

## 2 Samuel 7:14 in Hebrews 1:5b

Why did the writer of the letter to the Hebrews quote only part of a verse?

Hebrews 1:5 NASB	2 Samuel 7:14 NASB	
For to which of the angels did He ever say,		
"YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"?		
And again,		
<b>"I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"?</b>	<b>I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me;</b>	
	when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,	

The first part of the verse can clearly be interpreted as Messianic, as the writer to the Hebrews must have intended: "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me;..."

The second part of the verse is problematic (to say the least) to a Messianic interpretation: "...when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men."

Why did the writer use only half of the statement (recognizing the verse numbering is irrelevant to the question)? What does that say about his inspired hermeneutic? What does that say about the hermeneutic we use?

### Comparing Translations<sup>1</sup>

Of the fifty-plus translations available on [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) thirty-two translate the verse similar to NASB using the word "when" (e.g., CSB, ESV, NIV (2011), RSV).

I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; **when** he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men (NASB)

Fifteen of the translations follow KJV using the word "if" (GNV, NKJV, NLT, WYC):

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/2%20Samuel%207:14>

I will be his father, and he shall be my son. **If** he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: (KJV)

Clearly, translators were divided on the exact meaning of the Hebrew word used. The listing of the range of ways the word is translated in a single version (NASB) demonstrates why there could be some differences of opinion in a given context:

**asher: who, which, that**

**Original Word:** אֲשֶׁר

**Part of Speech:** particle of relation; connecting link; conjunction; adverb; conjunction; adverb; conjunction; conjunction; relative particle; pronoun; conjunction

**NASB Translation**

although (1), anyone (1), because (45), because\* (73), before\* (3), concerning\* (1), deadly\* (1), everything\* (2), everywhere\* (2), how (24), how\* (6), **if (8)**, inasmuch (1), inasmuch\* (2), just (1), just\* (6), much (1), powder\* (1), reason (1), set (1), since (3), since\* (5), so (9), so\* (1), steward\* (4), storehouses (1), such (8), such\* (2), than\* (1), therefore (1), these (2), this (1), though\* (1), unless\* (1), until\* (35), what (166), what\* (8), whatever (16), whatever\* (40), **when (44)**, when\* (1), whenever (1), where (49), where you how (1), where\* (136), whereas\* (1), whereby (1), wherein (1), wherever (4), wherever\* (27), which (1925), which he and how (1), which\* (1), whichever (1), while (1), while those who (1), who (1), who (850), whoever (4), whoever\* (13), whom (345), whom\* (1), whomever (1), whomever\* (3), whose (80), whose remains when (1), why (2).

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/834.htm>

## The Septuagint Text

The text of the Jewish Scriptures in common use in the first-century world of Roman occupation and Hellenistic influence was the Septuagint (abbreviated LXX), a Greek translation of the Old Testament. “There is a very general agreement that the author (of Hebrews) drew his quotations not directly from a Hebrew text, but from the LXX.”<sup>2</sup> With that factor in mind, it might be helpful to look at the LXX text that the author probably used. How did the LXX translators understand 2 Samuel 7:14?

The Greek text in the LXX for 2 Samuel 7:14 follows:

ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν· καὶ **ἐάν** ἔλθῃ  
[*subjunctive aorist*] ἀδικία αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλέγξω [*indicative future*] αὐτὸν ἐν  
ράβδῳ ἀνδρῶν καὶ ἐν ἀφαῖς υἱῶν ἀνθρώπων<sup>3</sup>

The point of interest in the text is the highlighted word ἐάν (*ean*, “if”).

New Testament Greek has at least two words usually translated “if” in English versions.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 37.

<sup>3</sup> LXX text from [https://biblehub.com/sepd/2\\_samuel/7.htm](https://biblehub.com/sepd/2_samuel/7.htm);  
parsing from [https://studybible.info/LXX\\_WH/2%20Samuel%207](https://studybible.info/LXX_WH/2%20Samuel%207)

- The more common word (ἐἰ, *ei*, 502x) is most often translated “if” with the sense of “a condition of fact”<sup>4</sup> Grammatical structure and context determine the appropriate translation.
- The other word (ἐάν, *ean*, 350x) is also typically translated “if” but with a sense of uncertainty.<sup>5</sup>

The translators of the Septuagint (not necessarily inspired by the Holy Spirit but still under God’s Providence) chose to use the Greek word implying uncertainty in their version of the 2 Samuel passage. Their choice would seem to support the English versions using “if” rather than “when.”

Perhaps the uncertainty or ambiguity supports the dual-understanding. David and his mortal heirs certainly would “commit iniquity” and would be disciplined by God. The ultimate heir, Jesus, the incarnate Son, would not. Therefore the writer of the letter to the Hebrews inspired by the Holy Spirit and using that Greek version truncated the verse at that point. He selected the clearly Messianic portion of the prophetic verse but omitted the condition that would not apply to the Messiah.

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<sup>4</sup> William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1999), 330.

<sup>5</sup> H.E.Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1927), 290.

## NOTES:

I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; **when** he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men...

2 Samuel 7:14 (NASB)

I shall be to him into a father, and he shall be to me into a son; and **if** he shall do anything wickedly, I shall chastise him in the rod of men, and in the wounds of the sons of men.

Wycliffe

ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν· καὶ **ἐὰν** ἔλθῃ [*subjunctive aorist*] ἀδικία αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλέγξω [*indicative future*] αὐτὸν ἐν ῥάβδῳ ἀνδρῶν καὶ ἐν ἀφαῖς υἱῶν ἀνθρώπων,

LXX, [https://biblehub.com/sepd/2\\_samuel/7.htm](https://biblehub.com/sepd/2_samuel/7.htm);

parsing from [https://studybible.info/LXX\\_WH/2%20Samuel%207](https://studybible.info/LXX_WH/2%20Samuel%207)

אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לּוֹ לְאָב וְהוּא יִהְיֶה לִּי לְבֵן אֲשֶׁר בְּתַעֲוֹתָיו וְהִכַּחֲתִיר בְּשִׁבְטֵי אַנְשֵׁים וּבִנְגָעַי בְּגִי אָדָם:  
The Westminster Leningrad Codex

834 [e] 'ā-šer אֲשֶׁר If Pro-r	1121 [e] lə-bên; לְבֵן son Prep-l   N-ms	li לִי My Prep   1cs	1961 [e] yih-yeh- יִהְיֶה shall be V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	1931 [e] wə-hū וְהוּא and he Conj-w   Pro-3ms	1 [e] lə-'āb, לְאָב Father Prep-l   N-ms	lōw לוֹ his Prep   3ms	1961 [e] 'eh-yeh- אֶהְיֶה will be V-Qal-Imperf-1cs	589 [e] 'ā-nī אֲנִי I Pro-1cs
120 [e] 'ā-dām. אָדָם of men N-ms	1121 [e] bə-nê בְּנֵי of the sons N-mpc	5061 [e] ū-bə-niḡ-'ê וּבִנְגָעַי and with the blows Conj-w, Prep-b   N-mpc	376 [e] 'ā-nā-šim, אַנְשֵׁים of men N-mp	7626 [e] bə-šē-bet בְּשִׁבְטֵי with the rod Prep-b   N-msc	3198 [e] wə-hō-kaḥ-tiw וְהִכַּחֲתִיר and I will chasten him Conj-w   V-Hifil-ConjPerf-1cs   3ms	5753 [e] bə-ha-'ā-wō-tōw, בְּתַעֲוֹתָיו he commits iniquity Prep-b   V-Hifil-Inf   3ms		

[https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2\\_samuel/7-14.htm](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_samuel/7-14.htm)

asher: who, which, that

**Original Word:** אֲשֶׁר

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### NASB Translation

although (1), anyone (1), because (45), because\* (73), before\* (3), concerning\* (1), deadly\* (1), everything\* (2), everywhere\* (2), how (24), how\* (6), **if** (8), inasmuch (1), inasmuch\* (2), just (1), just\* (6), much (1), powder\* (1), reason (1), set (1), since (3), since\* (5), so (9), so\* (1), steward\* (4), storehouses (1), such (8), such\* (2), than\* (1), therefore (1), these (2), this (1), though\* (1), unless\* (1), until\* (35), what (166), what\* (8), whatever (16), whatever\* (40), **when** (44), when\* (1), whenever (1), where (49), where you how (1), where\* (136), whereas\* (1), whereby (1), wherein (1), wherever (4), wherever\* (27), which (1925), which he and how (1), which\* (1), whichever (1), while (1), while those who (1), who (1), who (850), whoever (4), whoever\* (13),

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whom (345), whom\* (1), whomever (1), whomever\* (3), whose (80), whose remains when (1), why (2).

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/834.htm>

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<sup>11</sup> When your days are fulfilled that you must go *to be* with your fathers, that I will set up *one* of your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>12</sup> He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.

1 Chronicles 11:12 (NASB)

וְהָיָה כִּי־מָלְאוּ יָמָיו לָלֶכֶת עִם־אֲבֹתָיו וְהָקִימוֹתִי אֶת־יֹרְעָדְךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה מִבְּנֶיךָ וְהָקִינוֹתִי אֶת־מַלְכוּתוֹ:

<sup>12</sup> הוּא יִבְנֶה־לִּי בַּיִת וְכִנֵּנְתִּי אֶת־כִּסְאוֹ עַד־עוֹלָם:

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