - Psalm 89:22, “son of wickedness”

6. Human

- The words “son of man” are used to refer to a human.
- Examples:
 - Job 35:8, “your righteousness might benefit another son of man”
 - Ezekiel 2:1, “Son of man, stand up on your feet”

7. The nation of Israel

- In the Old Testament, the word “son” is used to refer to the nation of Israel as the son of God. In this case “son” refers to both male and female Israelites.
- This use of the term speaks of a relationship with God that is like the relationship between a human son and his father, with all the privileges associated with being sons.
- Example:
 - Exodus 4:22, “Israel is my firstborn son”

8. The Messiah

- There are many verses in the Old Testament that are prophecies about the Messiah. In some of these verses the Messiah is referred to as “son” of God.
- In these verses “son” may refer to both the Messiah and to someone else. For example, in 2 Samuel 7:14 refers both to David’s son, Solomon, and to the Messiah, who would be born at a later time.
- Examples:
 - Psalm 2:7, “You are my son”
 - Isaiah 9:6, “to us a son is given”

Translating the word “son”

The New Testament teaches that Jesus is the Messiah or the Christ that was prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. New Testament writers sometimes used Old Testament verses to show this (Matthew 2:15; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5).

When “son” refers to the Messiah in the Old Testament, it is important that translators use the same word for “son” as they do when referring to a biological, male offspring. As stated above, the word “son” means something different in each case; that is, Jesus is not a son born from God the Father in the same way that a human son is born from a human father. However, when God revealed Jesus to the world, he did so by calling Jesus his Son. It is the responsibility of Christian preachers and teachers to explain to their churches the meaning of “Son of God.”

“Son of God” Terms Table

How to use the Terms Table

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

The first column in the table includes the verse reference.

The second column includes the Hebrew text. The word for “son” 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 “son” is supported by the original language.

The third column includes the text from the ULB with the word “son” in bold letters. Usually the complete text of the verse is not included. The phrase that includes “son” 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 “son” 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 “son” normally refer to a literal, biological, male born to literal biological parents?
- In this verse, is this the same word for “son” that was used in previous passages?
- If it is not the same word, does it also normally refer to a literal, biological, male born to literal biological parents?
- 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:

Verse reference	Hebrew	English	Your language	Comments
2 Samuel 7:14	אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָּאָב וְהוּא יִהְיֶה לִּי לְבֵן	I will be to him a father, and he will be my son .	son	<p>2:7 Does not specify a male</p> <p>2:12 does not specify "son"</p>
Psalms 2:7	יְהוָה אָמַר אֵלַי בְּנִי אַתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יָלַדְתִּיךָ	Yahweh said to me, "You are my son ; today I have begotten you."	child	
Psalms 2:12	נִשְׁקוּ-בֶן	Kiss the son .	boy	
Isaiah 9:6	כִּי-יֵלֵד יֶלֶד-לָנוּ בֶן נָתַן-לָנוּ	For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;	son	

Terms Table

Verse reference	Hebrew	English	Your language ¹	Comments
2 Samuel 7:14	אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה-לּוֹ לְאָב וְהוּא יֶהְיֶה-לִּי לְבֵן	I will be to him a father, and he will be my son .		
Psalms 2:7	יְהוָה אָמַר אֵלַי בְּנִי אַתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדָּתִיךָ	Yahweh said to me, "You are my son ; today I have begotten you."		
Psalms 2:12	נִשְׁקוּ-בֶן	Kiss the son .		
Psalms 89:27	אֶף-אֲנִי בְּקֹר אֶתְנֶהוּ עָלָיו לְמַלְכֵי-אֶרֶץ: The word בְּקֹר means "firstborn." This refers to the firstborn son.	I also will place him as my firstborn son , the most exalted of the kings of the earth.		
Isaiah 9:6	כִּי-יֵלֵד יִלְד-לָנוּ בֶּן נָתַן-לָנוּ	For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;		
Ezekiel 21:10	שֹׁבֵט בְּנִי מֵאֶסֶת כָּל-עֵץ:	The scepter of my son you have rejected, despising every tree.		

¹ Please look at each verse in the Bible you are reviewing and write how "son" was translated.

Verse reference	Hebrew	English	Your language	Comment
Hosea 11:1	וּמִמִּצְרָיִם קָרָאתִי לְבִנִּי	I called my son out of Egypt		