

Resource: Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

Aquifer Open Bible Dictionary

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Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

A

Aaron, Aaron's Rod, Aaronites, Ab, Abaddon, Abagtha, Abana, Abarim, Abba, Abda, Abdeel, Abdi, Abdiel, Abdon (Person), Abdon (Place), Abednego, Abel (Person), Abel (Place), Abel-beth-maacah (Maachah), Abel-keramim, Abel-maim, Abel-meholah, Abel-mizraim, Abel-shittim, Abez, Abi, Abi-albon, Abia, Abiah, Abiasaph, Abiathar, Abib, Abida, Abidan, Abiel, Abiezer, Abiezrite, Abigail, Abigal, Abihail, Abihu, Abihud, Abijah, Abijam, Abilene, Abimael, Abimelech, Abinadab, Abinoam, Abiram, Abishag, Abishai, Abishalom, Abishua, Abishur, Abital, Abitub, Abiud, Abner, Abomination, Abraham, Abram, Abron, Abronah, Absalom, Abubus, Abyss, Acacia, Acanthus, Achor, Accad, Accho, Acco, Accos, Aceldama, Achaia, Achaicus, Achan, Achar, Achaz, Achbor, Achim, Achior, Achish, Achmetha, Achor, Achsa, Achsah, Achshaph, Achzib, Acra, Acraba, Acre, Acrocorinth, Acropolis, Acrostic, Acsah, Acshaph, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Andrew and Matthias, Acts of Andrew and Paul, Acts of Barnabas, Acts of Bartholomew, Acts of Paul and Thecla, Acts of Pilate, Acts of Thaddeus, Acts of Thomas, Aczib, Adadah, Adah, Adaiah, Adalia, Adam (Person), Adam (Place), Adam, the Second, Adamah, Adami, Adami-Nekeb, Adar (Month), Adar (Place), Adasa, Addan, Addar (Person), Addar (Place), Adder, Addi, Addon, Addus, Ader, Adida, Adiel, Adin, Adina, Adino, Adithaim, Adlai, Admah, Admatha, Admin, Adna, Adnah, Adonai, Adoni-Bezek, Adoni-Zedek, Adonijah, Adonikam, Adoniram, Adoption, Adoraim, Adoram, Adrammelech, Adramyttium, Adria, Adriel, Aduel, Adullam, Adullamite, Adultery, Adummim, Advent of Christ, Adversary, Advocate, Aegean Sea, Aeneas, Aenon, Aeon, Aesora, Affliction, Agabus, Agag, Agagite, Agape, Agate, Age, Agee, Agia, Agora, Agriculture, Agrippa, Ague, Agur, Ahab, Aharah, Aharhel, Ahasai, Ahasbai, Ahasuerus, Ahava, Ahaz, Ahaziah, Ahban, Aher, Ahi, Ahiah, Ahiam, Ahian, Ahiezer, Ahihud, Ahijah, Ahikam, Ahilud, Ahimaaz, Ahiman, Ahimelech, Ahimoth, Ahinadab, Ahinoam, Ahio, Ahira, Ahiram, Ahiramite, Ahisamach, Ahishahar, 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Antiochians, Antiochis, Antiochus IV, Antiochus V, Antiochus VII, Antipas, Antipater, Antipatris, Antitype, Antothijah, Antothite, Anub, Apame, Ape, Apelles, Aphairema, Apharsachites, Apharsathchites, Apharsites, Apek, Apekah, Aphiah, Aphik, Aphrah, Aphses, Apocalypse, Apocalypse of Abraham, Apocalypse of Adam, Apocalypse of Bartholomew, Apocalypse of Baruch, Apocalypse of James, Apocalypse of Paul, Apocalypses, Apocalyptic, Apocalyptic Apocrypha, Apocrypha, Apocryphal Acts, Apocryphal Epistles, Apocryphal Ezekiel, Apocryphal Gospels, Apollonia, Apollonius, Apollophanes, Apollos, Apollyon, Apostasy, Apostle, Apostleship, Apostolic History of Abdias, Apothecary, Apothegm, Appaim, Appeal, Appearances of Christ, Apphia, Apphus, Appian Way, Apple, Apple Tree, Apricot, Aqueduct, Aquila, Ar, Ara, Arab, Arabah, Arabia, Arabs, Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, Arabic History of Joseph the Carpenter, Arad (Person), Arad (Place), Aradus, Arah, Aram (Person), Aram (Place), Aram of Damascus, Aram-Geshur, Aram-maacah (Maachah), Aram-Naharaim, Aram-Zobah, Aramaic, Arameans, Aran, Ararat, Aratus, Araunah, Arba, Arbathite, Arbatta, Arbela, Arbite, Arch, Archaeology and the Bible, Archangel,

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Aaron

Moses's brother and Israel's first high priest. He was Moses's representative and helper during Israel's exodus from Egypt.

Aaron's Early Life and Family

Aaron was three years older than Moses and was 83 when they first approached the pharaoh ([Exodus 7:7](#)). Their sister, Miriam ([Numbers 26:59](#)), was the eldest, old enough to send messages when the infant Moses was found by the pharaoh's daughter ([Exodus 2:1-9](#)). Aaron's parents were Jochebed and Amram, who belonged to the Kohath family within the tribe of Levi ([Exodus 6:18-20](#)).

Aaron and his wife, Elisheba, had four sons ([Exodus 6:23](#)), who were to follow him as priests ([Leviticus 1:5](#)). Two of them, Nadab and Abihu, disobeyed God by performing an improper act while burning incense and were killed by fire as a result ([Leviticus 10:1-5](#)). The priesthood continued through Aaron's other two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, who also occasionally failed to follow God's instructions correctly ([Leviticus 10:6-20](#)).

Important Events in Aaron's Life

The Exodus from Egypt

Aaron's importance during the exodus was partly due to his relationship with Moses. When Moses tried to avoid leading Israel because of a speech impediment, God chose Aaron, who was a skilled speaker, to assist him ([Exodus 4:10-16](#)).

Aaron was born while the Hebrews were enslaved in Egypt. Moses, raised as an Egyptian by the pharaoh's daughter, fled to the Midian Desert after killing an Egyptian taskmaster ([Exodus 1-2](#)). When God sent Moses back to Egypt to free the Israelites ([Exodus 3-4](#)), Aaron was sent to meet him in the desert ([Exodus 4:27](#)). Since Moses had been away for many years, Aaron connected with Israel's elders on Moses' behalf ([Exodus 4:29-31](#)). Together, they confronted the pharaoh, delivering God's command to release the Israelites ([Exodus 5:1](#)). When the pharaoh made life harder for the Hebrew slaves, God began to demonstrate his power through a series of miracles ([Exodus 5-12](#)). Aaron, using a rod (likely a shepherd's staff), performed the first three miracles. After a plague of gnats (sometimes translated as "lice") affected all of Egypt, the pharaoh's magicians admitted defeat, saying, "This is the finger of God!" ([Exodus 8:19](#)). God then brought further plagues through Moses, leading to the death of all firstborn Egyptian sons. Aaron was with Moses ([Exodus 12:1-28](#)) when God

revealed the Passover, where the marked homes of the Israelites were spared from death. This event is the origin of the Passover feast still celebrated by Jews today ([Exodus 13:1-16](#)).

Wandering in the Wilderness

After God safely led the Israelites out of Egypt and destroyed the pursuing Egyptians, Aaron helped Moses govern the people during their long journey to the promised land ([Exodus 16:1-6](#)). In a battle against Amalek's army, Aaron supported Moses by holding up his weary arms in prayer, ensuring God's blessing ([Exodus 17:8-16](#)). Although Aaron was always second to Moses, he was recognized as an important leader ([Exodus 18:12](#)). God called Aaron to join Moses when he gave the law on Mount Sinai ([Exodus 19:24](#)). Aaron was among the leaders who confirmed God's laws in the Book of the Covenant ([Exodus 24:1-8](#)). He accompanied these leaders partially up the holy mountain and saw a vision of the God of Israel ([Exodus 24:9-10](#)). Along with Hur, Aaron was left in charge while Moses was with God on the mountaintop ([Exodus 24:13-14](#)).

When Moses was away for over a month, Aaron gave in to the people's demand for an idol. He melted their gold jewelry and made a golden calf ([Exodus 32:1-4](#)). (The Israelites may have been influenced by Egypt's worship of Apis, a fertility god in the form of a bull.) At first, Aaron seemed to think he was doing something acceptable to God ([Exodus 32:5](#)). Still, things quickly got out of control, leading to a wild, immoral celebration around the idol ([Exodus 32:6](#)). God was so angry that he considered destroying the people. Still, Moses interceded, reminding God of his promise to Abraham ([Exodus 32:7-14](#)). Moses confronted Aaron about idolatry and immorality, but Aaron blamed the people instead of admitting his guilt ([Exodus 32:21-24](#)). The idolaters were punished by death ([Exodus 32:25-28](#)), and the entire camp was struck by a plague ([Exodus 32:35](#)). Although Aaron was in great danger, he was spared because Moses prayed for him ([Deuteronomy 9:20](#)).

In their second year of wandering, Aaron assisted Moses in taking a census ([Numbers 1:1-3, 17-18](#)). Later, Aaron may have become jealous of Moses's leadership, as both he and Miriam began to speak against their brother, even though Moses was now the most humble man on earth ([Numbers 12:1-4](#)). Moses's prayer turned away God's anger, but Miriam suffered for her actions ([Numbers 12:5-15](#)). Once again, Aaron was not punished. Aaron

also supported Moses against rebellions at Kadesh ([Numbers 14:1-5](#)) and later in the wilderness ([Numbers 16](#)). After a final incident at Meribah, where the Israelites almost rebelled again, God accused Moses and Aaron of not trusting him fully and denied them entry into the promised land ([Numbers 20:1-12](#)). Aaron died at the age of 123 on Mount Hor after Moses removed his priestly clothes and gave them to Aaron's son Eleazar ([Numbers 20:23-29; 33:38-39](#)).

See also Israel, History of; Exodus, The; Wilderness Wanderings; Priests and Levites; Levi, Tribe of; Aaron's Rod.

Aaron's Rod

A staff belonging to Aaron, the brother of Moses. It symbolizes the authority of Moses and Aaron in Israel.

When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, some people led by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram argued against Moses and Aaron's leadership ([Numbers 16:1-40](#)). God punished these rebels, but the other Israelites blamed Moses and Aaron for their deaths ([16:41](#)).

To show everyone that God chose Moses and Aaron as leaders, God told Moses to do something special. The Lord told Moses to collect a wooden rod from each tribe and have the leader of the tribe write his name on it. Aaron was told to write his name on the rod of Levi. The rods were placed in the inner room of the tabernacle, in front of the ark (of the covenant).

In the morning, Aaron's rod had sprouted blossoms and had produced ripe almonds. Aaron's rod was kept in the tabernacle to remind the Israelites that God chose Aaron and Moses as leaders ([Numbers 17:1-11](#); compare [Hebrews 9:4](#)).

After that, the people of Israel entered the Wilderness of Zin, but there was no water for them and their flocks. Again the people argued with Moses and Aaron. The Lord told Moses to get Aaron's rod and, in front of Aaron and the rest of the people, command a particular rock to bring forth water.

Moses got angry and said, "Listen now, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" ([Numbers 20:10](#)). Then he hit the rock twice with the rod. Water came out and the people drank.

Yet Moses and Aaron were forbidden to enter the land God promised to Abraham's descendants. This was because they did not honor God properly in front of the people ([Numbers 20:12–13](#)). An earlier event had shown that God was able to provide water from a rock in a similar way ([Exodus 17:1–7](#)).

See also Aaron.

Aaronites

The collective name for the priests who descended from Aaron through his sons Eleazar and Ithamar. Aaron was the brother of Moses and the first high priest of Israel.

The term is used twice in the King James Version to refer to the 3,700 men who supported David against Saul ([1 Chronicles 12:27](#)) and of whom Zadok later became leader ([1 Chronicles 27:17](#)). Both “house of Aaron” ([Psalms 115:10, 12; 118:3; 135:19](#)) and “Aaron” ([1 Chronicles 27:17](#)) are used to refer to the Aaronites.

See also Aaron.

Ab

A month in the Hebrew calendar. It is the time around the middle of July to the middle of August in our modern calendar. *See* Calendars, Ancient and Modern.

Abaddon

A Hebrew word that means “place of destruction.” It appears six times in the Old Testament, usually referring to the place where people go after they die ([Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Psalm 88:11; Proverbs 15:11; 27:20](#)).

Abaddon means the same thing as Sheol (the underworld or realm of the dead). Some Bible translations use words like “hell,” “death,” “the grave,” or “destruction” instead of Abaddon.

The same Hebrew word appears once in the New Testament in its Greek form, Apollyon ([Revelation 9:11](#)). In this verse, the idea of destruction is shown as a person called the “angel of the Abyss [the bottomless pit].” Because of this, some translations use the word “destroyer” instead of Abaddon.

In the book of Revelation, John has a vision where Abaddon (or Apollyon) is described as the angel ruling over the place of the dead. This angel appears after the fifth trumpet sounds ([Revelation 9:1](#)).

See also Sheol.

Abagtha

One of the seven eunuchs (officers in the king's court) commanded by King Ahasuerus to bring Queen Vashti to his drunken party ([Esther 1:10](#)).

Abana

A river that runs through the city of Damascus in Syria. Today, it is called the Barada River.

Naaman thought the Abana River would be better for healing his leprosy than the Jordan River. However, he decided to obey the prophet Elisha. He washed in the Jordan River and was cured of his leprosy ([2 Kings 5:9–14](#)).

Abana is called “Amana” in [2 Kings 5:12](#).

See also Amana.

Abarim

A mountainous area located east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. It stretches northward from the flat lands of Moab.

The highest point on Mount Nebo is in Abarim. It is called Pisgah. It is 2,643 feet (805 meters) high.

Moses looked into the promised land from Pisgah shortly before he died ([Deuteronomy 32:48–50; 34:1–6](#)).

Abba

Aramaic word for “father,” which is applied to God in [Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15](#); and [Galatians 4:6](#). The name expresses a very intimate and inseparable relationship between Christ and the Father, and between believers (as children) and God (as Father).

Abda

1. Adoniram's father. Adoniram was in charge of forced labour under King Solomon ([1 Kings 4:6](#)).
2. Shammua's son. He was a Levite leader in Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 11:17](#)). In 1 Chronicles, their names are given as Shemaiah and Obadiah ([1 Chronicles 9:16](#)).

Abdeel

Shelemiah's father. Shelemiah was an officer sent by King Jehoiakim of Judah to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch after the king had read and burned their prophetic scroll ([Jeremiah 36:26](#)).

Abdi

1. A member of the Merari clan of Levites. Abdi's grandson Ethan was a musician during King David's time ([1 Chronicles 6:44](#); [15:17](#)).
2. A Levite whose son Kish served during King Hezekiah's time ([2 Chronicles 29:12](#)). This Abdi has sometimes been confused with Abdi #1.
3. A member of the Elam clan in Ezra's time. He married a non-Israelite woman after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 10:26](#)).

Abdiel

Guni's son and the father of Ahi ([1 Chronicles 5:15](#)). Ahi was a clan leader in Gad's tribe during the reigns of King Jotham of Judah and King Jeroboam II of Israel ([1 Chronicles 5:15-17](#)).

Abdon (Person)

1. Hillel's son who judged Israel for eight years ([Judges 12:13-15](#)). He was a very wealthy man. He owned 70 donkeys.
2. Shashak's son from the tribe of Benjamin. He lived in Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 8:23, 28](#)).

3. Jeiel's oldest son from the tribe of Benjamin. He lived in Gibeon. This Abdon is mentioned in Saul's list of ancestors ([1 Chronicles 8:30](#); [9:36](#)).
4. Micah's son ([2 Chronicles 34:20](#)). He is also called Acbor, son of Micaiah. *See* Acbor #2.

Abdon (Place)

One of four cities that the Levites received from Asher's territory after the conquest of Canaan, the land God promised to Abraham's family ([Joshua 21:30](#); [1 Chronicles 6:74](#)). Abdon is probably the same as Ebron ([Joshua 19:28](#)). Today, Abdon is called Khirbet 'Abdeh.

Abednego

One of Daniel's three friends who was sentenced to death by Nebuchadnezzar but was protected in the fiery furnace by an angel ([Daniel 1:7](#); [3:12-30](#)).

See Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Daniel, Additions to (Prayer of Azariah).

Abel (Person)

The second male child of Adam and Eve ([Genesis 4:2](#)). His name probably comes from old Sumerian and Akkadian words that mean "son." "Abel" was used as a general term for all humans.

Abel's older brother, Cain, was a farmer, but Abel was a shepherd. When both brothers brought offerings, God accepted Abel's animal sacrifice but rejected Cain's vegetable offering. Because of this, Cain became jealous of Abel and killed him.

The Bible story suggests that Abel had better character, which is why God blessed his offering and not Cain's ([Genesis 4:7](#)). The Bible does not say that grain or vegetable offerings were worse than animal offerings for either sin or fellowship sacrifices. Mosaic law allows for either. In the New Testament, Abel is said to be the first person who died because of their faith ([Matthew 23:35](#); [Luke 11:51](#); [Hebrews 11:4](#)).

Abel (Place)

A strong city on the border of upper Galilee in northern Israel.

The leader of King David's army, Joab, chased a man named Sheba to Abel. Sheba was fighting against David. A wise woman from Abel talked with Joab. After their talk, the people of Abel killed Sheba and threw his head over the city wall. Then Joab stopped attacking the city ([2 Samuel 20:13-22](#)).

Later, the city was conquered by the Syrian King Ben-hadad during a war between King Asa of Judah and King Baasha of Israel. When Asa persuaded Ben-hadad to break his agreement with Baasha, Ben-hadad took a large amount of land, including Abel, called Abel-beth-maacah ([1 Kings 15:16-20](#)).

Sometime later, Tiglath-pileser III took Abel-beth-maacah, also called Abel of Beth-maacah, or Abel of Beth-maachah. The people who lived there were taken as prisoners to Assyria ([2 Kings 15:29](#)).

Abel is sometimes called Abel-maim ("meadow of water"). The name shows the city was surrounded by fertile land ([2 Chronicles 16:4](#)). The town has been identified with modern Tell Abil-el-Qamh.

Abel-beth-maacah (Maachah)

Another name for Abel, a fortified city in upper Galilee in [1 Kings 15:20](#) and [2 Kings 15:29](#). *See* Abel (Place).

Abel-keramim

A city taken by Jephthah, the Israelite judge, when he conquered the Ammonites ([Judges 11:33](#)). It was located south of the Jabbok River.

Abel-maim

Another name for Abel, a fortified city in upper Galilee, in [2 Chronicles 16:4](#).

See Abel (Place).

Abel-meholah

The birthplace of the prophet Elisha ([1 Kings 19:16](#)).

Elijah found Elisha in Abel-meholah where he was plowing. He threw his coat over Elisha's shoulders, symbolizing God's call to Elisha to become a prophet ([1 Kings 19:19-21](#)). Earlier, the town is mentioned as one place where the Midianites fled from Gideon's 300 warriors ([Judges 7:22](#)). It is also mentioned in a list of districts set up by King Solomon ([1 Kings 4:12](#)).

Abel-meholah is likely modern-day Khirbet Tell el-Hilu.

Abel-mizraim

An alternate name for Atad, where Jacob's sons stopped during his funeral on the way to Hebron. Abel-mizraim was a place in Canaan ([Genesis 50:11](#)).

See Atad.

Abel-shittim

An alternate name for Shittim, a place on the plains of Moab ([Numbers 33:49](#)).

See Shittim (Place).

Abez

The King James Version spelling of Ebez, a place in the land of Issachar, in [Joshua 19:20](#).

See Ebez.

Abi

A shortened form of Abijah, the name of the mother of Judah's King Hezekiah ([2 Kings 18:2](#)).

See Abijah #4.

Abi-albon

Alternate name of Abiel in [2 Samuel 23:31](#). *See* Abiel #2.

Abia

1. The spelling of Abijam in the King James Version. Abia was Rehoboam's son and king of Judah, in [1 Chronicles 3:10](#) and [Matthew 1:7](#).
See Abijam.
2. The spelling of Abijah in the King James Version ([Luke 1:5](#)).
See Abijah #6.

Abiah

1. The King James Version's translation for Abijah, Samuel's son, in [1 Samuel 8:2](#) and [1 Chronicles 6:28](#).
See Abijah #1.
2. The King James Version's translation of a Hebrew word in [1 Chronicles 2:24](#). The translation makes the word a name, Abiah, the wife of Hezron. Most modern translations, use "his father:" "Caleb went in to Ephrathah, the wife of Hezron his father." The Berean Standard Bible translates it like the King James Version (as a proper name).

The Hebrew text is difficult, with different manuscript traditions preserving variations, which explains the differences between the versions.

3. The King James Version's translation for Abijah, Becher's son, in [1 Chronicles 7:8](#).
See Abijah #5.

Abiasaph

An alternate form of Ebiasaph, a descendant of Korah, in [Exodus 6:24](#).

See Ebiasaph.

Abiathar

One of two high priests during the reign of King David. The other high priest was Zadok, who David appointed after he conquered Jerusalem.

Abiathar's Role During the Reign of King David

Abiathar was the only one who escaped when King Saul ordered the killing of the priests at Nob. The priests of Nob gave food and Goliath's sword to David when he was fleeing from Saul. This earned Saul's hatred ([1 Samuel 21-22](#)). Abiathar brought the ephod (a special priestly garment) to David, which David used to determine the will of God ([1 Samuel 23:6, 9-11; 30:7-8](#)). Abiathar was one of the first of David's supporters. His support was important because he represented the priesthood from the line of Eli.

During the last days of David's reign, his sons fought to become the next king. The main rivals were Adonijah and Solomon. Abiathar, the high priest, and Joab, David's general, both supported Adonijah's claim to the throne ([1 Kings 1:5-7](#)). This was probably because Adonijah was David's oldest living heir. Zadok supported Solomon, who became the king. Since he did not support the new king, Abiathar was banished to Anathoth ([1 Kings 2:26-27](#)). Anathoth was a village about 6.4 kilometers (four miles) northeast of Jerusalem.

Abiathar's relationship with Ahimelech is unclear. Ahimelech could have been Abiathar's father ([1 Samuel 22:20; 23:6](#)). Or, he could have been Abiathar's son ([2 Samuel 8:17; 1 Chronicles 18:16; 24:6](#)). If all these verses are talking about the same Ahimelech, then the names might have been switched around in the later passages.

Abiathar in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Abiathar is mentioned as the high priest when David came to Nob needing food and weapons ([Mark 2:26](#)). However, the Old Testament account says that Ahimelech was the priest at that time ([1 Samuel 21:1-2](#)). The mistake might be from a copyist's error or from the fact that Abiathar's time as a high priest was more notable than Ahimelech's.

Abib

The Canaanite name of the Hebrew month Nisan, about mid-March to mid-April.

See Calendars, Ancient and Modern.

Abida

One of Midian's sons. Midian was Abraham's son by his concubine Keturah ([Genesis 25:2, 4](#); [1 Chronicles 1:33](#)).

Abidan

Gideon's son and the leader of the tribe of Benjamin when the Israelites were wandering in the Sinai wilderness after their escape from Egypt ([Numbers 1:11](#); [2:22](#)). As the leader, he presented his tribe's offering at the dedication of the tabernacle ([Numbers 7:60–65](#)).

Abiel

1. The father of Kish and Ner and grandfather of King Saul, according to [1 Samuel 9:1](#) and [14:51](#). Other lists of ancestors in 1 Chronicles list Ner, instead of Abiel, as Kish's father and Saul's grandfather ([1 Chronicles 8:33](#); [9:39](#)). This confusion is either because of a copyist's error or because Saul may have had two relatives named Ner, a great-grandfather and an uncle.
2. A warrior among David's mighty men who were known as "the thirty" ([1 Chronicles 11:32](#)). He is also called Abi-albon the Arbathite ([2 Samuel 23:31](#)).

Abiezer

1. A descendant of Manasseh ([Joshua 17:1–2](#)). Abiezer's father is not named, but he is listed with the descendants of his mother's brother, Gilead ([1 Chronicles 7:18](#)). In [Numbers 26:30](#), Abiezer's name is shortened to Iezer, and his family is called Iezerites. Gideon was a part of Abiezer's family, and they were the first to respond to his call to fight the Midianites ([Judges 6:34](#)). Abiezer's descendants were called Abiezrites ([Judges 6:11, 24, 34](#); [8:32](#)).
2. A member of the tribe of Benjamin from Anathoth and warrior among David's mighty men, known as "the thirty" ([2 Samuel 23:27](#); [1 Chronicles 11:28](#)). Abiezer was made leader of the ninth division of the army in the rotation system established by David ([1 Chronicles 27:12](#)).

Abiezrite

A member of Abiezer's family ([Judges 6:11, 24, 34](#); [8:32](#)).

See Abiezer #1.

Abigail

1. Nabal's wife, who later became the wife of David ([1 Samuel 25:2-42](#)). Nabal was a wealthy sheep owner whose flocks had been protected by David's men. When David asked Nabal for food in return, Nabal said no. This made David very angry. He took 400 armed men to attack Nabal and his household. Abigail heard what her husband had done. She quickly gathered food and met David on the way. She apologized for her husband's foolish behavior. David thanked God for using Abigail to stop him from doing something wrong. The next morning, Nabal woke up after drinking too much. When he heard what happened, he had a stroke (a sudden illness that affects the brain). He died 10 days later. Abigail then married David and lived with him among the Philistines ([1 Samuel 27:3](#)). Later, she was captured by the Amalekites and rescued by David ([1 Samuel 30:1-19](#)). Abigail went with David to Hebron when he became king of Judah ([2 Samuel 2:2](#)). She bore his second son, Chileab ([2 Samuel 3:3](#)), also called Daniel ([1 Chronicles 3:1](#)).
2. David's sister, who married Jether and gave birth to Amasa ([1 Chronicles 2:16-17](#)). There is some confusion about Abigail's father. In [1 Chronicles 2:13-17](#) she is listed as a daughter of Jesse. However, in [2 Samuel 17:25](#), her father is identified as Nahash. The difference could be because a scribe made an error when copying the text, or Nahash may be another name for Jesse, or the widow of Nahash could have married Jesse.

Abigal

Another way of spelling Abigail, David's sister ([2 Samuel 17:25](#)). See Abigail #2.

Abihail

A name used for both men and women in the Old Testament.

1. Zuriel's father and a leader of the Merari family of Levites during Israel's wandering in the wilderness ([Numbers 3:35](#)).
2. Abishur's wife and mother of Ahban and Molid ([1 Chronicles 2:29](#)).
3. Huri's son, a descendant of Gad, who lived in Gilead and Bashan ([1 Chronicles 5:14](#)).
4. A woman named in [2 Chronicles 11:18](#). Her relationship to King Rehoboam is not clear. In some translations, Abihail seems to be the second wife of Rehoboam. However, only one wife is listed at first. Abihail was probably the mother of Rehoboam's first wife, Mahalath. So, Abihail was a daughter of Eliab, David's eldest brother. She married her cousin Jerimoth, one of David's sons.
5. Esther's father, and uncle of Mordecai ([Esther 2:15](#); [9:29](#)).

Abihu

The second son of Aaron and Elisheba ([Exodus 6:23](#); [Numbers 26:60](#); [1 Chronicles 6:3](#)).

Abihu and his brother Nadab joined Moses, Aaron, and the 70 elders of Israel in worshiping the glory of God on Mount Sinai ([Exodus 24:1-11](#)). The four sons of Aaron were made priests with their father ([Exodus 28:1](#)), but later Abihu and Nadab were burned to death for offering "unauthorized fire" before the Lord ([Leviticus 10:1](#); see also [Numbers 3:2-4](#); [26:61](#); [1 Chronicles 24:1-2](#)).

Abihud

One of Bela's nine sons ([1 Chronicles 8:3](#)). Abihud should not be confused with the Abiud who is

included in the list of Jesus's ancestors in the Gospel of Matthew.

Abijah

1. Samuel's second son. He and his older brother, Joel, were corrupt judges in Beersheba. Because of their corruption, Israel's leaders demanded to be ruled by a king ([1 Samuel 8:2](#); [1 Chronicles 6:28](#)).
2. The son of King Jeroboam I of the northern kingdom of Israel. The boy's illness led his family to seek guidance from the prophet Ahijah at Shiloh ([1 Kings 14:1-2](#)).
3. An alternate name for Abijam, king of Judah, in [2 Chronicles 12:16-14:1](#) and [Matthew 1:7](#).
See Abijam.
4. Ahaz's wife, and mother of King Hezekiah ([2 Kings 18:2](#)). Sometimes written as "Abi" ([2 Chronicles 29:1](#)). She was Zechariah's daughter.
5. Becher's son from Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chronicles 7:8](#)).
6. The Levite who headed an eighth of the 24 priestly divisions established by King David ([1 Chronicles 24:10](#); [Luke 1:5](#)).
7. The head of a priestly family who signed Ezra's promise of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:7](#)).
8. The head of a priestly family who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 12:4](#)). Perhaps of the same family as #7.

Abijam

Rehoboam's son and his successor as king of Judah. He ruled from 913-910 BC ([1 Chronicles 3:10](#)). He

was also called "Abijah" ([2 Chronicles 11:18-22](#); [12:16](#); [13:1-22](#); [14:1](#)).

The main event of Abijam's rule was his war with King Jeroboam I of Israel ([2 Chronicles 13:1-3](#)). Before an important battle, Abijam stood on Mount Zemaraim and shouted criticisms of Jeroboam's dividing of the country and worshipping idols ([2 Chronicles 13:4-12](#)). Abijam and his army prayed for God's help in the battle. Even though Jeroboam's army was twice as big, Abijam's army escaped an ambush and won a surprise victory ([2 Chronicles 13:13-19](#)).

Abijam's reign over Judah was not described kindly in [1 Kings 15:1-8](#): "And Abijam walked in all the sins that his father before him had committed, and his heart was not as fully devoted to the LORD his God as the heart of David his forefather had been." ([1 Kings 15:3](#)). But God had promised to keep David's descendants on the throne in Jerusalem ([1 Kings 11:36](#)), so Abijam's son Asa became king after him.

Abijam was a member of David's family, so he was an ancestor of Jesus Christ ([Matthew 1:7](#), called "Abijah").

See also Israel, History of; Timeline of Bible Events (Old Testament); Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Abilene

A region on the east side of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains in Syria. The district is named after the capital city of Abila, located about 18 miles (29 kilometers) from Damascus. At the time of John the Baptist, Abilene was governed by Lysanias ([Luke 3:1](#)).

Abimael

One of the many sons or descendants of Joktan, and thus a descendant of Shem ([Genesis 10:28](#); [1 Chronicles 1:22](#)).

Abimelech

A royal title for Philistine rulers. It is similar to the title "pharaoh" used by the Egyptians and "agag" used by the Amalekites.

1. The King of Gerar in Abraham's time. Gerar was a city near Gaza. Abraham, out of fear for his life, told people his wife Sarah was his sister ([Genesis 20:1–18](#)). He had done this before in Egypt ([Genesis 12:10–20](#)). Sarah was taken into Abimelech's harem, but God warned Abimelech in a dream that Sarah was married and he would die if he touched her. Abimelech returned Sarah to Abraham. Later, Abraham and Abimelech made a treaty to clarify water rights in the Negev Desert at Beersheba ([Genesis 21:22–34](#)).
2. The King of Gerar in Isaac's time. Isaac, like his father Abraham, told people his wife Rebekah was his sister. Abimelech was aware of the danger because he knew what happened to the king before him. So Abimelech protected Rebekah by declaring anyone who touched her or Isaac would be put to death ([Genesis 26:1–11](#)). Due to disputes over water and overcrowding, Abimelech asked Isaac to leave the Philistine territory ([Genesis 26:12–22](#)). They eventually made a peace treaty at Beersheba, renewing the one made between Abraham and the earlier Abimelech ([Genesis 26:26–33](#)).
3. Gideon's son by a concubine in Shechem ([Judges 8:31](#)). After his father's death, Abimelech worked with his mother's family to kill his 70 half brothers. Jotham was the only one that escaped ([Judges 9:1–5](#)). In his third year as ruler, he harshly stopped a rebellion ([Judges 9:22–49](#)). Eventually, he was killed when a woman dropped a millstone on his head. Abimelech asked his armor bearer to kill him with a sword so that no one could say he had been killed by a woman ([Judges 9:53–57](#)).
4. Achish, king of the Philistine city of Gath ([1 Samuel 21:10–15](#)).

5. Abiathar's son, a priest who served with Zadok in David's time ([1 Chronicles 18:16](#)).

Abinadab

1. Someone who lived in Kiriath-jearim who housed the ark of God after it was brought back from the Philistines ([1 Samuel 6:21–7:2](#)).
2. Jesse's second son, and brother of David ([1 Samuel 16:8](#); [17:13](#); [1 Chronicles 2:13](#)). He served in Saul's army for part of the Philistine war.
3. Another form of Ben-abinadab. He was one of King Solomon's administrative officers in [1 Kings 4:11](#). See Ben-abinadab.
4. One of Saul's sons ([1 Chronicles 8:33](#); [10:2](#)).

Abinoam

Barak's father. Barak was an ally of Deborah, an Israelite judge, in the war against the Canaanites ([Judges 4:6, 12](#); [5:1, 12](#)).

Abiram

1. One of Eliab's two sons. Abiram and his brother Dathan joined in a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Moses caused the ground to split open beneath the two brothers and their families. They died in a massive earthquake ([Numbers 16:1–33](#)).
2. Hiel's oldest son. He died early when his father rebuilt Jericho against God's wishes ([1 Kings 16:34](#)). Joshua had prophesied about this event ([Joshua 6:26](#)).

Abishag

A beautiful young woman from Shunem who was sent to care for King David during his last days ([1 Kings 1:1-4](#)). After David's death, Adonijah asked his half-brother, King Solomon, to marry Abishag. At that time, to take the concubine of a deceased king was to claim you were the next king (a concubine is a woman who lived with a man and had a relationship like a wife but without the full rights of marriage). Adonijah's request made Solomon angry and he ordered Adonijah to be killed ([1 Kings 2:13-25](#)).

Abishai

King David's nephew. The son of David's sister Zeruiah (his father is not mentioned) and brother of Joab and Asahel ([1 Chronicles 2:16](#)).

Abishai went with David to Saul's camp one night and wanted to kill Saul while he was sleeping, but David stopped him ([1 Samuel 26:6-12](#)). He also helped Joab kill Abner, Saul's general, to avenge the death of their brother, Asahel ([2 Samuel 3:30](#)).

Later, Abishai won a victory over the Edomites ([1 Chronicles 18:12-13](#)) and was second in command in a decisive battle against the Ammonites ([1 Chronicles 19:10-15](#)). Abishai was often cruel. For example, he wanted to behead Shimei for insulting David during Absalom's rebellion, but again, David stopped him ([2 Samuel 16:5-12](#); [19:21-23](#)). When King David fled beyond the Jordan, Abishai led one of David's three divisions that defeated Absalom ([2 Samuel 18:1-15](#)).

Later, in a battle against the Philistines, Abishai saved David's life by killing the giant Ishbi-benob ([2 Samuel 21:15-17](#)). He was called one of David's bravest warriors ([2 Samuel 23:18-19](#); [1 Chronicles 11:20-21](#)).

Abishalom

Another name for Absalom, King David's son, in [1 Kings 15:2, 10](#).

See Absalom.

Abishua

1. Aaron's great-grandson, son of Phinehas and ancestor of Ezra ([1 Chronicles 6:4-5, 50](#); [Ezra 7:5](#)). Abishua's name also appears in the record of Ezra's ancestry in 1 Esdras ([1 Esdras 8:2](#); [2 Esdras 1:2](#)).
2. Bela's son, and grandson of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 8:4](#)).

Abishur

Shammai's son and the father of Ahban and Molid from the tribe of Judah. His wife was Abihail ([1 Chronicles 2:28-29](#)).

Abital

Mother of King David's fifth son, Shephatiah ([2 Samuel 3:4](#); [1 Chronicles 3:3](#)).

Abitub

Son of Shaharaim and Hushim from the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 8:11](#)).

Abiud

Someone in the list of Jesus's ancestors in the Gospel of Matthew. He is listed as Eliakim's father ([Matthew 1:13](#)).

See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Abner

Ner's son and Saul's cousin. Abner was a commander in Saul's army ([1 Samuel 14:50](#); [17:55](#)). He was highly respected by Saul. He even ate at the king's table together with David and Jonathan ([1 Samuel 20:25](#)).

Five years after Saul's death, Abner made Saul's son Ishbosheth the king of Israel ([2 Samuel 2:8-9](#)). The war between Ishbosheth and David, the king of Judah, lasted for two years. Abner commanded Ishbosheth's army and Joab commanded David's army in many small battles. David's army usually won,

but Abner became powerful among Saul's followers.

Abner slept with Saul's concubine, Rizpah. This was wrong because only the king was allowed to do this. Abner might have been planning to become king himself. When Ishbosheth rebuked him, Abner became so angry that he left Ishbosheth and made an agreement with David. David showed him great respect, and in return, Abner promised to bring all of Israel to support David.

Joab was afraid of Abner's influence on the king and killed him. He claimed that he did it to avenge the death of his brother, who Abner had killed in battle. Abner was honored with a public funeral and mourning. This kind of honor was only given to a ruler or great leader. King David wept aloud at the tomb, and even the people wept with him ([2 Samuel 3:7-34](#)). David condemned Joab for murdering Abner.

See also David; Israel, History of.

Abomination

Repugnant or detestable act, person, or thing. The idea of abomination derives from the specific demands God's holiness makes upon his people. Adjectives frequently used for abominations in the Old Testament are "abhorrent," "loathsome," "unclean," and "rejected."

There are four major Hebrew words translated "abomination." The one most frequently used indicates violation of an established custom or ritual. This violation brings the judgment of God. Examples range from defective sacrifices ([Deuteronomy 17:1](#)) to magic and divination ([Deuteronomy 18:12](#)) or idolatrous practices ([2 Kings 16:3](#)). A second Hebrew word refers to the meat of certain kinds of animals that was ritually defiling, whether touched or eaten ([Leviticus 11:10-13](#)). A third word designates three-day-old sacrificial meat ([Leviticus 7:18](#)). A fourth word refers almost only to idolatrous objects of pagan origin ([Jeremiah 4:1](#); [7:30](#)).

Apart from the specialized usage of "abomination of desolation," the Greek word for "abomination" is used infrequently in the New Testament ([Luke 16:15](#); [Romans 2:22](#); [Titus 1:16](#); [Revelation 17:4-5](#); [21:8, 27](#)) and is translated by many English words. The primary connotation is anything that is abhorrent to a holy God.

See also Cleanness and Uncleanness, Regulations Concerning; Dietary Laws (After Moses).

Abraham

Abraham is one of the most important people in the Bible. God called him from the city of Ur to become the leader of God's chosen people.

Abraham was first called Abram, which means "the father is exalted." When Abram's parents named him, they probably worshiped the moon god or another pagan god. God changed Abram's name to Abraham to separate him from his pagan past ([Genesis 17:5](#)). The new name "Abraham" means "father of many." This shows God's promise that Abraham would have many descendants. It was a test of faith because Abraham was 99 years old, and his wife Sarah was 90 years old and had no children ([Genesis 11:30](#); [17:1-4, 17](#)).

Abraham's Life

Abraham's story starts in [Genesis 11](#), where we learn about his family ([Genesis 11:26-32](#)). Terah, Abram's father, was named after the moon god worshiped by the people living at Ur.

Terah had three sons:

- Abram
- Nahor
- Haran.

Haran, Lot's father, died before the family left Ur. Terah took Lot, Abram, and Abram's wife, Sarai, from Ur to go to Canaan, but they settled in Haran instead ([Genesis 11:31](#)). According to [Acts 7:2-4](#), Abraham heard God's call to leave for a new land while still in Ur.

A very important factor in Abram's life is found in [Genesis 11:30](#): "Sarai was barren; she had no children." Sarai was unable to have children which created great challenges and tests of faith for Abram and Sarai.

After Terah's death, God told Abram, "Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you." This was the basis of a "covenant" (a special agreement), in which God promised to make Abram the founder of a new nation in that land ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)).

Abram trusted God's promise and left Haran at the age of 74. He went to Shechem in Canaan, between

Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. There he built an altar to God ([Genesis 12:7](#)). Then, Abram moved near Bethel and built another altar to worship God ([Genesis 12:8](#)). The expression “called on the name of the LORD” means more than to pray. Abram declared the truth of God to the people there who worshiped false gods. Later, he moved to Hebron and built another altar to worship God.

In a vision, God promised Abram many descendants ([Genesis 15:1](#)). Abram was still childless and he worried that his servant Eliezer of Damascus would inherit everything ([Genesis 15:2](#)). The discovery of the Nuzi documents has explained this confusing statement. (The Nuzi documents are a collection of ancient tablets from the time Abraham probably lived).

According to Hurrian custom, a wealthy couple without children would adopt an heir. This heir would usually be a slave, and they would bury and mourn their adoptive parents. If the couple later had their own child, that child would become the heir instead of the slave.

So, when Abram was worried about Eliezer, God told him clearly, “This one will not be your heir, but one who comes from your own body will be your heir” ([Genesis 15:4](#)). Then God made a promise to Abram. He said Abram would have an heir, become a nation, and own the land.

When Abram was 86, his son Ishmael was born. When Abram was 99, God appeared to him again and promised him a son. ([Genesis 17](#)). Circumcision (the removal of the foreskin of the male reproductive organ) was added as a sign of this promise ([17:9-14](#)). God also changed Abram and Sarai’s names to Abraham and Sarah ([Genesis 17:5, 15](#)).

Abraham’s response to the promise of another son was to laugh: “Abraham fell facedown. Then he laughed and said to himself, ‘Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah give birth at the age of ninety?’” ([Genesis 17:17](#)).

[Genesis 18](#) and [19](#) tell the story of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In [Genesis 18](#), three visitors came to Abraham. Abraham offered them food and drinks, but they were not ordinary travelers, but the angel of the Lord and two other angels ([Genesis 18:1-2](#); [19:1](#)). The angel of the Lord was likely God himself ([Genesis 18:17, 33](#)). They announced that Sarah would have a son, which made her laugh because she did not believe it could be true ([Genesis 18:12-15](#)).

[Genesis 21](#) to [23](#) is the climax of Abraham’s story. When Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, “the LORD did for Sarah what He had promised” ([Genesis 21:1](#)). The old couple felt extremely happy. Both Abraham and Sarah had laughed when promised a son because they did not believe it could be true, but now they laugh with joy. They named the baby Isaac, which means “he laughs.” This shows that God had the final say in their story. Sarah said, “God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears of this will laugh with me” ([Genesis 21:6](#)).

The joy of Isaac’s birth ended when God tested Abraham’s faith. In [Genesis 22](#), God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. This test was very painful for Abraham because he had waited 25 years to have a son.

Just as Abraham was about to kill Isaac, God stopped him and provided a ram to sacrifice instead. Abraham’s name, meaning “father of a multitude,” took on a deeper meaning when Isaac was saved. God explained the test he had given Abraham: “For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me” ([Genesis 22:12](#)).

Those words implied an even greater promise. The Lord provided a substitute for Isaac. Abraham named the place “the Lord will provide.” The scene foreshadows how God will give his only Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

See also Covenant; Patriarchs, Period of the; Israel, History of; Sarah #1.

Abram

The original name of the patriarch Abraham ([Genesis 11:26](#)).

See Abraham.

Abron

A stream or dry riverbed mentioned in the Book of Judith. It was located on the path that Nebuchadnezzar’s general, Holofernes, took during his attack ([Judith 2:24](#)).

Some early scholars thought it with the biblical Jabbok ([Numbers 21:24](#)). Others called it the Cherbon, maybe because of a misreading of Habor ([2 Kings 17:6](#)).

Abronah

A place near Elath where the Israelites camped on their journey from Egypt to Canaan ([Numbers 33:34–35](#)).

See Wilderness Wanderings.

Absalom

The son of King David and his wife Maacah ([2 Samuel 3:3](#)). The name is also spelled Abishalom ([1 Kings 15:2, 10](#)). Absalom was a handsome young prince who was famous for his long, full hair ([2 Samuel 14:25–26](#)). He had a beautiful sister, Tamar, who was raped by their half-brother Amnon. After dishonoring Tamar, Amnon refused to marry her ([2 Samuel 13:1–20](#)).

Absalom took his wounded sister into his own house. He expected his father, David, to punish Amnon for his act of incest. After two years of simmering rage and hatred, Absalom planned his revenge. He gave a feast for King David and his princes at his country home. David did not attend, but Amnon did and was murdered by Absalom's servants after Absalom got him drunk. Absalom was afraid of King David's anger, so he escaped across the Jordan River to King Talmai of Geshur, his mother's father ([2 Samuel 13:21–39](#)).

After three years in exile, Absalom was called back to Jerusalem because of the efforts of David's general, Joab, and a wise woman from Tekoa. After two years, he was fully forgiven by the king ([2 Samuel 14](#)). He began to attempt to take the throne from his father. He began to gain public support while lowering the confidence in his father, the king ([2 Samuel 15:1–6](#)).

Eventually, Absalom planned a rebellion against David, going to Hebron to gain supporters from all over Israel. After Ahithophel, one of David's wisest aids, supported Absalom, the prince announced that he was now king. When David heard what Absalom had done, he had to flee from Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 15](#); [Psalm 3](#)).

Absalom arrived in Jerusalem without a fight. Ahithophel advised him to attack David immediately with 12,000 troops. But Hushai, who was David's spy in Absalom's court, recommended that Absalom take some time to gather the entire nation against David. Hushai used flattery by

suggesting that Absalom should lead the attack. Absalom preferred Hushai's advice, and Ahithophel, out of desperation, committed suicide. Hushai sent Absalom's plans to David by two priests, Zadok and Abiathar. With this information, David crossed the Jordan and camped at Mahanaim ([2 Samuel 16–17](#)).

Absalom brought his army across the Jordan to fight David in the forest of Ephraim. Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, the Gittite, led David's army. They defeated Absalom's forces. Absalom fled on a mule, but his long hair got caught in the branches of an oak tree. He hung from the branches by his hair, unable to do anything. Joab was chasing Absalom, and when he found him, he killed him. Joab's men threw the body in a pit and piled stones on it ([2 Samuel 18:1–18](#)).

David had ordered everyone not to hurt Absalom. So, when Absalom died, David was shocked and very upset. David cried: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" ([2 Samuel 18:33](#)). In his grief, David did not notice that the rebellion was ended until Joab reminded him that David's followers had risked their lives for him ([2 Samuel 19:1–8](#)).

See David.

Abubus

Ptolemy's father. Ptolemy was a military governor in Jericho. He killed his father-in-law, Simon Maccabeus, and two of Simon's sons in 134 BC ([1 Maccabees 16:11–17](#)).

See Maccabean Period.

Abyss

A deep pit with no bottom that cannot be measured, or the underworld.

See Bottomless Pit.

Acacia

Any tree or shrub of the mimosa family that grows in warm regions. The plant called "shittah" (singular) or "shittim" (plural) in the King James Version of the Bible is certainly the acacia tree. This

was the only timber tree of significant size that grew in the Arabian desert. Acacia wood was used in the building of the ark of the covenant ([Exodus 25:10](#)).

Acacia tortilis is the largest and most common tree in the desert where the Israelites wandered for 40 years. It is especially noticeable on Mount Sinai and was probably the type of wood used for making the tabernacle furnishings.

Acacia seyal is less common today. It can grow as tall as 7.6 meters (25 feet). It has yellow flowers on twisted branches. The wood is close-grained, heavy, and hard. It has an orange-brown color and was highly valued for making cabinets. The ancient Egyptians used acacia wood to seal shut their mummy coffins.

See Plants.

Acanthus

Acanthus (Acanthus syriacus)

The acanthus is a perennial herb or small shrub that looks similar to a thistle. It grows about 0.9 meter (3 feet) tall. This plant is possibly mentioned in [Job 30:7](#) and [Zephaniah 2:9](#). The acanthus is a common weed found throughout countries in the East. For thousands of years, artists have used the distinctive shape of acanthus leaves as a model for decorative scrolls and leaf designs in art.

Achor

1. The father of Baal-hanan, king of Edom, who ruled before the establishment of Israel's kingdom ([Genesis 36:38–39](#); [1 Chronicles 1:49](#)).
2. Micaiah's son, a courtier (companion that worked in a king's court) of King Josiah of the southern kingdom of Judah. Josiah sent Achor to ask Huldah, the prophetess, about the newly found Book of the Law ([2 Kings 22:12–14](#)). Achor is also called Abdon, son of Micah ([2 Chronicles 34:20](#)). He was the father of Elnathan ([Jeremiah 26:22](#); [36:12](#)).

Accad

One of the three cities (Babel, Erech, and Accad) that are between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

It was said to have been founded by Nimrod ([Genesis 10:10](#)). "Akkadian" (from Accad) is the name for the language spoken in Mesopotamia from the days of Sargon (around 2360 BC) through Assyrian and Babylonian times.

Accho, Acco

A major Palestinian port city from the earliest Canaanite period. The Old Testament mentions that Asher's tribe failed to drive out the people living in Acco at the time of Israel's conquest of Canaan ([Judges 1:31](#)).

Acco is mentioned often in Middle and New Kingdom Egyptian texts and Assyrian records. Acco was probably controlled by Israel when David was king, and was one of 20 cities given by Solomon to King Hiram of Tyre ([1 Kings 9:11–14](#)). Later, Alexander the Great of Macedonia captured Acco. It was eventually rebuilt and renamed Ptolemais ([Acts 21:7](#)).

Accos

The name of Hakkoz in [1 Maccabees 8:17](#).

See Hakkoz.

Aceldama

The King James Version spelling of Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood" ([Acts 1:19](#)).

See Blood, Field of.

Achaia

A name used in New Testament times to refer to the area on the Greek peninsula south of Thessalonica.

See Greece, Greek.

Achaicus

An early Christian convert in Corinth. Achaicus, Stephanas, and Fortunatus were visiting Paul in Ephesus when he wrote 1 Corinthians ([1 Corinthians 16:17](#)). Achaicus and his friends probably brought Paul a letter from the Corinthian church and returned with Paul's reply ([1 Corinthians 7:1](#)).

Achan, Achar

A member of the tribe of Judah who kept some of the loot from the Israelite victory at Jericho, disobeying Joshua's orders and God's commands ([Joshua 6:1-7:1](#)).

Later, Israel was defeated at Ai, a weaker city than Jericho. This defeat showed Joshua that God was angry. With God's help, Joshua discovered which Israelite had disobeyed. Achan confessed that he had buried a robe and some gold and silver from Jericho in his tent ([Joshua 7:20-22](#)). The stolen loot was found and taken to the valley of Achor (meaning "trouble"), where Achan and his family were killed.

In the Hebrew text, [1 Chronicles 2:7](#) gives Achan's name as Achar (meaning "disaster") because he "brought trouble upon Israel by violating the ban on devoted things."

Achaz

The spelling of Ahaz, Judah's king in the King James Version ([Matthew 1:9](#)).

See Ahaz #1.

Achbor

Another spelling for Achor.

See Achor.

Achim

A descendant of Zerubbabel. He is listed in the New Testament as an ancestor of Jesus ([Matthew 1:14](#)).

See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Achior

The book of Judith calls Achior a "leader of all the Ammonites" ([Judith 5:5](#)). Much of [chapter 5](#) describes Achior's version of Israel's history. It ends with his warning to Holofernes that God would protect Israel. When he said this, the hearers threatened to tear him apart.

Holofernes then sent Achior over to the Israelites, and Uzziah treated him well ([Judith 6](#)). After Holofernes's death, Achior went to see the Assyrian general's severed head. When he saw this, he threw himself at the feet of Judith, praising her. He recognized the powerful works of God, was circumcised (which is a religious ceremony for men joining the Jewish faith), and became a permanent member of the Israelite community ([Judith 14:6-10](#)).

Achish

The king of the Philistine city of Gath. Even though David had killed Goliath, Gath's champion ([1 Samuel 17](#)), David ran from Saul to Achish's court. When he realized his mistake, David pretended to be crazy to save his life. This caused Achish to throw him out ([1 Samuel 21:10-15](#)). Later, when David came back to Gath with 600 fighters, Achish gave him the city of Ziklag to use as a base ([1 Samuel 27:1-7](#)). Achish thought David's men were attacking the Israelites. Instead, they were destroying Philistine towns ([1 Samuel 27:8-12](#)).

Achmetha

The King James Version's form of Ecbatana, a Persian city, in [Ezra 6:2](#).

See Ecbatana.

Achor

A valley that was named after Achan, who brought trouble to Israel and was stoned and burned there ([Joshua 7:24-26](#); compare [1 Chronicles 2:7](#)). Achor was in the north of Judah ([Joshua 15:7](#)). Later, the valley is mentioned in prophecies of Israel's future blessings. A valley once known for Israel's trouble would become "a gateway of hope," and a place for joyful singing ([Hosea 2:15](#)). A place of barrenness would become a place for herds to lie down ([Isaiah](#)

[65:10](#)). The valley of Achor is identified as the Buqei'ah.

Achsa, Achsah

Caleb's daughter ([1 Chronicles 2:49](#)). Othniel, Caleb's nephew, accepted his uncle's request to capture Kiriath-sepher in order to marry Achsah. She persuaded Othniel to ask her father, Caleb, for a field. She also asked Caleb for two springs of water, which was necessary for life in the desert ([Joshua 15:16–19](#); [Judges 1:12–15](#)).

Achshaph

A Canaanite royal city in Joshua's time. Its king joined an alliance with Jabin, king of Hazor, against Israel in a battle at Merom ([Joshua 11:1](#)). After Israel's victory, Achshaph's king was one of 31 Canaanite kings defeated by Joshua ([Joshua 12:20](#)). This fulfilled God's promise to give kings to Israel ([Deuteronomy 7:24](#)). The city of Achshaph was given to the tribe of Asher when the Israelites were dividing up the land of Canaan ([Joshua 19:25](#)).

Achzib

The King James Version form of Aczib.

See Aczib.

Acra

A strong fortress in Jerusalem during the time of the Seleucid and Hasmonean rulers. It was built on high ground near the temple. The Acra housed soldiers and controlled the city during the Maccabean wars.

The Seleucid government saw the Acra as a royal stronghold, separate from the rest of Judea. Sometimes, one group of soldiers held the Acra while their enemies held the rest of the city. This made the fortress almost like an independent city.

The historian Josephus wrote about two forts called Acra:

1. An earlier fort captured by Antiochus III in 198 BC. This was likely the same as the temple fortress from Persian and Ptolemaic times, called the "castle" in [Nehemiah 7:2](#). Later, this site became the Roman fortress called Antonia.
2. A new fort built later by Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

Antiochus decided to abolish all Jewish worship practices. In 167 BC, he broke sacred Jewish laws by building an altar to the Greek god Zeus in the Jerusalem temple. He may have also sacrificed a pig there ([1 Maccabees 1:20–64](#); [2 Maccabees 6:1–6](#)).

The next year, Antiochus sent soldiers to build the Acra. Its purpose was to enforce his new religious rules and stop Jewish religious practices in the city. The Acra also stored food and items taken from the city. The Jews saw it as "an ambush against the sanctuary, an evil enemy of Israel always" ([1 Maccabees 1:36](#)).

Josephus wrote that Simon, the second Maccabean brother, captured the Acra in 142 BC. He said Simon spent three years tearing down both the fort and the hill it stood on. However, some doubt this account. Other stories say Simon cleansed (made ritually pure) the citadel and used it to keep the city safe (see [1 Maccabees 13:50](#); [14:37](#)).

Acra

The site where some of the Edomite-Ammonites in Holofernes's army were located during the siege of Bethulia ([Judith 7:18](#)). Acra was probably located about 10 miles (16 kilometers) southeast of Shechem. It is the modern-day Nablus.

Acre

A measure of an area of land. Literally, the Hebrew word means "yoke" and probably refers to the amount of land a yoke of oxen could plow in a day.

See Weights and Measures.

Acrocorinth

A huge, steep hill south of the ancient city of Corinth. It is 1,886 feet (575 meters) above sea

level. This hill had a great view of the Isthmus of Corinth and controlled both land traffic between central Greece and the Peloponnesus, as well as sea traffic from Italy, moving east through the Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf.

At the top of the hill was the temple of Aphrodite, which had a bad reputation in ancient times. The geographer Strabo, writing around AD 20, claimed that 1,000 prostitutes worked at the temple during Greece's golden age (a period of great cultural and intellectual achievement). The people of Athens might have made Corinth's reputation sound worse than it really was. The saying "Not every man's ship is bound for Corinth" was common among the ancient Greeks, reflecting this negative view of the city.

Today, scholars are skeptical of Strabo's claim, but it still affects how people interpret Paul's letters to the Corinthians. It is possible that the Corinthians were just as moral as people in other Greek cities. Strabo himself could only find a small temple of Aphrodite, and there are almost no remains of it today.

Acropolis

A term combining the Greek *akros* (meaning "highest") and *polis* (meaning "city"). In ancient Greece, an acropolis was a strong, protected place. It usually was built on a hill and served as a place of refuge. The area around the base of the hill would often develop into a city.

The acropolis in Athens (the capital city of Greece) had a famous building called the Parthenon. The Parthenon was a temple built to honor Athena, who ancient Greeks believed was the goddess of wisdom. People made this temple in the 500s BC (over 2,500 years ago). The Parthenon was built in a style called Doric (a type of Greek building design). Many people think it is one of the best examples of Greek building skills from long ago.

[Acts 17:34](#) mentions that Paul preached at the Areopagus, meaning "hill of Ares," which is a low hill northwest of the acropolis. When Paul spoke there, he helped one person from the Athens city council become a follower of Jesus.

Acrostic

A poetic device in which the first letters of each line or stanza spell out the alphabet, a word, or a motto. The Hebrew authors often used an alphabetical acrostic as a poetic or mnemonic (memory) device (see [Psalm 9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145; Proverbs 31:10–31; Lamentations 1–4; Nahum 1](#)).

Acsah

An alternate spelling of Achsa, Caleb's daughter ([1 Chronicles 2:49](#)). See Achsa, Achsah.

Acshaph

Acshaph is another way to spell Achshaph, the name of a Canaanite royal city.

See Achshaph.

Acts of Andrew

The Acts of Andrew is an apocryphal story that claims to describe the miracles and martyrdom in Greece of the apostle Andrew, who was Peter's brother. It encourages believers to turn away from wealth and the temporary values of the world. Instead, it calls for a life of self-denial and full devotion to God.

The oldest known part of the story is a fragment kept in Vatican City. The original version probably came from the second century AD. It was likely long and difficult to read. Gregory of Tours, a bishop in the sixth century AD, thought the story was valuable. He wrote a shorter version about Andrew's miracles, using an earlier copy that no longer exists. The story of Andrew's death likely circulated as a separate text.

Gregory recorded many miracles, including one about Exoos, a noble young man from Thessalonica. After hearing about Andrew's preaching and miracles, Exoos travels to Philippi, becomes a Christian, and stays with Andrew. The unconverted parents of Exoos try to persuade Andrew to tell their son to stop living this way and to return to them by offering him money. When this fails, the parents refuse to listen to Andrew and set fire to the house where the Christians are staying.

As the flames rose, Exoos prayed that the Lord would stop the fire. He sprinkled the flames with water, and they went out at once. The parents and the crowd then accused Exoos of being a sorcerer. They climbed ladders to enter the house and kill the people inside, but God caused them to lose their sight. Although it is night, a light shines out from the house, and sight is restored to those who have been blinded. All except Exoos's parents became believers. The parents soon died.

Exoos remains with Andrew and spends his inheritance on the poor. After his return to Thessalonica, Exoos heals a man who has been paralyzed for 23 years. After that, Exoos and Andrew continue to perform miracles and preach.

In Patrae, the maidservant of Maximilla, the wife of the governor Aegeates, comes to Andrew. She urges him to heal her mistress. Her fever is so severe that her husband is standing at her bedside, threatening to kill himself with a sword the moment she dies. Telling the governor to put his sword away, Andrew takes Maximilla's hand, and the fever leaves her. He asked that food be brought for her and refused Aegeates's gift of one hundred pieces of silver. After performing many miracles in the city, Andrew receives a message from Maximilla to come and heal the slave of Stratocles, the governor's brother. The apostle heals the boy, and his master believes.

Maximilla's husband is furious to see his wife spend a lot of time listening to the preaching of Andrew. She also converts to the Christian faith. She then refuses to sleep with her husband and one night even substitutes a servant for herself. Further details appear in the account that describes Andrew's martyrdom. Aegeates is angry and holds Andrew responsible for turning his wife away from him. He has the apostle arrested.

After preaching from prison, Andrew is taken to be crucified by the seashore. When the Christian Stratocles sees Andrew treated roughly by the soldiers, he fights his way through and walks with Andrew to the place of crucifixion. Aegeates was afraid of his brother, so he ordered the soldiers not to interfere. At the seashore, the soldiers obey the governor's order to tie Andrew to the cross instead of nailing him. This would cause Andrew to die slowly and eventually be eaten by dogs.

After two days, Andrews is still speaking to people from the cross. Many people go to Aegeates demanding that he release Andrew. Arriving at the scene, the governor sees that Andrew is indeed still

alive. Aegeates approaches the apostle to release him. But Andrew demands that he be allowed to die and meet his Lord. Andrew dies and those watching cry as Maximilla and Stratocles take his body down from the cross. Maximilla then remains apart from her husband and continues in her Christian faith.

See also Andrew, the Apostle; Apocrypha.

Acts of Andrew and Matthias

This long story is probably not authentic. It was likely written in the late second century AD. It is one of many apocryphal "acts" that tried to add details to the New Testament book of Acts. The early church historian Eusebius said that this work and others like it were heretical, foolish, and untrue.

In this story, the apostles cast lots to determine where each should go. Matthias (Matthew in some versions) is sent to a country of people who eat human flesh. Soon, he is captured and is about to be eaten. The Lord sends Andrew to rescue him, and Andrew arrives just in time. Then a cloud lifts Matthias away to safety.

Andrew stays behind. The people arrest him, torture him, and drag him through the city. He nearly destroys the city by calling water to flow out of a statue. When the people see Andrew's miracles, they repent (turn away from their sins) and set him free.

After that, Andrew draws a plan for a church, and the people build it. He baptizes them and teaches them to follow the ways of the Lord.

See also Andrew, the Apostle; Apocrypha.

Acts of Andrew and Paul

This story survives only in fragments written in the Coptic language. It tells about the apostles Andrew and Paul, who arrive by sea at a city. In the story, Paul visits the underworld after asking Andrew to rescue him from it. While there, Paul meets Judas, who says that he worshiped Satan even after Jesus forgave him for the betrayal.

Andrew rescues Paul, who returns from the underworld carrying a piece of wood. Later, someone asks Andrew to heal a child, but some Jews doubt him. Because of their doubt, they do not allow the apostles to enter the city gates. Then Paul

strikes the gates with his piece of wood, and the gates sink into the ground. Amazed by this miracle, 27,000 Jews become followers of Christ.

See also Andrew, the Apostle; Apocrypha; Paul, the Apostle.

Acts of Barnabas

The Acts of Barnabas is one of several traditional stories about Barnabas, who was a companion of the apostle Paul. This story connects Barnabas with the island of Cyprus. The full title of this work is The Journeyings and Martyrdom of Saint Barnabas the Apostle. The author probably wrote it from Cyprus at the end of the fifth century or the start of the sixth century AD.

The story is told by John Mark, who explains what happened. In the story, John Mark says he left the apostles in Perga to sail to the West but was stopped (see [Acts 13:13](#)). When he tried to join Paul and Barnabas again in Antioch, Paul did not allow him. As a result, and after some dispute, John Mark and Barnabas sailed to Cyprus.

After preaching and healing many people, Barnabas met his old enemy, Bar-Jesus, who convinced the Jews to capture him. They led Barnabas out of the city of Salamis, formed a circle around him, and burned him alive. John Mark and other disciples escaped with his ashes. They buried them in a cave with scriptures Barnabas had received from Matthew. John Mark then went to Alexandria to minister there.

See also Apocrypha; Barnabas.

Acts of Bartholomew

This early Christian story tells about the last days and death of the apostle Bartholomew. It is also called The Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Bartholomew. The text probably dates back to the fifth or sixth century AD. It became popular and was copied in several languages, including Latin, Greek, Armenian, and Ethiopic.

In the Acts, Bartholomew travels to India and stays in a pagan temple. He stops the temple's oracle (a spirit that gave messages) and heals a person who had a demon. This attracts the attention of King Polymius. Bartholomew heals the king's daughter, who was also possessed by a demon.

After these events, Bartholomew casts the false god out of the temple. Because of these powerful acts, many people believe in the good news about Jesus. However, the king's brother becomes angry. He orders soldiers to beat Bartholomew and cut off his head. Soon after, the brother is punished when a demon strangles him. King Polymius becomes a follower of Jesus and serves as a bishop for twenty years.

See also Apocrypha; Bartholomew, the Apostle.

Acts of Paul and Thecla

The Acts of Paul and Thecla is part of a larger apocryphal work called the Acts of Paul. A church elder in Asia wrote it in the late second century AD. The early Christian writer Tertullian said that this man wrote the story out of "love of Paul" (*On Baptism* 17.19–21). However, the church removed him from his position for creating this document. It is not clear whether he was removed because he falsely claimed that an apostle had written it or because the church thought the ideas in his work were incorrect (heretical).

The Story of Paul and Thecla

The story is written in the style of a folk tale. The apostle Paul travels to Iconium after escaping from Antioch. A man named Onesiphorus meets him and invites him to stay in his home. Soon, a group gathers there to listen to Paul's message.

A young woman named Thecla lives in a nearby house. She cannot see Paul, but she listens carefully to his words from her window. Her mother, Thecleia, says, "My daughter, like a spider, is bound by his words to the window, seized by a new craving and a terrible passion." Paul teaches that to "see God," a person must live a pure life and avoid sexual activity.

Thecla was already engaged to be married, but she was so moved by Paul's teaching that she decided to end her engagement to Thamyris. Thamyris became very upset and went to the city governor for help. The governor ordered Paul to be arrested and put in prison.

Thecla gave the jailer her bracelets and a silver mirror as a gift so she could visit Paul in his cell. When she entered the prison, she listened to Paul again and was deeply drawn to his message.

At her trial, Thecla firmly refused to marry Thamyras. The city officials forced Paul to leave Iconium and sentenced Thecla to be burned to death. However, a miracle saved her life. Afterward, she met Paul again, and together they traveled to Antioch.

In Antioch, Thecla refused the advances of a nobleman named Alexander. Because of this, the authorities sentenced her to death again. She was thrown into an arena with wild animals, but instead of attacking her, the beasts licked her feet and guarded her. Later, Thecla jumped into a pool of water to baptize herself, and her life was once again spared.

When lightning struck the water, all the fish died and floated to the surface. Queen Tryphaena, who had become Thecla's friend, fainted in fear as people tried many times to kill Thecla. Seeing these events, Alexander finally asked the governor to set her free.

After being set free, Thecla searched for Paul. She dressed in men's clothing so that people would not recognize her. When she arrived in Myra, she found Paul and told him she was returning to Iconium. Paul commands her to "teach the word of God." After teaching for a while in Iconium, Thecla travels to Seleucia.

Thecla's Later Life and Death

The later years of Thecla's life are not well known. Some manuscripts say that she became afraid of the people in Seleucia, so she went to live in a mountain cave. There, she lived a simple and disciplined life, teaching the women who came to visit her and healing those who were sick.

Later, Thecla traveled to Rome to look for Paul, but he had already died. She herself died at about ninety years old, and people buried her near the tomb of her beloved teacher.

Comparison with Paul's Teachings in the New Testament

This writing is *apocryphal* (a set of ancient texts not included in the Hebrew Bible but accepted by some Christian groups) and is not part of the New Testament canon (the official list of books recognized as Scripture). Even so, some early Christian writers held it in high respect.

Origen and Hippolytus spoke positively about the Acts of Paul, which includes this story. The early church historian Eusebius believed the story was

not true, but he said it was not as harmful as other writings that were considered false or heretical (against accepted Christian teaching).

In two manuscripts of 2 Timothy ([3:11](#); [4:19](#)), a copyist wrote a note in the margin that links these verses to events described in the Acts of Paul. This shows that the story was likely well known among early Christians. The document probably reflects popular traditions that were widely shared in the second century AD.

On the other hand, the church father Tertullian argues that the document does not agree with Paul's teachings found in the New Testament. He claimed that Paul would never have allowed a woman to teach or to baptize (*On Baptism* 17.21–23). While the Acts of Paul and Thecla may differ from Paul's letters, the disagreement is not exactly as Tertullian described. The main difference is that the Acts of Paul and Thecla seem to support the *Encratite* belief, the idea that a person must remain unmarried and avoid sexual activity to receive salvation.

In the New Testament, Paul teaches salvation is not obtained by works, but is through faith and a gift of grace. When Paul writes about celibacy, he explains that it is a special calling for some believers, not a command for everyone ([1 Corinthians 7:1–7](#)). The Acts of Paul and Thecla suggest that a woman must dress like a man and remain unmarried in order to serve as a leader. In contrast, Paul taught that women who prophesy should dress in a way that is appropriate for women ([1 Corinthians 11:4–6](#)). He also spoke positively about the ministry of married women, such as Priscilla ([Romans 16:3](#)).

The Acts of Paul and Thecla present Thecla as a woman deeply devoted to the apostle Paul himself. However, Paul warned against showing personal allegiance to any Christian leader ([1 Corinthians 1:12–17](#)). Instead, he urged believers to find their devotion and motivation for ministry in Christ alone.

A Description of Paul

The Acts of Paul and Thecla includes a rare description of the apostle Paul: "a short man with a bald head and crooked legs, healthy, with joined eyebrows and a slightly hooked nose, full of friendliness; sometimes he looked like a man, and other times he had the face of an angel." This description is probably not reliable in any historical sense. Except for the phrase "the face of an angel," it likely reflects what people of that time

thought an ordinary Jewish man looked like. Even so, since no other early document describes Paul's appearance, this account has influenced how artists have imagined him for centuries.

See also Apocrypha; Paul, the Apostle.

Acts of Pilate

The Acts of Pilate is an apocryphal gospel about the suffering and death of Jesus. It was completed by the middle of the fourth century AD.

The first Christian writer to mention the Acts of Pilate was Epiphanius. He was a church leader known for opposing false teachings. Around AD 375, he wrote a long book about heresies and clearly referred to the Acts of Pilate (*Heresies* 50.1). Earlier writers also mentioned a report from Pontius Pilate to the Roman emperor Tiberius about Jesus's trial. Justin Martyr spoke of this report (*I Apology* 35; 48), and near the end of the second century AD, Tertullian also referred to it. However, the reports that Justin Martyr and Tertullian describe are not the same as the Acts of Pilate that we have today.

While an earlier version of the Acts of Pilate might have existed before the fourth century AD, the current version dates to the middle of the fourth century AD. The original language was Greek, and later it was translated into Latin, Coptic, and Armenian.

Eusebius was a well-known church historian and bishop of Caesarea in the fourth century AD. He condemned what he believed to be a false and offensive story about Pilate. This story was likely a pagan writing that tried to dishonor Christ (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1.9.3; 9.5.1). The Christian version of the Acts of Pilate was probably written to respond to and correct that false account.

Two Parts of the Acts of Pilate

The final version of the Acts of Pilate includes later edits and additions. It has two main sections:

1. The first section claims to be an account by the Pharisee Nicodemus about the events surrounding the suffering of Jesus. It says that his account was translated from Hebrew into Greek (chapters 1–16).

2. The second section is called *Christ's Descent into Hell*. It gives a vivid description of Christ going down into Hades to set free the righteous people who had died (chapters 17–27). This is a creative story based on [1 Peter 3:19](#). The phrase “he descended into hell” in the Apostles’ Creed also comes from this passage. After the fourteenth century AD, the whole work was expanded and became known as the Gospel of Nicodemus, because Nicodemus plays an important role in it.

What Happens in the Acts of Pilate?

In the introduction to the Acts of Pilate, a Roman soldier named Ananias claims he found the Acts of Pilate in Hebrew and translated the document into Greek in the eighteenth year of Emperor Flavius Theodosius's rule (AD 425).

The story begins in the fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius Caesar (AD 29). Nicodemus writes about the events surrounding the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Jewish high priests accuse Jesus of committing religious crimes and bring him before Pilate for judgment. Although Pilate is hesitant, he calls Jesus to appear before him in a respectful way. When Jesus arrives, the Roman military standards (banners carried by soldiers) bow down to him on their own (chapter 1).

In chapter 2, the Jewish leaders accuse Jesus of several things:

- that he was born from fornication (sexual sin outside of marriage),
- that his birth caused the death of the children in Bethlehem, and
- that Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt because they were not respected among the people of Israel.

However, twelve devout Jews immediately deny the first accusation. They say they were witnesses to the engagement of Mary and Joseph and know that this charge is false.

In chapter 3, Pilate interviews Jesus. This part is inspired by the story found in [John 18:33–38](#). The Jews accuse Jesus of blasphemy (speaking

disrespectfully about God), and Pilate reluctantly gives him over to them (chapter 4).

In chapter 5, Nicodemus speaks to the Jewish council, called the Sanhedrin. He urges them to release Jesus, saying that if Jesus is not sent by God, his movement will fail on its own (see [Acts 5:38–39](#)). But the council refuses to listen to him.

Three Jews healed by Jesus testify for him (chapter 6). Bernice, the woman Jesus healed from her bleeding, also testifies for him (chapter 7). The crowd proclaims he is a prophet (chapter 8). When Pilate offers to release a prisoner, the Jews ask for Barabbas. Pilate then washes his hands of the matter. He has Jesus whipped and crucified with two criminals called Dysmas and Gestas (chapter 9).

Jesus is mocked by the crowds, while one criminal (Gestas) is rebuked by the other (chapter 10). The sun darkens to mark the death of Jesus. The Jews dismiss this as a normal eclipse (chapter 11). They seize Joseph of Arimathea and imprison him. However, when they come to execute him, he has disappeared (chapter 12). The guards report seeing an angel at the tomb, but the Jews give them bribes to keep silent (chapter 13). Three Jews arrive from Galilee: Phineas, a priest; Adas, a teacher; and Angaeus, a Levite. They report that they witnessed Jesus giving the Great Commission and ascending to heaven from Mount Malich. (chapter 14).

Nicodemus advises the council to search the nearby mountains to see if some spirit might have taken Jesus up and thrown him down on the rocks. But when the Jews search, they find nothing, only Joseph of Arimathea in his hometown. Joseph is then called to testify before the council. He tells them that the risen Jesus appeared to him while he was in prison and set him free (chapter 15). After hearing other witnesses, the council decides that if people still remember Jesus after 50 years, the stories must be true (chapter 16).

Christ's Descent into Hades

The second document starts with Joseph speaking to the council. He claims two brothers rose from the dead at the same time as Jesus. The council calls them to share their stories (chapter 17). The brothers claimed that while they were in Hades, a great light appeared, and Abraham and Isaiah were filled with joy (chapter 18). Satan thought he could keep Jesus there (chapter 20). But when the "King of Glory" arrived, the gates broke down. Satan was

made prisoner, and angels bound him and took him away (chapter 22). Hades blamed Satan and rebuked him for ruining his kingdom (chapter 23).

The King of Glory (Christ) then led Adam and the righteous dead out of Hades (chapter 24) to paradise (chapter 25). The two brothers even saw there the criminal who had been crucified with Jesus and had repented on his cross (chapter 26). According to the two brothers, the angel Michael had sent them to preach the resurrection of Jesus to all mankind.

Purpose and Influence

The Acts of Pilate is a collection of quotes and references from the four Gospels, but the author also adds creative and imaginative details. The main purpose of the work is to defend the truth of the resurrection of Jesus against claims made by pagan and Jewish opponents. Sadly, the text includes anti-Jewish elements, and these influenced many dramatizations of the events of Jesus's Passion from the fourth century AD through the late Middle Ages.

See also Apocrypha; Pontius Pilate.

Acts of Thaddeus

The Acts of Thaddeus is a sixth-century story that expands on an earlier Syriac writing from the fifth century called the *Doctrina Addaei* (also known as the Legend of Abgar). That legend claims to record an exchange of letters between Abgar, the king of Edessa (AD 9–46), and Jesus. Because of this exchange, Jesus sends Thaddeus, one of his apostles, to visit Edessa.

In this story, Thaddeus performs many miracles, including healing King Abgar. However, in the Acts of Thaddeus, Abgar is healed earlier, when his messenger Ananias returns from seeing Jesus, before Thaddeus arrives. The Acts mainly describes Thaddeus's work in establishing the church in Edessa.

See also Apocrypha; *Doctrina Addaei*; Thaddaeus, the Apostle.

Acts of Thomas

The Acts of Thomas is one of several ancient writings known as the *acts* of the apostles. These writings share three main features:

1. They tell how the apostles spread the good news (the Gospel) across the ancient world.
2. They highlight the actions and teachings of one specific apostle.
3. They usually describe that apostle's death as a martyr (someone who dies for their faith).

The oldest of these *acts* are about Paul, John, Andrew, Peter, and Thomas. The Acts of Thomas, like the others, combines Christian devotion, popular Greek-style stories (called *romances*), and moral teachings similar to Jewish *haggadic* stories (traditional tales that explain or teach moral lessons).

When Was the Acts of Thomas Written?

Scholars believe that the Acts of Thomas was written at the beginning of the third century AD. It was first written in Syriac (a language related to Aramaic). The author likely had Gnostic beliefs (a movement that taught salvation through secret spiritual knowledge).

The book became popular among Gnostics, Manichaeans (followers of a Persian religious teacher named Mani), and in the wider church. It was translated from Syriac into Arabic, Armenian, and several Greek versions. From these Greek texts, it was later translated into Coptic, Latin, and Ethiopic. Some Coptic parts were even translated back into Arabic, Ethiopic, and Greek. This complex pattern created a confusing history of the text.

Only one complete early Syriac copy still exists, but it may be less reliable than some of the Greek translations that survive today.

What Is the Structure and Content of the Acts of Thomas?

In 1962, scholar A. F. J. Klijn published a critical English edition of the Acts of Thomas. In this edition, the story is divided into 13 main sections called *acts* (from the Greek word *praxeis*, meaning “deeds” or “actions”). These 13 *acts* make up 170 short chapters. The first *act* tells how the apostles received their different regions to share the good news. The book ends with the death of the apostle Thomas as a martyr.

The stories contain various liturgical pieces, sermon fragments, and hymns. This includes two particularly famous hymns used in the early

church: the “Song of the Bride” (act 1) and the “Song of the Pearl” (act 9). The first six acts are not connected by a single theme. They tell how Thomas boarded a ship to travel to India (act 3). This suggests his ministry was in southern India. However, one part describes his work with a northern Indian ruler named Gundaphoro (act 4). Acts 7 through 13, along with the story of Thomas's death as a martyr, take place in the southern Indian kingdom of Mazdai. These final *acts* appear to have been written by the same author.

The first six acts probably come from earlier stories that the writer of the last seven *acts* and the story of Thomas's death later added to his book.

Thomas's Mission to India

This work gives the earliest known account that Thomas served as a missionary in India, was killed there for his faith, and that his bones were later taken to Edessa (a city in ancient Mesopotamia). Like other apocryphal acts of the apostles, the Acts of Thomas assumes that the world was divided into regions, and each apostle was sent to share the good news in one of them. Thomas was given India.

In the Acts of Thomas, the apostle is called *Judas Thomas*. This follows the Syrian way of naming him. He is described as the *twin of Jesus*. The word *Didymus* in the New Testament also means “twin.”

In these stories, Thomas receives special revelations from God and is sometimes described as Jesus appearing again in human form (in chapters 10, 11, 39, 47, and 48 of the Acts). Many historians think these are clear indications of Gnostic thought. Others think that Jesus was represented by an apostle to make him someone the readers could more easily identify with. These are frequent features in early Christian literature. Over time, editors from the established church removed most of the Gnostic and Manichaean ideas from the Greek and Latin versions of the text.

Stories and Miracles

One quickly gets a sense of how this story works. At the beginning of the Acts of Thomas, the apostle refuses to go to India. He is then sold as a slave. This parallels the coming of Christ in the form of a servant to save humankind. Thomas arrives in India as a carpenter (like Jesus) and a builder of homes. He is a groomsman in a wedding. There he performs such miracles that the flute player is convinced that Thomas is an apostle of God. As a result, the king asks Thomas to pray for his

daughter. Thomas greatly emphasizes purity in his teaching, which usually involves sexual abstinence as well. Finally, many convert to the Christian faith, including the king. Together they form a community of believers in the city of Sandaruk.

In the second act, King Gundophor gives Thomas a large amount of money to build a palace. Thomas surprises the king by drawing the palace plan on the ground during winter. Instead of building a palace on earth, Thomas gives the money to the poor, saying that he is building a palace for the king in heaven.

When Gundophor learns this, he believes Thomas has deceived him. He throws Thomas into prison and plans to have him killed. But then the king's brother, Gad, dies and goes to heaven. There he sees the beautiful palace that Thomas built through his generosity. Gad wants to buy it for himself.

God returns Gad to life, and he asks Gundophor to sell him the heavenly palace. The king realizes that he cannot sell it and frees Thomas from prison. Thomas praises God with a hymn of thanksgiving (chapter 25 of act 2). Both brothers come to believe in Christ and ask to be baptized.

Martyrdom and Legacy

The Acts of Thomas includes many miracles and teachings that echo stories from across the New Testament, though it rarely quotes them directly. Some well-known miracle scenes are retold in new ways. For example, Balaam's talking donkey and Peter's escape from prison appear again in Thomas's life, but with added details. The talking donkey enters a house and drives out a demon when Thomas commands it. Thomas amazes everyone by repeatedly walking in and out of a locked prison. Miracles, sufferings, and conversions like these fill acts 3 through 13 and continue to the climax of Judas Thomas's ministry.

In the end, Thomas is killed with spears by four soldiers under orders from King Mazdai (chapter 168). Later, Thomas appears to his followers, who take his bones to Edessa. Meanwhile, King Mazdai's son becomes seriously ill. Desperate for help, the king visits Thomas's tomb, hoping to find a relic that could heal his son. When he discovers the body is gone, he takes some of the dust from where it had lain, and his son is healed. Because of this miracle, the king also becomes a believer and joins the Christian community.

See also Apocrypha; Thomas, the Apostle.

Aczib

1. A city in Judah ([Joshua 15:44](#)). The prophet Micah listed it with other cities that would be destroyed with Samaria ([Micah 1:14](#)). It was probably the same city as Chezib ([Genesis 38:5](#)) and Cozeba ([1 Chronicles 4:22](#)).
2. A city in Asher ([Joshua 19:29](#)). It was one of seven cities from which Asher failed to remove the Canaanite inhabitants ([Judges 1:31](#)). Recent archaeological digs at Aczib (modern ez-Zib) show that people lived in the town from the ninth to the third centuries BC.

Adadah

One of 30 cities given to the tribe of Judah when the Israelites divided up the land of Canaan. It was in the Negev, which is the southern desert region ([Joshua 15:22](#)). In the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament), the name is sometimes written as Ararah, or "Aroer" in [1 Samuel 30:28](#). It may be modern-day Khirbet Ar'arah, located 12 miles (19 kilometers) south of Beersheba.

Adah

1. One of Lamech's two wives and the mother of his two sons, Jabal and Jubal ([Genesis 4:19–21, 23](#)).
2. Esau's first wife, the daughter of Elon the Hittite and mother of Eliphaz ([Genesis 36:2–16](#)).

Adaiah

1. Josiah's grandfather on his mother's side. Josiah's mother, Jedidah, was Adaiah's daughter ([2 Kings 22:1](#)).

2. Ethan's son, a Levite of the Gershon clan and an ancestor of Asaph the psalmist ([1 Chronicles 6:41](#)). He is sometimes identified with the Iddo of [1 Chronicles 6:21](#).
See Iddo #2.
3. Shimei's son, a minor member of the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 8:21](#)).
4. Jeroham's son, a priest who returned to Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon ([1 Chronicles 9:12](#); [Nehemiah 11:12](#)).
5. Maaseiah's father. Maaseiah was a captain under Jehoiada the priest ([2 Chronicles 23:1](#)).
6. Bani's son, who obeyed Ezra's advice to divorce his non-Jewish wife after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 10:29](#)).
7. The son of a different Bani, who also obeyed Ezra's advice to divorce his non-Jewish wife ([Ezra 10:39](#)).
8. Joiarib's son. He was descended from Perez and was an ancestor of Maaseiah ([Nehemiah 11:5](#)).

Adalia

The fifth of Haman's ten sons. All of his sons were killed with their father when Haman's plot to destroy the Jews was stopped ([Esther 9:8](#)).

Adam (Person)

First man and father of the human race. Adam's role in biblical history is significant not only in Old Testament considerations but also in comprehending the significance of salvation and the identity and actions of Jesus Christ.

The creation of Adam and the first woman, Eve, is described in two accounts in the book of Genesis. The purpose of the first account ([1:26-31](#)) is to present the first pair in their relationship to God and to the rest of the created order. It teaches that in relation to God, the first humans were created male and female in God's image with his specific mandate to populate and rule over the earth. In relation to the rest of creation, the first humans were, on one hand, a part of it, being created on the

same day as other land animals; on the other hand, they were distinctly above it, being the climax of the creation process and the sole bearers of God's image.

The intent of the second account is much more specific ([2:4-3:24](#)); it seeks to explain the origin of the present human condition of sin and death and to set the stage for the drama of redemption. The story treats in detail aspects of Adam's creation omitted from the first story. For example, it tells of the formation of Adam from the dust of the ground and of his receiving the breath of life from God ([2:7](#)). It recounts the planting of the Garden and the responsibility given to Adam to cultivate it ([2:8-15](#)). God's instruction to Adam that the fruit of every tree in the Garden was his for food, except one, is carefully recorded, as well as the solemn warning that the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" was never to be eaten, under the pain of death ([2:16-17](#)). Adam's loneliness after naming the animals and not finding a suitable companion is also described, thus introducing the creation of the first woman ([2:18-22](#)). The creation of Eve from Adam's rib poignantly portrays the essential unity of spirit and purpose of the sexes intended by God.

The story does not end on such a positive note, however. It moves on to record the great deception Satan played upon Eve through the serpent. By clever insinuations and distortion of God's original commandment (cf. [3:1](#) with [2:16-17](#)), the serpent tricked Eve into eating the forbidden fruit and sharing it with Adam. Eve seems to have eaten because she was deceived ([1 Tm 2:14](#)), Adam out of a willful and conscious rebellion. Ironically, the two beings originally created in God's image and likeness believed that they could become "like" God by disobeying him ([Gn 3:5](#)).

The consequences of their disobedience were immediate, though not at all what Adam had expected. For the first time, a barrier of shame disrupted the unity of man and woman ([3:7](#)). More importantly, a barrier of real moral guilt was erected between the first couple and God. The story explains that when God came looking for Adam after his rebellion, he was hiding among the trees, already aware of his separation from God ([3:8](#)). When God questioned him, Adam threw the blame on Eve and, by implication, back on God: "It was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit" ([3:12](#), NLT). Eve, in turn, blamed the serpent ([3:13](#)).

According to the story in Genesis, God held all three responsible and informed each one of the tragic consequences of their rebellion (3:14–19). The two great mandates, originally signs of pure blessing, became mixed with curse and pain—the earth could now be populated only through the woman’s birth pangs and could be subdued only by the man’s labor and perspiration (3:16–18). Further, the unity of man and woman would be strained by man’s subjugation of her, or possibly by the beginning of a struggle for dominance between them (3:16b can be taken both ways). Finally, God pronounced the ultimate consequence: as he had originally warned, Adam and Eve were to die. Someday the breath of life would be taken from them, and their bodies would return to the dust from which they were made (3:19). That very day they also experienced a “spiritual” death; they were separated from God, the giver of life, and from the tree of life, the symbol of eternal life (3:22). God sent them out of Eden, and there was no way back. The entrance to paradise was blocked by the cherubim and flaming sword (3:23–24). Only God could restore what they had lost.

The story is not without hope. God was merciful even then. He made them clothes of skin to cover their bodies and promised that someday the power of Satan behind the serpent would be defeated by the woman’s “seed” (Gn 3:15; cf. Rom 16:20). Many scholars consider that promise to be the first mention of redemption in the Bible.

The Significance of Adam

Adam’s significance is based upon several assumptions, the first being that he was a historical individual. That assumption was made by many OT writers (Gn 4:25; 5:1–5; 1 Chr 1:1; Hos 6:7). The NT writers agreed (Lk 3:38; Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22, 45; 1 Tm 2:13–14; Jude 1:14). Equally essential to Adam’s significance is a second assumption, that he was more than an individual. To begin with, the Hebrew word *adam* (more correctly ‘a-dha-m) is not merely a proper name. Even in the Genesis story it is not used as a name until Genesis 4:25. The word is one of several Hebrew words meaning “man” and is the generic term for “human race.” In the vast majority of cases it refers either to a male individual (Lv 1:2; Jos 14:15; Neh 9:29; Is 56:2) or to humanity in general (Ex 4:11; Nm 12:3; 16:29; Dt 4:28; 1 Kgs 4:31; Jb 7:20; 14:1). The generic, collective sense of the word *adam* is also behind the phrase “children (or sons) of men” (2 Sm 7:14; Pss 11:4; 12:1; 14:2; 53:2; 90:3; Eccl 1:13; 2:3). That phrase, literally “sons of adam,” simply means

“men” or “human beings,” and when it is used the entire human race is in view. Indeed, the universalistic human connotation of the word *adam* indicates a concern in the OT going far beyond Israel’s nationalistic hopes and its God—to all the earth’s people and the Lord of all nations (Gn 9:5–7; Dt 5:24; 8:3; 1 Kgs 8:38–39; Pss 8:4; 89:48; 107:8–31; Prv 12:14; Mi 6:8).

It is no accident, then, that the first man was named “Adam” or “Man.” The name intimates that to speak about Adam is somehow also to speak about the entire human race. Such usage can perhaps best be understood through the ancient concept of corporate personality and representation familiar to the Hebrews and other Near Eastern peoples. Modern thinking emphasizes the individual; existence of the social group and all social relationships has been seen as secondary to, and dependent upon, the existence and desire of the individual. The Hebrew understanding was quite different. Though the separate personality of the individual was appreciated (Jer 31:29–30; Ez 18:4), there was a strong tendency to see the social group (family, tribe, nation) as a single organism with a corporate identity of its own. Likewise the group representative was seen as the embodiment or personification of the corporate personality of the group. Within the representative the essential qualities and characteristics of the social group resided in such a way that the actions and decisions of the representative were binding on the entire group. If the group was a family, the father was usually considered the corporate representative; for good or for ill his family, and sometimes his descendants, received the results of his actions (Gn 17:1–8; cf. Gn 20:1–9, 18; Ex 20:5–6; Jos 7:24–25; Rom 11:28; Heb 7:1–10).

As the original man and father of humankind, in whose image all succeeding generations would be born (Gn 5:3), Adam was the corporate representative of humanity. The creation accounts themselves give the impression that the mandates of Genesis 1:26–30 (cf. Gn 9:1, 7; Pss 8:5–7; 104:14) as well as the curses of Genesis 3:16–19 (cf. Ps 90:3; Eccl 12:7; Is 13:8; 21:3) were meant not only for Adam (and Eve) but, through him, for the entire race.

In Romans 5:12–21 the apostle Paul contrasted the death and condemnation brought upon humanity by Adam’s disobedience with the life and justification given to humanity through Christ’s obedience. More explicitly, in 1 Corinthians 15:45–50 (RSV), Paul called Christ the “last Adam,”

“second man,” and the “man of heaven” in juxtaposition to the “first Adam,” the “first man,” and the “man of dust.”

For Paul, the human race was divided into two groups in the persons of Adam and Christ. Those who remain “incorporated” in Adam are the “old” humanity, bearing the image of the “man of dust” and partaking of his sin and alienation from God and Creation ([Rom 5:12–19](#); [8:20–22](#)). But those who are incorporated into Christ by faith become Christ’s “body” ([Rom 12:4–5](#); [1 Cor 12:12–13, 27](#); [Eph 1:22–23](#); [Col 1:18](#)); they are recreated in Christ’s image ([Rom 8:29](#); [1 Cor 15:49](#); [2 Cor 3:18](#)); they become one “new man” ([Eph 2:15](#); [4:24](#); [Col 3:9–10](#), kjv); and they partake of the new creation ([2 Cor 5:17](#); [Gal 6:15](#)). The old barriers raised by Adam are removed by Christ ([Rom 5:1](#); [2 Cor 5:19](#); [Gal 3:27–28](#); [Eph 2:14–16](#)). For Paul, the functional similarity of Adam and Christ as representatives meant that Christ had restored what Adam had lost.

See also Eve; Man, Old and New; New Creation, New Creature.

Adam (Place)

A city on the Jordan River. When Joshua led the Israelites across the river, God made the river dry up, from Adam to the Dead Sea, so the people could cross on dry land ([Joshua 3:16](#)). Adam is modern-day Tell ed-Damiyeh.

Adam, the Second

An analogy that compares the first man, Adam, with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two important biblical passages explain this idea. Where Adam’s sin brought terrible results for humanity, the perfect work of Jesus Christ was the cure for humanity’s problem ([Romans 5:12–21](#); [1 Corinthians 15:22, 45–49](#)).

See Adam (Person).

Adamah

One of the 19 strong cities belonging to the tribe of Naphtali ([Joshua 19:36](#)). It might be modern Qarn Hattin.

Adami, Adami-Nekeb

The names of a city located near the southern border of Naphtali ([Joshua 19:33](#)). It is usually identified as modern Khirbet ed-Damiyeh.

Adar (Month)

Adar is one of the months in the Jewish calendar. The name comes from the ancient language of Babylon ([Ezar 6:15](#)). On our modern calendar, it usually occurs during parts of February and March.

See Calendars, Ancient and Modern.

Adar (Place)

The King James Version form of Addar in [Joshua 15:3](#).

See Addar (Place).

Adasa

1. A town mentioned during the period of the Maccabean revolt. At Adasa, Judas Maccabeus defeated the Syrian army under Nicanor in 161 BC. The victory was celebrated annually on the 13th of Adar ([1 Maccabees 7:40, 45, 49](#)). The modern site is probably Khirbet ’Adassa, 7 miles (11 kilometers) from Beth-horon.
2. The leader of a group of Babylonian exiles returning to Judah who could not prove their Jewish ancestry ([1 Esdras 5:36](#)). The same name, spelled Addon, might refer to an otherwise unknown place in the Babylonian Empire ([Nehemiah 7:61](#)).

Addan

A city in Persia. Some Jewish people who had been forced to live away from their homeland during exile in Babylon came back from Addan to Jerusalem with Ezra ([Ezra 2:59](#)). It was probably named after a Babylonian god called Addu. Some exiles from this city could not prove their Jewish

descent because they lost their family records. It is also spelled Addon ([Nehemiah 7:61](#)).

Addar (Person)

Addar is another name for Ard, one of Benjamin's descendants ([1 Chronicles 8:3](#)).

See Ard, Ardite.

Addar (Place)

A town on Judah's southwest border, northwest of Kadesh-barnea ([Joshua 15:3](#)). The towns Hezron and Addar were called Hazar-addar ([Numbers 34:4](#)).

Adder

One of 20 poisonous snakes in Israel and nearby countries. It is also called a cockatrice and a viper. True vipers (genus *Cerastes*, *Echis colorata*, and *Vipera palestina*) also exist there. They are poisonous snakes. These snakes have special hollow teeth called fangs that move into position when they bite. The horned viper (*Cerastes hasselquistii*) can attack horses. It is 30 to 46 centimeters (12 to 18 inches) long. It often hides in the sand, showing only its eyes and the horn-like bumps on its head.

Both Jesus and John the Baptist referred to the viper several times ([Matthew 3:7](#); [12:34](#); [23:33](#)). The reference in [Acts 28:3](#) likely refers to a small, aggressive viper (*Vipera aspis*) that strikes quickly. It is found in southern Europe and hisses each time it inhales and exhales. The poison of vipers attacks lung function and destroys red blood cells.

See Snake.

Addi

1. The ancestor of some who obeyed Ezra's advice to divorce their non-Jewish wives after the exile in Babylon ([1 Esdras 9:31](#)). In [Ezra 10:30](#), Pahath-moab is listed instead of Addi.

2. An ancestor of Jesus, mentioned in Luke's record of Jesus's ancestry ([Luke 3:28](#)).
See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Addon

Another form of Addan, a place in Babylonia ([Nehemiah 7:61](#)).

See Addan.

Addus

One of Solomon's servants. His descendants returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel from exile ([1 Esdras 5:24](#)). His name is not mentioned in Ezra or Nehemiah.

Ader

The King James Version form of Eder, Beriah's son ([1 Chronicles 8:15](#)).

See Eder (Person) #1.

Adida

A town strengthened by Simon Maccabeus ([1 Maccabees 12:38](#); [13:13](#)). Adida was in the foothills of southern Judea four miles (6.4 kilometers) east of Lydda between the coastal plains of the Mediterranean and the central highlands. Adida is likely the same place as Hadid ([Nehemiah 11:34](#)).

Adiel

1. A prince from the tribe of Simeon who led a group of Simeonites to the entrance of Gedor to find land for their flocks ([1 Chronicles 4:36-39](#)).
2. An ancestor of Maasai, a priest of Israel who was one of the first to return to Palestine after the exile ([1 Chronicles 9:12](#)).

3. An ancestor of Azmaveth. Azmaveth was in charge of King David's treasuries ([1 Chronicles 27:25](#)).

Adin

1. An ancestor of a group of people who returned to Judah with Zerubbabel after the exile in Babylon. A comparison of various lists shows that different groups of Adin's descendants returned at different times ([Ezra 2:15; 8:6; Nehemiah 7:20; 1 Esdras 5:14; 8:32](#)).
2. A political leader who signed Ezra's promise to be faithful to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:16](#)).

Adina

Shiza's son and a warrior among David's mighty men who were known as "the thirty" ([1 Chronicles 11:42](#)).

Adino

Possibly another name for Josheb-basshebeth, one of David's top three military heroes ([2 Samuel 23:8](#)). He was also called Jashobeam ([1 Chronicles 11:11](#)).

See Jashobeam #1.

Adithaim

A town in the lowlands of Judah ([Joshua 15:36](#)).

Adlai

The father of Shaphat, who took care of the king's cattle in the valleys when David was king of Israel ([1 Chronicles 27:29](#)).

Admah

A city associated with Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zeboiim ([Genesis 10:19; 14:2, 8](#)). It was probably destroyed in God's judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah ([Deuteronomy 29:23](#); it is not mentioned in [Genesis 19:28–29](#)). A recent survey of the area east and south of the Dead Sea has revealed five early Bronze Age (around 3300 to 2000 BC) cities that probably are the five "cities of the plain" mentioned in Genesis. Each city was located beside the valley of a river that flowed into the plain around the Dead Sea.

Admatha

One of seven counselors of King Ahasuerus ([Esther 1:14](#)). The king's counselors suggested that he banish Queen Vashti for saying no to his invitation to appear at a drunken party.

Admin

An ancestor of Jesus who is mentioned in Luke's record of Jesus's ancestry ([Luke 3:33](#)).

See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Adna

1. A descendant of Pahath-moab who obeyed Ezra's command to divorce his pagan wife after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 10:30](#)).
2. A priest who served under the high priest Joiakim. He returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 12:15](#)).

Adnah

1. A captain from the tribe of Manasseh who left Saul to join David's army at Ziklag ([1 Chronicles 12:20](#)).
2. A general under King Jehoshaphat of Judah ([2 Chronicles 17:14](#)).

Adonai

The name of God, usually translated as “Lord.” It shows that God is worthy of honor, majesty, and power.

See God, Names of.

Adoni-Bezek

The title of the Canaanite king of Bezek, a city in northern Palestine. After Joshua died, the tribes of Judah and Simeon defeated Adoni-bezek and cut off his thumbs and big toes. Adoni-bezek had done the same thing to many kings he had captured. He admitted that what happened to him was a just punishment from God ([Judges 1:5–7](#)). Some argue that Adoni-bezek and Adoni-zedek, who is mentioned in [Joshua 10:1](#), were the same person.

Adoni-Zedek

The Amorite king of Jerusalem at the time of the Israelite conquest of the promised land ([Joshua 10:1–5](#)). When the Amorites and Israelites fought for control of Gibeon, Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still ([Joshua 10:6–15](#)). The Israelites won a decisive victory. Adoni-zedek and four other enemy kings were discovered hiding in a cave. Joshua executed them ([Joshua 10:16–27](#)).

See also Conquest and Allotment of the Land.

Adonijah

1. David’s fourth son. Haggith gave birth to him at Hebron ([2 Samuel 3:4](#)). After his three older brothers (Amnon, Chileab, and Absalom) died, Adonijah was next to become king after David. According to 1 Kings, David promised his wife Bathsheba that their son Solomon would be the next king ([1 Kings 1:17](#)). When David seemed to be dying, Adonijah began to prepare to become king ([1 Kings 1:1–10](#)). Before this could happen, David named Solomon as the next king ([1 Kings 1:11–40](#)). Adonijah avoided Solomon at first ([1 Kings 1:41–53](#)), but eventually, he asked King Solomon for permission to marry Abishag. Abishag was the woman from Shunem who was caring for David during his last days. In the ancient Near East, taking the concubine of a deceased king was the same as claiming the throne. This made Solomon angry and he ordered Adonijah to be killed ([1 Kings 2:13–25](#)).
2. A Levite sent by King Jehoshaphat of Judah to teach the people the law of the Lord ([2 Chronicles 17:8](#)).
3. A political leader who signed Ezra’s promise to be faithful to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:16](#)).

Adonikam

The head of a family whose descendants returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the Babylonian exile ([Ezra 2:13](#); [Nehemiah 7:18](#)). Ezra says that 666 members of Adonikam’s family returned, but Nehemiah says the number is 667 (which agrees with [1 Esdras 5:14](#)). This is probably a scribal variation.

Adoniram

An important official in Israel during the reigns of David, Solomon, and Rehoboam ([1 Kings 4:6](#); [5:14](#)). Adoniram is also called:

- "Adoram", possibly a shortening of his name ([2 Samuel 20:24](#); [1 Kings 12:18](#))
- Hadoram ([2 Chronicles 10:18](#))

While Solomon's temple was being built, Adoniram was in charge of 30,000 workers ([1 Kings 5:13-14](#)). David created a system of slave labor that Solomon continued, not only for building the temple but for many other projects.

When Rehoboam became king, the people asked for lower workloads. Instead, Rehoboam decided to increase their workloads ([1 Kings 12:1-15](#)). When Adoniram went to enforce the king's rule, the people in rebellion stoned him to death ([1 Kings 12:16-19](#)).

Adoption

Theologically, adoption is the act of God by which believers become members of "God's family" with all the privileges and duties of family membership. The term "Sons of God" includes both men and women who are considered God's children ([Isaiah 43:6](#); [2 Corinthians 6:18](#)).

According to the New Testament, everyone is sinful by nature, and so are "children of wrath" ([Ephesians 2:3](#)). However, those whom God loves become "children of God" by grace ([1 John 3:1](#)). This adoption comes from God's love. It is based on Jesus Christ, who is uniquely the Son of God. The term "Son of God" refers mainly to Christ's divine nature ([Matthew 11:25-27](#); [16:16-17](#)). Jesus shares the same substance and glory as the Father. In the Trinity (the three persons of God), Christ is known as the second person. He is different from the Father because he is "the only begotten Son." This means he is the only one of his kind. Believers in Christ, though "adopted," are not equal to the uncreated, divine Son.

Even so, in Jesus, sinners are loved and chosen by God the Father to become his children by adoption ([Ephesians 1:4-6](#)). This adoption is made possible by Christ the Redeemer. Through his death and resurrection, he destroyed sin and its penalty, restoring the righteousness and life needed for sonship.

Christ is the head of the "new covenant" as the one who made it possible and the one who pays their debts. His followers become God's heirs and Christ's joint heirs ([Romans 8:17](#)). God gives them the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of his Son, as the Spirit of adoption ([Romans 8:15](#); [Galatians 4:6](#)). The Spirit in them assures believers that they are indeed God's children and enables them to call God "Father" ([Romans 8:15-16](#)). This closeness with the Creator and Savior in prayer is one benefit of adoption.

Adoption was a benefit given to God's people under the "old covenant" ([Romans 9:4](#)). Both Israel as a whole and individual Israelites knew God as Father ([Isaiah 64:8-9](#); [Hosea 11:1](#)). Since the New Testament sees adoption as only possible through Jesus Christ, Israel's adoption before Jesus's coming made them equal to servants ([Galatians 4:1-7](#)). In Jesus, the benefit of being a child was extended to include both Jews and gentiles ([Galatians 3:25-29](#)). Although adoption is a benefit enjoyed in the present experience of God's people ([1 John 3:1](#)), its full extent is realized only at their resurrection from the dead ([Romans 8:21-23](#)).

Adoraim

A city in the southern kingdom of Judah, which was strengthened by King Rehoboam ([2 Chronicles 11:9](#)). The two cities of Adoraim and Mareshah later joined together to make Idumea. In [1 Maccabees 13:20](#) it is called Adora. It is modern-day Dura, south of Hebron.

Adoram

An alternate spelling of Adoniram ([2 Samuel 20:24](#) and [1 Kings 12:18](#)).

See Adoniram.

Adrammelech

1. The son of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. Adrammelech and his brother Sharezer killed their father in the temple of Nisroch in Nineveh ([2 Kings 19:37](#); [Isaiah 37:38](#)). The nonbiblical text *Babylonian Chronicles* also talks about this assassination but does not name the sons.
See also Sennacherib.
2. A god worshiped by the Syrians from Sepharvaim. The Assyrians resettled the Sepharvaim into Samaria. The Sepharvites sacrificed children to Adrammelech ([2 Kings 17:31](#)).
See also Mesopotamia; Syria, Syrians.

Adramyttium

An ancient port city in Asia Minor. When travelling to Rome as a prisoner, Paul sailed on a ship from Adramyttium ([Acts 27:2](#)). Adramyttium is the modern-day Turkish city of Edremit. Coins found in the area indicate that Adramyttium may have been a center for the worship of Castor and Pollux (twin sons of the pagan god, Zeus).

Adria

The Adriatic Sea is an arm of the Mediterranean Sea between Italy, Greece, Albania, Montenegro, and Croatia on the east. The apostle Paul experienced a violent storm on the Adriatic Sea for 14 days ([Acts 27:27](#)). Other ancient texts also speak about the violence of the Adriatic Sea. The Jewish historian Josephus was shipwrecked in the Adriatic in AD 64, and the Greek poet Homer talked about these violent storms in his writings.

Adriel

Barzillai's son, to whom Saul gave Adriel his daughter Merab in marriage. Saul did this even though she had been promised to David ([1 Samuel 18:19](#)). Later, King David gave Adriel's five sons to the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites killed these sons as punishment against Saul's family ([2 Samuel 21:1-9](#)).

Aduel

Tobit's great-grandfather. He is only mentioned in [Tobit 1:1](#).

Adullam, Adullamite

An old Canaanite city between Lachish and Hebron. It also is the name of a cave region nearby.

The first reference to the city in the Bible is in the word "Adullamite" (someone from Adullam). It is used to describe Hirah, a friend of Judah. After Judah helped sell his brother Joseph into slavery, Judah left home and lived in Adullam with Hirah ([Genesis 38:1, 12, 20](#)).

Adullam was in the lowlands of Judah's tribal area ([Joshua 15:35](#)). Joshua conquered it, along with 31 other Canaanite royal cities ([Joshua 12:15](#)). King Rehoboam strengthened it along with 15 other cities ([2 Chronicles 11:7](#)). After the exiles' return from captivity in Babylon, people from Judah lived in Adullam again ([Nehemiah 11:30](#)).

A cave near Adullam was important several times in David's life. He hid in it when he fled from King Saul ([1 Samuel 22:1](#)). He also used it as a base in his war against the Philistines ([2 Samuel 23:13-17](#); [1 Chronicles 11:15-19](#)). David wrote [Psalms 57](#) and [142](#) when he was in the cave of Adullam. Adullam is the modern-day Tell esh-Sheikh Madhkur.

Adultery

Any sexual act between a married woman and a man who is not her husband, or between a married man and a woman who is not his wife. This breaks the unity of marriage.

In Old Testament times, having multiple spouses was not considered adultery ([Deuteronomy 21:15](#)). It also was not adultery if a husband had sexual intercourse with his female slave ([Genesis 16:1-4](#); [30:1-5](#)).

Jesus rejected these imbalances between men and women in his teaching on divorce and remarriage. He allowed for divorce in cases of adultery ([Matthew 5:32](#); [19:9](#)). However, Jesus warned that in all other cases, remarriage after divorce was adultery. Paul added that this applies only if the original partner is still alive ([Romans 7:2-3](#)).

Jesus expanded the Old Testament's definition of adultery by including people's thoughts. Any man who thinks lustfully (beyond being tempted) has committed adultery in his mind, even with no physical contact ([Matthew 5:27-28](#); compare [Job 31:1, 9](#)).

The Bible strongly condemns adultery throughout the Old Testament law, prophecy, and wisdom literature.

- The Ten Commandments forbid adultery ([Exodus 20:14](#); [Deuteronomy 5:18](#)).
- The prophets say adultery angers God ([Jeremiah 23:11-14](#); [Ezekiel 22:11](#); [Malachi 3:5](#)).
- Proverbs describe adultery as self-destructive ([Proverbs 6:23-35](#); compare [7:6-27](#)).

The New Testament continues this condemnation. Without repentance, adultery excludes people from God's kingdom ([1 Corinthians 6:9](#)). Adultery is the opposite of loving one's neighbor ([Romans 13:9-10](#)). God will judge adulterers ([Hebrews 13:4](#)).

In the Old Testament, the penalty for adultery is death for both the man and the woman ([Leviticus 20:10](#); [Deuteronomy 22:22](#)). This is the case whether a woman engaged to another man, other than in the cases of rape (where only the man is to be killed—[Deuteronomy 22:23-27](#)). The command "You must purge the evil from among you" ([Deuteronomy 22:24](#)) shows that adultery was a threat to society's health, as well as a threat to the families of the two guilty parties.

Because the consequences were so serious, guilt had to be certain. When adultery was only suspected, the wife had to be tested by taking an oath and drinking bitter water. Since she stood in the Lord's presence, the result was believed to reveal the truth ([Numbers 5:11-31](#)).

In both the Old and New Testaments, adultery is used symbolically to describe human unfaithfulness to God. The Old Testament prophets connected God's covenant relationship with his people to marriage ([Isaiah 54:5-8](#); compare [Revelation 21:2](#)). Breaking that relationship, especially by worshiping idols, was spiritual adultery ([Jeremiah 5:7-8](#); [13:22-27](#); [Ezekiel 23:37](#)).

Jesus also used this idea of spiritual adultery to describe the people who rejected his claims or demanded proof of his divine nature ([Matthew 12:39](#); [16:4](#); [Mark 8:38](#)). In [James 4:4](#), God is described as a loving, jealous husband who deals with his adulterous people who are friends with the world.

The prophet Hosea focuses on this theme in a special way. God used Hosea's personal experience to teach an important lesson. Hosea's wife was unfaithful to him, just as God's people were unfaithful to God. This story shows:

1. How serious it is when God's people are unfaithful to him ([Hosea 2:2-6](#))
2. How much God wants to restore the relationship ([3:1-5](#))

Being unfaithful to God (spiritual adultery) leads to God's judgment, just like physical adultery. However, in both cases, God's strongest desire is to repair the relationship. This happens when people truly turn away from their wrong actions and come back to God ([Jeremiah 3:1-14](#); [Ezekiel 16:1-63](#)).

See also Divorce; Marriage, Marriage Customs; Fornication.

Adummim

A pass stretching from the hill country into the Jordan Valley and which formed part of Judah's northern border ([Joshua 15:7](#)). This place also helps locate Geliloth on Benjamin's southern border ([Joshua 18:17](#)). The road from Jerusalem to Jericho went through this mountain pass.

Jerome, a church father, believed that this was where Jesus's story of the good Samaritan took place ([Luke 10:30-37](#)). The modern Arabic name means "ascent of blood." The Hebrew name Adummim, meaning "red rocks," likely comes from the natural color of the rocks, not from the fate of many travelers who were robbed there.

Advent of Christ

The advent of Christ refers to the anticipated second coming of Jesus Christ when he will return to Earth in glory to establish God's kingdom and judge humanity. "Advent" comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "coming" or "arrival."

See Incarnation; Jesus Christ, Life and Teachings of; Second Coming of Christ.

Adversary

Any foe, opponent, or enemy of God and his people. The apostle Peter's description of the devil as "your adversary" ([1 Peter 5:8](#)) has led to the use of "the adversary" as a reference to Satan in literature and popular speech.

See Satan.

Advocate

A translation for the Greek term *parakletos*. It describes the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John, as well as Jesus in [1 John 2:1](#).

See Spirit of God; Paraclete.

Aegean Sea

The Aegean Sea is part of the Mediterranean Sea. It is located between Greece on the west and north and Turkey on the east. The large island of Crete marks its southern boundary. To the northeast, the Aegean connects to the Black Sea through the Strait of Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmara.

The Aegean Sea is about 200 miles (320 kilometers) wide and 400 miles (640 kilometers) long and has hundreds of islands, including Lesbos and Patmos ([Revelation 1:9](#)). The sea was probably named after Aegeus, a king of Athens and the father of Theseus in Greek mythology.

The apostle Paul spent a lot of time in the Aegean area during his second and third missionary journeys. The three major modern cities on the Aegean are Athens (with its port of Piraeus), Thessaloniki (biblical Thessalonica) in Greece, and Izmir (biblical Smyrna) in Turkey.

Aeneas

A paralyzed man who lived in Lydda and had to remain in bed all the time. The apostle Peter healed him ([Acts 9:33–35](#)). It was a miracle.

Aenon

A small town near the Jordan River. Scholars believe it may have been located about 30 miles (48 kilometers) north of the Dead Sea. The Bible mentions that John the Baptist baptized people there ([John 3:23](#)).

Aeon

A Greek word meaning a long period or age. The English word "eon" comes from this Greek word.

See Age.

Aesora

A town warned to prepare for an invasion by Holofernes, the chief general of Nebuchadnezzar ([Judith 4:4](#)). Many ancient translations do not include this city and instead mention Samaria, Jericho, and sometimes Beth-horon. Based on the context, Aesora was likely located north-northeast of Jerusalem.

Affliction

Affliction means great suffering or trouble.

See Suffering.

Agabus

A prophet in New Testament times. He made two predictions recorded in Acts. He correctly predicted a severe famine, which happened when Claudius was the emperor of Rome ([Acts 11:27–28](#)). He also predicted that Paul would be handed over to the gentiles by the Jews in Jerusalem if he went there ([Acts 21:10–11](#)).

Agag

1. The name of an Amalekite king. It may be a general title for an Amalekite king, much like the Egyptian "pharaoh." Balaam prophesied that Israel's king would be greater than Agag ([Numbers 24:7](#)).

2. The name of another Amalekite king. God told Samuel to send King Saul to destroy all the Amalekites, down to the last sheep. Saul defeated them but saved Agag, as well as the Amalekites' best sheep and oxen. Samuel then killed Agag and told Saul that his disobedience meant he could no longer be Israel's king ([1 Samuel 15](#)).

Agagite

A term used to describe Haman, "the enemy of all the Jews," in the Persian court of King Ahasuerus ([Esther 3:1](#); [9:24](#)). Agag was an Amalekite king and Saul's enemy.

Agape

The English transliteration of the New Testament Greek word for "love" or "love feast."

See Love.

Agate

A hard, semiprecious stone. It is a variety of chalcedony (a type of quartz). It often has striped or clouded coloring.

See Minerals and Metals; Stones, Precious.

Age

A long period of time with no exact beginning or end. It can refer to the past or the future.

The Bible describes God as existing and planning "before the ages" ("before time began" in the Berean Standard Bible; [1 Corinthians 2:7](#)). He is the King of ages ("King eternal" in the Berean Standard Bible; [1 Timothy 1:17](#)). He has an eternal purpose ([Ephesians 3:11](#)). The Bible also talks about what God will do at the end of the age(s) ([Matthew 13:39-49](#)).

The New Testament builds on earlier Jewish writings when it talks about two different time periods. There is "the present age," which is seen as "evil" ([Galatians 1:4](#)). And there is "the age to come" when God will judge and set things right, and

God's people will inherit their full blessing ([Mark 10:30](#)). The Bible suggests we are now living at "the fulfillment of the age" ([1 Corinthians 10:11](#)). At the same time, we can experience some of "the powers of the coming age" ([Hebrews 6:5](#)) and its life. This means that the future perfect age has started to overlap with the present age.

The word "age" is sometimes linked with "generation." [Colossians 1:26](#) mentions a mystery hidden "for ages and generations" (compare [Ephesians 3:21](#)). However, the Bible does not divide time into periods with different ways to be redeemed.

Another related term is "world." [Ephesians 2:2](#) describes unredeemed humanity as following "the ways of this world." [Hebrews 1:2](#) and [11:3](#) speak of God's creation of the world.

The Bible also discusses human age, counted in years or other ways. Wisdom is often associated with the elderly ([Job 12:12](#)). However, wisdom in old age is not guaranteed ([Ecclesiastes 4:13](#)). Age should be respected ([Leviticus 19:32](#)). Long life is a blessing from God ([Proverbs 16:31](#)). Yet, old age is recognized as frail ([Ecclesiastes 12:1-6](#)). [Psalm 90:10](#) says a human lifespan is typically 70 years, extending to 80 with "labor and sorrow."

See Eternity.

Agee

The father of Shammah, one of the warriors among David's mighty men who were known as "the thirty" ([2 Samuel 23:11](#)).

Agia

Jaddus's wife, who is mentioned in the Apocrypha as a descendant of Barzillai the Gileadite ([1 Esdras 5:38-39](#); see also [2 Samuel 19:31-40](#)).

Her sons had become priests. But when the Jewish people came back from exile in Babylon, Agia's sons were not allowed to serve as priests anymore. The other Jews asked for proof that they were from a priestly family. These men could not give this proof ([Ezra 2:61-63](#); [Nehemiah 7:63-65](#)).

Agora

An agora was an open public space in ancient Greek cities. It served as a marketplace and center for political, religious, and social activities.

See Market, Marketplace.

Agriculture

In biblical times, agriculture in Palestine was organized into three main forms, similar to how it is today. The focus on each type of agriculture varied based on the society's social and technological development.

Preview

- Herding
- Field Cropping
- Fruit Raising
- Cultivating
- Harvesting

Herding

Raising livestock is one of the earliest jobs mentioned in the Bible. Abel ([Genesis 4:2](#)) and Jabal ([Genesis 4:20](#)) were shepherds or had cattle. This job suited their seminomadic lifestyle (moving from place to place), providing both food and clothing with only basic techniques and equipment.

The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were mainly herdsman, grazing their sheep and cattle on common land and generally not farming the soil. Jacob and his sons came to Egypt as shepherds ([Genesis 47:3](#)). Later, this way of life continued among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in Transjordan ([Numbers 32:1](#)) as well as in some tribes living in the western hills of Palestine ([1 Samuel 25:2](#)). Even after settling down, herding remained a part of Hebrew life because the animals could graze on less productive land and because of traditional practices, including the sacrifices made in the temple.

Field Cropping

Most experts believe that the Israelites learned how to farm from the Canaanites because they were in contact with them when they settled in the Promised Land. Although growing grain was known to have existed before then, with Cain being

a farmer or "tiller of the soil" ([Genesis 4:2](#)), it is unclear what exactly he grew. Archaeologists have found evidence of grain farming dating back to around 6800 BC in the Near East. Isaac sowed grain in Gerar ([Genesis 26:12](#)), and Joseph dreamed of sheaves of grain ([Genesis 37:6-7](#)). Joseph likely learned more about grain farming from the Egyptians, who grew it on the rich soils of the Nile.

However, it was the Canaanites who taught the Israelites how to grow grain. Joshua and Caleb reported the productivity of Canaan at Kadesh-barnea ([Numbers 13:26](#)), and the conquered Canaanites probably helped their conquerors learn farming techniques. This interaction may have also contributed to the Israelites' repeated lapses into idolatry ([Judges 9:27](#)). The speed at which they transitioned from a nomadic lifestyle is not clear. Some tribes remained nomadic, but by the time of the kings, many Israelites were farming the land ([2 Samuel 14:30](#)).

Wheat was one of the most important crops. Solomon sent large amounts of wheat, along with barley and oil, to Hiram ([2 Chronicles 2:10](#)), and it continued to be a major export ([Ezekiel 27:17](#)). Barley was the second most important crop. It was the main ingredient in bread early on ([Judges 7:13](#)). Later became a significant food for poorer people ([John 6:9, 13](#)). It was also used as feed for cattle.

Other field crops included beans and lentils ([2 Samuel 17:28](#)), which were ground into meal and sometimes used to make bread ([Ezekiel 4:9](#)). Leeks, garlic, and onions were grown for flavoring, while cumin, coriander, dill, mint, rue, and mustard were used as spices. Flax was important ([Joshua 2:6](#)). Some cotton was grown ([Isaiah 19:9](#)). Wool was used to supplement fiber supplies. By Roman times, cotton had become more important than flax.

Fruit Raising

Once the Israelites settled down, they began planting orchards and vineyards, which became symbols of prosperity. Vineyards produced wine for drinking, while olive orchards provided oil used in cooking, cosmetics, and medicine. They also grew figs and pomegranates. Growing these crops required more skill and equipment compared to earlier farming practices.

Cultivating

Throughout biblical times, much of the farming work was done by the farmers themselves. To start planting, they had to clear the land of forests ([Joshua 17:18](#)), stones ([Isaiah 5:2](#)), weeds, and thorns. Sometimes they terraced hilly land or used irrigation. These tasks limited farm sizes, so only wealthy individuals like Job and Boaz could have large farms.

To till the land, farmers used oxen or cows to pull very basic plows ([Judges 14:18](#); [Amos 6:12](#)). Occasionally donkeys were used ([Deuteronomy 22:10](#)). They broke up clods with a hoe or a goad, and smoothed the surface by dragging a simple harrow, which might have been a thornbush or a stoneboat. Seeds were sown by hand, either carefully in furrows or spread over the surface and then lightly covered with the harrow or stoneboat. Weeds were controlled with the plow, harrow, or hoe.

Farm tools changed little during biblical times. The plow was a simple J-shaped piece of hardwood attached to oxen at one end and held by the driver at the other end. This basic tool could only break up four to five inches (10 to 13 centimeters) of soil. After the Exodus, iron was used for the plow tip ([1 Samuel 13:20](#)), which mainly helped reduce wear.

Fertilizer use was very limited on Palestinian farms. The law required fields to lie fallow every seventh year to help replenish the soil's water and nutrients. Manuring fields was uncommon because dung was primarily used as fuel. However, the Bible mentions some use of dung around trees ([Luke 13:8](#)). The Mishnah notes the use of wood ashes, leaves, animal blood, and oil scum as fertilizers.

Harvesting

Seeding was done at the start of the rainy season, and harvesting began at the end. Harvesting typically lasted at least seven weeks. Some crops, like pulses, were pulled up by the roots, while others, like some grains, were dug with a hoe. Most crops, however, were cut with a sickle. Archaeologists have found iron sickles, some with flint flakes set into the cutting edges. The harvested grain was tied into sheaves ([Psalm 126:6](#)) and stacked into heaps to be taken to the threshing floor. Barley was harvested first, followed by wheat.

Small quantities of grain, dill, cumin, and other small crops were beaten out with a flail ([Judges](#)

[6:11](#); [Ruth 2:17](#)). Most grain was threshed on a floor elevated to let the wind blow away the chaff. The common method involved spreading the loosened straw on the floor and driving oxen over it to release the grains. Sometimes heavy tools weighted with stones were drawn over the straw ([Isaiah 28:27](#); [41:15](#)). These tools were ridden by the driver. The resulting chaff was separated from the grain through a process called winnowing, where the mixture was tossed into the air with a fork or shove ([Isaiah 30:24](#); [Jeremiah 15:7](#)). The lighter chaff was blown away, while the heavier grain fell to the ground. The chaff was either burned or used as animal feed. The grain was sifted ([Amos 9:9](#)), gathered into heaps, and later stored in covered pits in the field ([Jeremiah 41:8](#)). Sometimes it was stored in granaries ([Deuteronomy 28:8](#)).

See also Plants; Harvest; Palestine; Vines, Vineyard; Food and Food Preparation.

Agrippa

The name of two Roman rulers of Judea from the Herodian family line.

See Herod, Herodian Family.

Ague

An intense fever characterized by chills, common in malaria. The English word shares its origin with "acute." The "fever" ([Deuteronomy 28:22](#)) can "destroy your sight and drain your life" ([Leviticus 26:16](#)). Both passages describe punishments the Israelites would suffer if they disobeyed God's laws.

In early translations of the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Old Testament), translators used the Greek word for jaundice to render the Hebrew term for ague, likely due to the similar symptoms both illnesses present, particularly in connection with malaria.

See also Medicine and Medical Practice.

Agur

Jakeh's son. Although he was not an Israelite, he wrote or collected the sayings in [Proverbs 30](#). Agur was from Massa ([Proverbs 30:1](#)), an area of

northern Arabia that was settled by a son of Ishmael ([Genesis 25:14](#); [1 Chronicles 1:30](#)).

See Proverbs, Book of.

Ahab

1. The eighth king of the northern kingdom of Israel. He reigned about 874–853 BC. His father, Omri, established a royal family (dynasty) that lasted for 40 years, through the reigns of Ahab and his two sons, Ahaziah and Jehoram. This dynasty had an impact that went beyond what is written in the Bible. They were mentioned on the well-known Moabite Stone and in several writings (inscriptions) from Assyria. According to 1 Kings, Omri was a general under King Elah, the son of Baasha. After Elah was assassinated, Omri's troops declared him king ([1 Kings 16:8–16](#)). He won the resulting civil war and took over Tirzah, the capital city ([1 Kings 16:17–23](#)). Later, he moved his capital to Samaria and built defenses around it ([1 Kings 16:24](#)). Omri also made an alliance with the Phoenicians. David and Solomon had done the same but were criticized for it afterward. When Ahab became king after his father ([1 Kings 16:28](#)), he continued this alliance by marrying the Phoenician king's daughter, Jezebel ([1 Kings 16:29–31](#)). Jezebel strongly supported false gods and did not behave in ways that were right or good. Ahab's marriage to her had a major impact on Israel ([1 Kings 21:21–26](#)). It even affected the southern kingdom of Judah. Their daughter, Athaliah, married Jehoram of Judah, and this union led to terrible consequences ([2 Kings 8:17–18, 26–27; 11:1–20](#)). Under Jezebel's influence, Ahab abandoned the worship of God in favor of Baal worship. This new religion was a fertility cult that included sexual rites between priests and temple "virgins," which went directly against God's laws. By marrying Jezebel, Ahab also broke the biblical command against pagans ([Deuteronomy 7:1–5](#)). The Bible tells us that Ahab built many cities and fought several wars

([1 Kings 22:39](#)). But most of the story focuses on the prophet Elijah ([1 Kings 17:1](#); [18:1](#); [19:1](#)). Early in Ahab's reign, God sent Elijah to announce a drought and famine as punishment for the king's sins ([1 Kings 17:1](#); [18:16-18](#)). This drought lasted three and a half years and was so significant that it was remembered in the New Testament ([Luke 4:25](#); [James 5:17](#)). It caused severe suffering for both people and animals ([1 Kings 18:5](#)). At the end of the drought, Elijah challenged Ahab to gather all the pagan prophets for a showdown between God and Baal. Elijah mocked the 450 prophets of Baal for their failure to get their god's attention. Then he prayed to God, and fire came down from heaven to consume God's altar. The people then declared their faith in God and helped Elijah kill the false prophets ([1 Kings 18:16-40](#)). The drought ended immediately ([1 Kings 18:41-46](#)). When Jezebel learned what had happened to her prophets, she vowed to take revenge. Elijah fled, and on Mount Horeb, God instructed him to anoint Jehu as the new king of Israel to replace Ahab ([1 Kings 19:1-16](#)). This was later done by Elijah's successor, Elisha ([1 Kings 19:19-21](#); [2 Kings 9:1-10](#)). Elijah also confronted Ahab about acquiring a vineyard from a man named Naboth ([1 Kings 21:1-16](#)). When Naboth refused to sell his land, Jezebel arranged for false witnesses to accuse him of cursing God and the king. Naboth was then stoned to death for blasphemy. Elijah condemned Ahab, prophesying that God would bring a bloody end to his family ([1 Kings 21:17-24](#)). Although Ahab repented, causing God to delay the judgment until after Ahab's death ([1 Kings 21:27-29](#); [2 Kings 10:1-14](#)). During his reign, Ahab faced several military conflicts with King Ben-

hadad II of Syria (Aram), largely because the Syrians provoked these encounters. In their first clash, Ben-hadad besieged Samaria, the capital of Israel, and demanded heavy tribute. Ahab refused to meet these demands and consulted with the elders of Israel. As the Syrians prepared to attack, a prophet advised Ahab to strike first ([1 Kings 20:1–14](#)). The Syrians were defeated, and Ben-hadad barely escaped with his life ([1 Kings 20:15–22](#)).

The next year, Ben-hadad launched another attack against Ahab's forces, was again defeated, and eventually surrendered to Ahab ([1 Kings 20:23–33](#)). As part of the terms, Ben-hadad gave up some cities his father had previously taken from Israel and allowed Israel to have trading posts in Damascus ([1 Kings 20:34](#)). However, God later rebuked Ahab through a prophet for forming such an alliance with a pagan power ([1 Kings 20:35–43](#)).

In Ahab's final war with Syria, he had the support of an alliance with the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat ([1 Kings 22:2–4](#); [2 Chronicles 18:1–3](#)). This alliance was strengthened by the marriage of Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, to Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son. Ahab proposed a campaign to recapture Ramoth-gilead, located in the northeast of Israel. When Jehoshaphat doubted the optimistic forecasts of Ahab's 400 prophets, the prophet Micaiah was called in and predicted Ahab's death ([1 Kgs 22:5–28](#); [2 Chronicles 18:4–27](#)).

For the battle with Syria, Jehoshaphat wore his royal robes, while Ahab disguised himself as an ordinary soldier. Despite this, a Syrian archer managed to hit Ahab between the joints of his armor. Ahab died that evening, and his troops abandoned the battle. His chariot and armor were washed beside the pool of Samaria,

where, as Elijah had prophesied, dogs licked Ahab's blood. Ahab was succeeded by his son Ahaziah ([1 Kings 22:29–40](#); [2 Chronicles 18:28–34](#)). *See also* Elijah #1; Jezebel; Israel, History of; King; Kings, Books of First and Second; Chronology of the Bible (Old Testament).

2. The son of Kolaiah. He was an infamous false prophet during the final days of Judah. He was among the Jews who were deported to Babylon during the exile of Jehoiachin in 598–597 BC. Along with his colleague Zedekiah, Ahab was condemned by the prophet Jeremiah for falsely prophesying in God's name and for their sexual immorality. ([Jeremiah 29:21–23](#)).

Aharah

Another name for Ahiram, Benjamin's third son ([1 Chronicles 8:1](#)).

See Ahiram, Ahiramite.

Aharhel

Harum's son from the tribe of Judah ([1 Chronicles 4:8](#)).

Ahasai

The King James Version form of Ahzai, the priest ([Nehemiah 11:13](#)).

See Ahzai.

Ahasbai

Eliphelet's father. Eliphelet lived in the city of Maacah and was a warrior among David's mighty men who were known as "the thirty" ([2 Samuel 23:34](#)).

Ahasuerus

1. The Persian king who is better known to Western readers as Xerxes I. He ruled from 486 to 465 BC. He was the son and successor of Darius I (Hystaspis). In [Ezra 4:6](#) Ahasuerus received letters accusing the Jews of rebuilding their temple. Ahasuerus is important in the book of Esther. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, in the third year of his reign, Ahasuerus planned an invasion of Greece. The book of Esther begins with a feast that probably was part of this plan. His attack on Greece in 480 BC failed. Afterward, Ahasuerus turned to personal concerns, as recorded in Esther. Esther was the second wife of Ahasuerus. She and her cousin Mordecai convinced the king to stop a plan to kill all Jewish people. Ahasuerus ordered the death of Haman, his top helper, who had asked for the law to be made against the Jewish people. Ahasuerus had Haman killed by hanging. Ahasuerus controlled a large area "from India to Cush" ([Esther 1:1](#)). He built many things in Susa and Persepolis. His rule ended in 465 BC when he was killed in his bedroom. The book of Tobit wrongly calls him the conquerer of Nineveh ([Tobit 14:15](#)). But Nineveh was destroyed in 612 BC, over a century before Ahasuerus was born. *See* Persia, Persians; Esther, Book of; Israel, History of.
2. The father of Darius the Mede ([Daniel 9:1](#)). The identity of this father and son is unknown.

Ahava

The name of the river (and possibly town) in Babylonia where Ezra added some Levites to the group of Jewish people returning home from exile.

He also declared a fast (to stop eating for a time) there for the Jews to humble themselves and seek God's protection before returning to Palestine ([Ezra 8:15, 21, 31](#)).

Ahaz

Ahaz

Ahaz

1. A king of Judah (735–715 BC) who was known for turning away from God. "Ahaz" ([Matthew 1:9](#)) is a shortened form of Ahaziah or Jehoahaz. The three main stories about Ahaz all describe him as one of the most evil kings of the southern kingdom of Judah ([2 Kings 16](#); [2 Chronicles 28](#); [Isaiah 7](#)). He was buried without honor ([2 Chronicles 28:27](#)). His son Hezekiah was king after him ([2 Kings 18:1](#)).
 There is little agreement on when these events happened. The dates that seem to work best suggest Ahaz became king in 735 BC. He might have ruled together with his father, Jotham, from 735 to 732 BC. If so, his whole time as king was about 20 years, ending in 715 BC.
 Ahaz reigned over Judah during a dangerous time. Assyria was attacking nearby countries. Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria, were hostile towards Assyria and invaded Judah to replace Ahaz with a king who would join their alliance.
 Instead of trusting God, Ahaz asked Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria, for help. This made the prophet Isaiah angry. The following war led to Isaiah's prediction of the birth of Immanuel as a sign that Israel and Syria would be destroyed ([Isaiah 7](#)). Tiglath-pileser did destroy the two countries over the next two years, from 734 to 732 BC.
 Before Israel and Syria were destroyed, their invasion of Judah caused many problems ([2 Chronicles 28:8](#)). They took many people and things from Judah. A prophet named Obed stopped them from keeping 200,000 captives as slaves and made them return the people to Jericho. ([2 Chronicles 28:9](#)). He was joined by several leaders of Israel ([2 Chronicles 28:12](#)), who returned the prisoners to Jericho some of the spoil that was stolen.

During this time, Judah may have been attacked from the south, too. The Edomites, who Judah used to control, may have tried to become independent because Judah was getting weaker. The Hebrew Bible talks about Syria (called Aram in Hebrew) attacking the town of Elath by the Red Sea ([2 Kings 16:6](#)). But, the name Aram is similar to the name Edom in Hebrew, so many scholars think that invasion was actually by Edomites.

By allying with Assyria, Ahaz put Judah in danger. Judah became like a slave country to Tiglath-pileser. Ahaz went to Damascus, which used to be Syria's capital, to meet Tiglath-pileser. He probably went to show that he would obey the king his country now had to pay ([2 Kings 16:10](#)).

In Damascus, Ahaz saw an Assyrian altar. He had one like it built in Jerusalem to replace the original altar. He made other changes in the temple, showing he was turning away from Jewish religion.

The "stairway of Ahaz" was important in a prophecy given to his son Hezekiah ([2 Kings 20:11](#); [Isaiah 38:8](#)). The set of stairs was probably used to tell time by the movement of a shadow across it.

See also King; Kings, Books of First and Second; Israel, History of; Sundial; Timeline of the Bible (Old Testament).

2. Micah's son and Jehoaddah's father, a descendant of Saul. Not much is known about him ([1 Chronicles 8:35–36](#)).

Ahaziah

Ahab's son, who was the ninth king of the northern kingdom of Israel for two years, from 853 to 852 BC. He became king when Ahab was killed trying to take back Ramoth-gilead from Syrian control.

Ahaziah was king at the same time as King Jehoshaphat of Judah and of Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram. He was king during a period of peace with Judah, unlike the reigns of the previous kings, Asa and Baasha ([2 Chronicles 20:37](#); compare with [1 Kings 22:48–49](#)). Soon after becoming king, he had to fight against Mesha of Moab, who had stopped paying taxes to Israel.

Ahaziah followed the false religion of Jeroboam I and openly worshipped Baal like his parents, Ahab and Jezebel ([1 Kings 22:51–53](#)). [2 Kings 1](#) talks about the illness that killed Ahaziah. He fell from the second story of his palace and was badly hurt. Instead of asking God for help, he asked, "Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron." The prophet Elijah said God would punish Ahaziah for this, and the king tried to arrest him. Two groups of soldiers were destroyed by fire from God, showing God's victory over Baal because he was worshipped as the god of fire and lightning. Ahaziah died just as Elijah predicted ([2 Kings 1:2–18](#)). His younger brother, Jehoram, became king after him. This was when Ahaziah's brother-in-law, also named Jehoram, was king of Judah.

2. The son of Jehoram of Judah, grandson of Jehoshaphat, and nephew of the previous Ahaziah. He was the sixth king of Judah, but only for one year (841 BC) at the age of 22 ([2 Kings 8:25–26](#)). The northern kingdom of Israel was turning away from God, and so was Judah, because Ahaziah was the grandson of Ahab and Jezebel (his mother, Athaliah, was their daughter).

Ahaziah joined his uncle Jehoram of Israel (sometimes abbreviated Joram) in a battle against King Hazael of Syria. In the battle, Jehoram was hurt and went to Jezreel to get better. Ahaziah visited his uncle in Jezreel ([2 Chronicles 22:7–9](#)) which turned out to be a mistake. Jehu, the army commander, had been chosen by Elisha to destroy Ahab's descendants ([2 Kings 9:1–13](#)). He killed both Joram and Ahaziah ([2 Kings 9:14–29](#)).

When Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, learned about his death, she took control and tried to kill all of his children. One child, Joash, escaped death and eventually became king ([2 Kings 11:1–21](#)). Ahaziah is sometimes called Jehoahaz ([2 Chronicles 21:17](#)) or Azariah ([2 Chronicles 22:6 in the King James Version](#)).

See also Israel, History of; Kings, Books of First and Second; Timeline of the Bible (Old Testament); King.

Ahban

The son of Abishur and Abihail from the tribe of Judah ([1 Chronicles 2:29](#)).

Aher

Another name for Ahiram, Benjamin's third son ([1 Chronicles 7:12](#)).

See Ahiram, Ahiramite.

Ahi

1. Abdiel's son, a clan leader in the tribe of Gad ([1 Chronicles 5:15](#)).
2. Shemer's brother and a member of the tribe of Asher ([1 Chronicles 7:34](#)). However, in this verse, "Ahi" is probably not a name and should be translated as "brother," as in most modern translations.

Ahiah

1. Another way of spelling the name Ahijah. See Ahijah #1, #2, and #6.
2. A political leader who signed Ezra's promise to be faithful to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:26](#)).

Ahiam

Sharar's son and a warrior among David's mighty men who were known as "the thirty" ([2 Samuel 23:33](#)).

Ahian

One of Shemida's four sons from the tribe of Naphtali ([1 Chronicles 7:19](#)).

Ahiezer

1. Ammishaddai's son. He was a leader from the tribe of Dan when Israel was wandering in the Sinai wilderness after they escaped from Egypt. As the leader of his tribe, he brought a special gift when the tabernacle was set apart for holy use ([Numbers 1:12; 2:25; 7:66, 71; 10:25](#)).
2. Shemaah's son. A leader of the warriors from the tribe of Benjamin who joined David at Ziklag when he was in conflict with King Saul. Ahiezer and his men could use either hand when using a bow or sling ([1 Chronicles 12:2-3](#)).

Ahihud

1. Shelomi's son, a leader from the tribe of Asher. Ahihud helped Eleazar and Joshua divide the territory of Canaan between the Israelites ([Numbers 34:17, 27](#)).
2. Some English Bible versions (King James Version, Revised Standard Version) say Ahihud was a leader in the tribe of Benjamin. They say his father was Gera, also called Heglam, who was sent away to live in Manahath ([1 Chronicles 8:7](#)).

But the Hebrew text (called the Masoretic Text) says Ahihud's father was Ehud. In this version, it was Gera who forced Ahihud and his mother to leave their home and go to Manahath ([1 Chronicles 8:6](#)).

Ahijah

1. Ahitub's son who was a priest at Shiloh. He took care of the ark of the covenant at Gibeah during Saul's last battle ([1 Samuel 14:3, 18](#)). He may be the same person as Ahimelech or related to him ([1 Samuel 21:1-9; 22:9-20](#)).
2. One of King Solomon's secretaries ([1 Kings 4:3](#)).
3. A prophet in Shiloh who told King Solomon's official, Jeroboam, that the 10 northern tribes would rebel. Before Solomon died, Ahijah tore his robe into 12 pieces. He gave Jeroboam 10 pieces, saying that God would take 10 tribes from Solomon and give them to Jeroboam ([1 Kings 11:29-39; 2 Chronicles 10:15](#)).
Later, when Jeroboam was unfaithful to Israel's religion, he sent his wife to ask Ahijah about their sick son ([1 Kings 14:1-5](#)). Even though he was old and blind, Ahijah predicted both the child's death and the fall of Jeroboam and his family ([1 Kings 14:6-17; 15:28-30](#)). "The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite" was a source for writings about Solomon's life ([2 Chronicles 9:29](#)).
4. The father of King Baasha of the northern kingdom of Israel ([1 Kings 15:27-28, 33; 21:22; 2 Kings 9:9](#)).
5. Jerahmeel's son from the tribe of Judah ([1 Chronicles 2:25](#)).
6. Ehud's son ([1 Chronicles 8:7](#)). However, the Hebrew is difficult to translate. Some English translations call Ahijah one of Ehud's sons, while others call Ahijah the one who carried Ehud's sons, Uzza and Ahihud, into exile.
7. A warrior among David's mighty men who were known as "the thirty" ([1 Chronicles 11:36](#)). He is also called Eliam, the son of Ahithophel ([2 Samuel 23:34](#)).

8. A Levite who was in charge of King David's temple treasury ([1 Chronicles 26:20](#)).
9. An ancestor of the prophet Ezra ([2 Esdras 1:2](#)).

Ahikam

Shaphan's son, an officer of the court of King Josiah of Judah ([2 Kings 22:12](#)).

Ahikam was one of the people who were sent to the prophetess Huldah to ask about the Book of the Law ([2 Kings 22:14-20](#)). Later, under King Jehoiakim, Ahikam saved the prophet Jeremiah from being killed ([Jeremiah 26:24](#)). Ahikam's son Gedaliah became the governor of Judah after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and took most of its citizens to Babylon in 586 BC ([2 Kings 25:22; Jeremiah 39:14; 40:5-16; 41:1-18; 43:6](#)).

Ahilud

The father of the court historian Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat served under both David and Solomon ([2 Samuel 8:16; 20:24; 1 Kings 4:3; 1 Chronicles 18:15](#)). Ahilud was probably also the father of Baana, one of Solomon's tax officials ([1 Kings 4:12](#)).

Ahimaaz

1. The father of Ahinoam, the wife of King Saul ([1 Samuel 14:50](#)).

2. The son of the high priest Zadok and the father of Azariah ([1 Chronicles 6:8–9, 53](#)). Ahimaaz was loyal to King David during Absalom's rebellion. He and Jonathan, the son of the priest Abiathar, shared information with King David. News of Absalom's movements was sent from Zadok and Abiathar in Jerusalem to Ahimaaz and Jonathan in En-rogel and then brought to David ([2 Samuel 15:27–29; 17:15–23](#)). Ahimaaz was probably well-known as a fast runner. He outran the official messenger, sending news to David of Absalom's defeat ([2 Samuel 18:19–33](#)).
3. One of 12 officers in charge of getting food for Solomon's house. Ahimaaz was from the tribe of Naphtali. He married Basemath, one of Solomon's daughters ([1 Kings 4:15](#)).

Ahiman

1. One of Anak's three sons. The Ahimanites were one of the Anakim clans (a race of giants) living in Hebron when the 12 Israelite spies gathered information about the land of Canaan ([Numbers 13:22; Josua 15:13–14; Judges 1:10](#)).
2. A Levite who worked as a gatekeeper in Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 9:17](#)). This was after the time when many Jewish people had been forced to live far from their homeland and then allowed to return.

Ahimelech

1. A priest at Nob who helped David when he was running from Saul ([1 Samuel 21:1–9](#)). When David asked for food, all he had was the holy bread from the tabernacle (Jesus spoke about this in [Matthew 12:1–8](#)). Doeg the Edomite told Saul what he saw, who ordered Ahimelech to be killed. But Saul's guards did not want to kill a priest. Doeg killed Ahimelech and 84 other priests, along with their families and animals ([1 Samuel 22:9–19](#)). Only Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, escaped and went to David for protection ([1 Samuel 22:20–23](#)). David wrote [Psalm 52](#) about what Doeg had done.
2. A Hittite who joined David's fighting men during his escape from Saul ([1 Samuel 26:6](#)).
3. The son of Abiathar and grandson of his father, Ahimelech. He helped his father in the priesthood under King David ([2 Samuel 8:17; 1 Chronicles 24:3, 5, 31](#); compare with [1 Chronicles 18:16](#), where some translations call him Abimelech).

Ahimoth

Elkanah's son, a Levite in the family of Kohath ([1 Chronicles 6:25](#)).

Ahinadab

Iddo's son and one of 12 officers in charge of bringing food to King Solomon's house. Ahinadab's home was in Mahanaim ([1 Kings 4:14](#)).

Ahinoam

1. The daughter of Ahimaaz and wife of King Saul ([1 Samuel 14:50](#)).

2. A Jezreelite woman who became David's wife after Saul took back his daughter Michal and married her to Palti ([1 Samuel 25:43-44](#)). In Hebron, Ahinoam became the mother of David's oldest son, Amnon ([2 Samuel 3:2](#); [1 Chronicles 3:1](#)).

Ahio

1. Abinadab's son. Ahio and his brother Uzzah drove the ox cart carrying the ark of the covenant to its new home in Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 6:3-4](#); [1 Chronicles 13:7](#)).
2. Elpaal's son from the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 8:14](#)).
3. The son of Jeiel and his wife Maacah. Ahio was either the brother or uncle of Kish, Saul's father ([1 Chronicles 8:31](#); [9:36-37](#)).

Ahira

Enan's son. He was the leader of the tribe of Naphtali when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness after their escape from Egypt. As a leader, he presented his tribe's offering when the tabernacle was set apart for holy use ([Numbers 1:15](#); [2:29](#); [7:78, 83](#); [10:27](#)).

Ahram, Ahiramite

Benjamin's third son. He was the ancestor of the Ahiramite clan ([Numbers 26:38](#); [1 Chronicles 8:1](#), here called "Aharah"). Two shortened forms of "Ahram" in lists of ancestors may be Ehi ([Genesis 46:21](#)) and Aher ([1 Chronicles 7:12](#)).

Ahisamach

The father of the craftsman Oholiab, from the tribe of Dan. Oholiab helped build the tabernacle and everything inside of it ([Exodus 31:6](#); [35:34](#); [38:23](#)).

Ahishahar

Bilhan's son. He was the chief of the subclan of Jediahel, from the tribe of Benjamin in the time of King David ([1 Chronicles 7:10](#)).

Ahishar

The overseer in charge of Solomon's palace ([1 Kings 4:6](#)).

Ahithophel

King David's trusted advisor who later betrayed him. He joined Absalom's plan to take over the kingdom. People thought Ahithophel's advice was very wise, almost like God's words ([2 Samuel 16:23](#)).

When David heard that Ahithophel betrayed him and joined Absalom, David prayed, "O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!" ([2 Samuel 15:31](#)). Ahithophel advised Absalom to take David's concubines ([2 Samuel 16:20-22](#)). Taking the king's concubines was a public act declaring that the former king was replaced.

Since David was still alive, this act aimed to create a final break between David and Absalom. It also fulfilled Nathan's prophecy to David that because David had taken another man's wife in secret, his own wives would be taken from him in public ([2 Samuel 12:7-12](#)).

Ahithophel's second plan was to attack David quickly with 12,000 skilled soldiers ([2 Samuel 17:1-3](#)). However, Absalom did not follow this advice. Instead, he listened to Hushai, who was secretly working for David. Hushai suggested a bigger attack plan ([2 Samuel 17:4-14](#)). His speech was meant to make Absalom feel important and give David more time to prepare. When Ahithophel saw that Absalom did not follow his advice, he went back to his hometown and killed himself ([2 Samuel 17:23](#)).

Ahitub

1. A member of the priestly line of Aaron's youngest son, Ithamar. Ahitub was a descendant of Eli through Eli's son Phinehas and father of Ahijah and Ahimelech, who were priests during Saul's reign ([1 Samuel 14:3](#); [22:9–12, 20](#)).
2. A member of the priestly line of Aaron's third son, Eleazar. Ahitub was Meraioth's grandson, Amariah's son, and father of Zadok ([1 Chronicles 6:4–7](#)). Zadok was a chief priest during David's reign ([2 Samuel 8:17](#)).
3. Possibly the same as #2 above (scribes sometimes copy names twice), but probably another member of the priestly line of Eleazar, seven generations after #2 ([1 Chronicles 6:11–12](#)). Ahitub's father was also named Amariah, and his son or grandson was Zadok ([1 Chronicles 9:11](#); [Nehemiah 11:11](#)). His grandfather was Azariah. Ahitub is listed as an ancestor of Ezra ([Ezra 7:2](#); [1 Esdras 8:2](#); [2 Esdras 1:1](#)).

Ahlab

A Canaanite city in Asher. The Israelites failed to remove its inhabitants in their conquest of Canaan ([Judges 1:31](#)). It probably is the same city as Mahalab in [Joshua 19:29](#). It is the modern-day Khirbet el-Mahalib near Tyre.

See Mahalab.

Ahlai

1. Sheshan's daughter, a member of the tribe of Judah ([1 Chronicles 2:31, 34](#)). In [1 Chronicles 2:31](#), Ahlai is sometimes called a son.
2. Zabad's father or ancestor. Zabad was one of David's mighty men who were known as "the thirty" ([1 Chronicles 11:41](#)).

Ahoah, Ahohi, Ahohite

One of Bela's nine sons, a member of the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 8:4](#)).

Ahoah's descendants were called Ahohites, and two of them were among King David's most effective warriors:

- Dodo ("son of... the Ahohite," [2 Samuel 23:9](#); it is spelled "Dodai" in [1 Chronicles 27:4](#))
- Zalmon the Ahohite ([2 Samuel 23:28](#); he is called "Ilai" in [1 Chronicles 11:29](#))

Aholah

The King James Version form of Oholah. Aholah was the symbolic name for Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel ([Ezekiel 23](#)).

See Oholah and Oholibah.

Aholiab

The King James Version form of Oholiab ([Exodus 31:6](#)), a craftsman from the tribe of Dan.

See Oholiab.

Aholibah

The King James Version form of Oholibah, the symbolic name for Jerusalem in [Ezekiel 23](#).

See Oholah and Oholibah.

Aholibamah

The King James Version form of Oholibamah ([Genesis 36:2](#)). It is a name associated with two members of the family of Esau.

See Oholibamah #1, #2.

Ahumai

Jahath's descendant from the tribe of Judah ([1 Chronicles 4:2](#)).

Ahuzam, Ahuzzam

The son of Ashur and Naarah and a member of the tribe of Judah ([1 Chronicles 4:6](#)).

Ahuzzath

A royal advisor to Abimelech of Gerar. Ahuzzath went with Abimelech to Beersheba to make an agreement with Isaac ([Genesis 26:26](#)).

Ahzai

A priest of the order of Immer. Ahzai's descendant, Amashsai, was a head priest in Jerusalem in Ezra's day ([Nehemiah 11:13](#)). Ahzai and Jahzerah were probably the same person ([1 Chronicles 9:12](#)).

See Jahzerah.

Ai

A Canaanite city which existed before Abraham's time ([Genesis 12:8](#); [13:3](#)). "Ai" means "ruin," which might mean it was an important or noticeable ruined place. When Abraham traveled through the area, the people of Ai and other Canaanite cities (Shechem, Bethel, Jerusalem) did not stop him. Maybe Abraham talked to their kings and showed he came in peace. Or maybe Abraham had so many people with him that the Canaanites were afraid to fight him.

Later, when Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, they attacked Ai. It was the second city they fought against. The first time they attacked, they lost. This was because an Israelite soldier named Achan had disobeyed God by taking things from Jericho. After dealing with Achan, the Israelites attacked Ai again and won ([Joshua 7:1-8:2](#)). Joshua caught the king of Ai, killed him, and burned the city ([Joshua 10:1](#)).

People rebuilt and lived in Ai again during the time of Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. The city seems to have had different names at different times:

- Ayyah, a village of Ephraim ([1 Chronicles 7:28](#))
- Aiath, a village Assyrian armies passed through on their way to Jerusalem ([Isaiah 10:28](#))
- Aija, a village where people from Benjamin's tribe lived after returning from exile ([Nehemiah 11:31](#))

See also Conquest and Allotment of the Land; Joshua, Book of.

Aiah

1. Zibeon's son, who was a Horite descended from Seir. Aiah is listed in Esau's list of ancestors ([Genesis 36:24](#); [1 Chronicles 1:35-40](#)).
2. The father (or possibly mother) of Saul's concubine Rizpah ([2 Samuel 3:7](#); [21:8-11](#)).

Aiath

An alternate name for Ai, the Canaanite city ([Isaiah 10:28](#)).

See Ai.

Aija

An alternate name for Ai, the Canaanite city, in [Nehemiah 11:31](#).

See Ai.

Aijalon

1. A city located in a valley 15 miles (24 kilometers) northwest of Jerusalem (modern-day Yalo). It was originally given to the tribe of Dan ([Joshua 19:42](#)). Aijalon was made as one of four cities in Dan for Levites ([Joshua 21:24](#)). Later, it became a city of refuge in the tribe of Ephraim ([1 Chronicles 6:69](#)). Dan had moved north, being unable to maintain its original territory, including Aijalon ([Judges 1:34–36](#)). Near Aijalon, Saul and Jonathan won a battle against the Philistines ([1 Samuel 14:31](#)). People from Benjamin's tribe also lived there at one point ([1 Chronicles 8:13](#)). After Solomon's death, Israel split into two kingdoms. King Rehoboam strengthened Aijalon, as it was on the border of the two kingdoms ([2 Chronicles 11:10](#)). The Egyptian pharaoh Shishak claimed he conquered Aijalon around 924 BC ([2 Chronicles 12:2–12](#)). Much later, the Philistines took Aijalon during the reign of Ahaz ([2 Chronicles 28:18](#)). The valley of Aijalon is famous for a battle where Joshua fought to control Gibeon ([Joshua 10:12](#)). During this battle, Joshua prayed to God: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon" ([Joshua 10:12](#)). *See also* Cities of Refuge; Levitical Cities.
2. A city in the territory of Zebulun. The burial place of the judge Elon ([Judges 12:12](#)).

Aijelesh Shahar

A Hebrew phrase in the title of [Psalm 22](#) which is translated as "To the tune of 'The Doe of the Dawn.'" It may have been a well-known ancient melody that accompanied the psalm.

See Music.

Ain

1. A city on the eastern border of Canaan (the promised land), northeast of the Sea of Galilee ([Numbers 34:11](#)). The name means "well" or "spring." It may be modern Khirbet 'Ayyun.
2. A town in the territory of Simeon. Many scholars believe it is the same as En-rimmon ([Joshua 19:7](#); compare [Nehemiah 11:29](#)). This implies a copyist made an error that separated "Ain" from "Rimmon." *See* En-rimmon.
3. A place name in [Joshua 21:16](#). This is due to a copying mistake because the Hebrew words for "Ain" and "Ashan" look similar. The correct name is Ashan (compare [1 Chronicles 6:59](#)). *See* Ashan.

Ajah

The King James Version rendering of Aiah, a son of Zibeon ([Genesis 36:24](#)).

See Aiah #1.

Ajalon

The King James Version form of Aijalon in [Joshua 10:12](#); [19:42](#); and [2 Chronicles 28:18](#).

See Aijalon #1.

Akan

An alternate name for Jaakan, a son of Ezer ([Genesis 36:27](#)).

See Jaakan.

Akeldama

The name given to the field where Judas killed himself after betraying Jesus. It is translated as "Field of Blood" ([Acts 1:19](#)).

See Blood, Field of.

Akhmim Fragment

AKHMIM FRAGMENT

Archaeologists discovered a document in a tomb at Akhmim, Egypt. It includes part of a work known as the Gospel of Peter, which is not part of the biblical canon (not recognized as Scripture).

See also Apocrypha; Preaching of Peter.

Akiba, Rabbi

A Jewish leader who was important about AD 110–135. Akiba did not grow up wealthy and began training to be a scholar when he was 40 years old. Having gained recognition in rabbinical study, he taught at his own school in Bene-berak, near Jaffa.

In AD 132–135, the Jewish people fought against the Romans who ruled over them. During this time, Akiba was arrested for teaching the Jewish laws. He chose to die for his beliefs rather than stop teaching. He had strongly supported the revolutionary leader Bar-Kochba, holding him to be the long-awaited Messiah (God's promised savior). Akiba's work as a rabbi can be divided into three categories:

- participation in discussions about which books should be included in the Jewish Scriptures;
- development of a unique method for interpreting the Bible; and
- encouragement of a new, highly literal Greek translation of the Scriptures.

Discussions about the Jewish Scriptures

Around AD 90, discussions were held at Jabneh or Jamnia about books to be included in the Jewish Scriptures and those to be left out. Akiba was present for these discussions. They discussed which books should be included in the accepted scripture. Some were questioning if Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs should be included. They were less concerned with adding new books.

Interpreting the Bible

Akiba had a view of biblical interpretation that differed from other rabbis. For example, Rabbi

Ishmael held that the language of Scripture was to be treated as ordinary human language. It followed the same grammar, word meanings, and so forth.

In contrast, Akiba insisted that Scripture was to be interpreted in a way that did not apply to ordinary language. Ordinary language might allow different spellings of the same word with no difference in meaning, for example. If such a thing happened in Scripture, Akiba believed there must be some reason.

A New Greek Translation of the Scriptures

Other schools of interpretation accused him of changed the meaning of words to fit his own ideas to force his own interpretations of Scripture. Akiba encouraged a scholar named Aquila to make a Greek translation of the Scriptures that would represent his principles of interpretation. Aquila's translation was therefore overliteral. It ignored standard principles of grammar, so it cannot be said to be acceptable Greek.

See also Talmud; Bible, Canon of the.

Akim

An alternate spelling of Achim, who was a descendant of Zerubbabel.

See Achim.

Akkad

An alternate spelling of Accad, the ancient Mesopotamian city.

See Accad.

Akkadians

The Akkadians were an ancient people who built one of the first big kingdoms in the Middle East. They took over the land of another group called the Sumerians and greatly impacted how early societies developed.

See Sumerians.

Akkub

1. One of Elioenai's seven sons and a distant descendant of David ([1 Chronicles 3:24](#)).
2. An ancestor to a family of Levite gatekeepers who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 2:42](#); [Nehemiah 7:45](#)). This name was shared by two of his descendants (#3 and #6 below).
3. A head of a family of Levite gatekeepers who were among the first to return to Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon ([1 Chronicles 9:17](#)).
4. An ancestor of a group of temple assistants who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 2:45](#)).
5. Ezra's assistant who explained to the people passages from the law read by Ezra ([Nehemiah 8:7](#)).
6. A head of a family of Levite gatekeepers who lived in Jerusalem during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah ([Nehemiah 11:19](#); [12:25-26](#)). He is perhaps the same as #5 above.

Akrabattene

The place where Judas Maccabeus destroyed the strongholds of the "sons of Esau," who were causing trouble for the Jews ([1 Maccabees 5:3](#); [2 Maccabees 10:14-23](#)). The phrase "In Idumea, at Akkrabattene" likely refers to a northern Edomite area near Acraba ([Judith 7:18](#)). It was likely not an area in the Negev Desert as people used to think.

Akrabbim

A mountain pass or slope in southern Palestine between the southwestern end of the Dead Sea and the Wilderness of Zin. The pass of Mount Akrabbim was part of the southern border of the land given to Judah's tribe after they conquered Canaan ([Numbers 34:4](#); [Joshua 15:3](#); [Judges 1:36](#)). During the time between the Old and New Testaments,

Judas Maccabeus won an important battle against the Idumeans at this pass ([1 Maccabees 5:3](#)).

It is also called Scorpion Pass.

Al-Taschith

A Hebrew phrase in the titles of [Psalms 57](#), [58](#), [59](#), and [75](#). It is translated as "Do Not Destroy!" It might be a familiar ancient melody to which the psalms were sung.

See Music.

Alabaster

A white or translucent (see-through) stone. It sometimes has lines or veins running through it. It is often used to make vases and flasks.

See Minerals and Metals; Stones, Precious.

Alameth

The King James Version form of Alemeth, Becher's son ([1 Chronicles 7:8](#)).

See Alemeth (Person) #1.

Alammelech

The King James Version form of Allammelech in [Joshua 19:26](#).

See Allammelech.

Alamoth

A Hebrew term in the title of [Psalm 46](#) and also in [1 Chronicles 15:20](#).

See Music.

Alcimus

A disloyal high priest during the time between the Old and New Testaments in Jewish history. He came from Aaron's family but was not from the proper high priest line. Around 163 BC, the Syrian king Demetrius I made Alcimus the high priest.

Alcimus favored Greek culture, which upset the Maccabeans who controlled Jerusalem. They did not want him as high priest. So Alcimus asked King Demetrius to send General Bacchides to control Judah.

Bacchides put Alcimus in charge, but Judas Maccabeus and his brothers fought against those who supported Alcimus ([1 Maccabees 7:1-24](#)). Alcimus asked for help again. Demetrius sent an army led by Nicanor, but the Maccabeans defeated them ([1 Maccabees 7:25-50](#)).

Then Demetrius sent Bacchides back with a stronger army. This time, Judas Maccabeus was killed, and Alcimus took control of Jerusalem ([1 Maccabees 9:1-53](#)). He "gave orders to tear down the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary," but before he could finish, he became paralyzed. "Alcimus died at that time in great agony" around 161 BC ([1 Maccabees 9:54-57](#)).

See also Maccabean Period.

Alema

A city in Gilead. Judas Maccabeus freed Jews from this city who were surrounded by unfriendly gentiles ([1 Maccabees 5:24-35](#)). Most experts think Alema was about 25 to 35 miles (40 to 55 kilometers) east of the Sea of Galilee. It might be where the modern city of Alma in Gilead is today. Helam, where King David won an important battle, might be the same as Alema ([2 Samuel 10:16-17](#)).

Alemeth (Person)

1. Becher's son from the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 7:8](#)).
2. Son of either Jehoaddah ([1 Chronicles 8:36](#)) or Jarah ([1 Chronicles 9:42](#)) and a descendant of King Saul.

Alemeth (Place)

A city given to the Levites (priests) in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 6:60](#); it may be written "Allemeth"). It is also called Almon in [Joshua 21:18](#). It is located at modern-day Khirbet 'Almit, about five miles (8 kilometers) northeast of Jerusalem.

See Levitical Cities.

Alexander

1. The Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great. He was born in 356 BC and died in 323 BC. His life has influenced history and culture for more than two millennia, down to the present time. He was a brilliant organizer and military strategist. His greatest achievement was the Hellenization of the empire he won. Hellenization is the spread of Greek culture. He unified many diverse peoples through the influence of Greek culture.

The introduction of the Greek language throughout this empire also had a far-reaching effect. The Old Testament was translated into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt. The New Testament books were written in that language. The earliest Christian missionaries spoke multiple languages. This made it possible to bring the gospel "first to the Jew, then to the Greek." ([Romans 1:16](#)).

Alexander was the son of Philip II of Macedon, who was well-known and respected. Alexander was an experienced military leader in his teens. Alexander became king at the age of 20 after the assassination of his father. After putting down the rebellions that broke out at his father's death, Alexander crossed the Dardanelles and conquered Asia Minor. In 333 BC, he met and defeated the highly praised Persian army of Darius III at Issus. This battle had a lasting historical significance.

Moving down the Mediterranean coast, he captured Sidon, Tyre, and Gaza. In 332 BC, Alexander arrived in Egypt. The oracle at Siwa, who said they spoke for the Egyptian god Amon, praised Alexander as the divine pharaoh (or god-king). He founded Alexandria. It was one of the more than 60 cities he established with this name. He then marched to the East. At Arbela in 331 BC, he again defeated the Persians. When he reached Persia, he seized the cities of Susa, Persepolis, and Ecbatana. He forged eastward until he reached the Indus River. His troops were worn out and threatened to rebel. He turned back toward the West.

He died in Babylon in 323 BC from fever, exhaustion, and living in an unhealthy way (such as drinking too much alcohol). He was the master of an empire that stretched from the Danube to the Indus and south to the Egyptian Nile.

See also Greece, Greek; Hellenism; Hellenists; Judaism; Alexandria.

2. The brother of Rufus and son of Simon of Cyrene. Alexander's father, Simon, was the man who passed Jesus at the time Jesus was being led to Golgotha. The Roman soldiers compelled him to carry the cross ([Mark 15:21](#)).

3. A member of the high-priestly family along with Caiaphas, Annas the high priest, and John ([Acts 4:6](#)). It was this group who summoned Peter and John to appear before them to account for the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple ([Acts 3](#)).

4. The Ephesian who was put forward by the Jews to serve as their spokesman. This occurred when the silversmith Demetrius roused the Ephesians to riot ([Acts 19:33](#)). The preaching of the gospel by Paul and his companions had resulted in the conversion of many people. These people left the worship of the goddess Artemis. Artemis is called Diana by the Romans. This reduced the income of the silversmiths, whose revenue derived from making images of this goddess ([Acts 19:23-41](#)).

5. One who, with Hymenaeus, was mentioned as having destroyed his faith because he rejected conscience (knowing what is right and wrong) ([1 Timothy 1:20](#)). Paul states that he had "handed [them] over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme."

6. A coppersmith ([2 Timothy 4:14](#)). Paul warns Timothy to beware of this man. This Alexander harmed Paul and strongly opposed the message of the gospel. Some scholars think this Alexander is the same as the Alexander of [1 Timothy 1:20](#) (the Alexander listed above as number five).

Alexander (Balas) Epiphanes

A man who falsely claimed to be the son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Syrian king. He arrived at the city of Ptolemais in 152 BC. From 150 BC, he began saying he was the rightful king.

Alexander asked Jonathan Maccabeus for help. In return, he made Jonathan the high priest. Alexander then fought and beat the Syrian King Demetrius I.

To strengthen his position, Alexander married the daughter of Ptolemy VI, king of Egypt. However, in 147 BC, Demetrius II challenged Alexander, and Alexander was defeated in 145 BC ([1 Maccabees 10-11](#)).

Alexander Jannaeus (Janneus)

A Jewish leader who ruled during the time of the Hasmonean family's control over Judea. *See* Hasmonean.

Alexandra

The wife of the first Hasmonean king, Aristobulus, who ruled from 104 to 103 BC. After his death, she married his brother Alexander Jannaeus, who was king from 103 to 76 BC. Their marriage was likely a "levirate" marriage (a Jewish custom where a man marries his deceased brother's widow under certain circumstances).

When Jannaeus died, Salome Alexandra became queen according to Alexander Jannaeus's will. She was the only Jewish woman to rule as queen in Judah, apart from the usurper Athaliah, who was queen from 841 to 835 BC.

Before he died, Jannaeus told her to make peace with the Pharisees (a Jewish religious group) who had fought against him. Salome followed this advice. It helped that her brother, Simon ben Shetach, was a well-known Pharisee leader.

Salome Alexandra ruled for almost 10 years, from 76 to 67 BC. It was a peaceful time during which the Pharisees gained significant power. Pharisees were allowed to join the Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish council) for the first time. By the time of Christ, the Pharisees had become almost as powerful as the Sadducees in the Sanhedrin.

See Hasmonean.

Alexandria

An Egyptian city established by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. Alexandria was the capital city of Egypt through the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Next to Rome, Alexandria was the most important city in the ancient world. Alexander built the city at the western edge of the Nile River delta on a peninsula between the mainland of Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.

Its harbor was protected by the island of Pharos. Pharos was the site of a huge lighthouse (the Pharos of Alexandria). It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Pharos was shaped like the top of the English letter "T." The stem of the "T" was a long, narrow structure built out from the

peninsula into the water. This structure (a mole) protected the ancient harbor, which lay on both sides of the "T."

Alexander built the city to provide a military base, harbor facilities, and trading center. With these resources, he could control Egypt and the East. The city was laid out in a grid pattern, with two tree-lined streets, about 200 feet (61 meters) wide, that intersected in the middle. It was divided into three districts. Jews lived in the northeast. Egyptians lived in the west. Greeks lived to the south.

Alexandria was famous in ancient times for its architecture. It was known for the lighthouse, the Museum, the mausoleum of Alexander, the Serapeum, and commercial buildings. The Museum was the greatest library and learning center of the Hellenistic age. One of Alexander's generals, Ptolemy, built the mausoleum (a large tomb) of Alexander. The Serapeum was a temple to the Greek god Pan. According to the geographer Strabo, the Serapeum was shaped like a pine cone (round like an egg with a point at the top).

Archaeological evidence of these structures of the ancient city is rare. An earthquake damaged the lighthouse in AD 796. It was destroyed some 500 years later. Only one scroll holder and a statue have been found from the Museum.

Alexandria played a key role in the history of the Greco-Roman world. Alexander the Great died in 323 BC. After his death, Egypt fell to Ptolemy, whose family ruled until Cleopatra. After Alexander destroyed the city of Tyre, Alexandria became the center of trade between the Greek world and the East, as well as central Egypt. Julius Caesar's romance with Cleopatra led to the end of Ptolemy's family rule.

The Museum in Alexandria was not like museums today. It was actually a university and library. The Museum was founded by Ptolemy Philadelphus. It made Alexandria the most important place for learning in the Greek world. The Museum focused on studying grammar, analyzing literature, and preserving important texts. Before it was partly destroyed by Egyptians and Julius Caesar's forces in 47 BC, it reportedly had 700,000 written works, including carefully edited texts of the Greek classics (popular Greek writings). In the late Hellenistic and Roman periods, the Museum started focusing on the new sciences. An example of this new scientific focus was a great lighthouse they built. It could be seen by the clever use of mirrors 20 miles (32 kilometers) at sea.

From its beginning, Alexandria had a large Jewish population. With the support of the Ptolemies, Jewish scholars produced the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. Ethnic tension in the city grew as the Jewish populace increased and prospered. In AD 42, the tension erupted into riots by the Greeks and the expulsion of Jews from the gentile sections into which they had spread. Jewish commercial success, particularly in the wheat trade, led to intensified hostility towards Jewish people.

There are only a few references to Alexandria in Scripture:

- Stephen, who became the first Christian martyr, debated with "Alexandrians" in Jerusalem concerning Jesus as the Messiah ([Acts 6:9](#)). Some translations identify the Alexandrians as "Jews from Alexandria."
- Apollos, who was a native of Alexandria ([Acts 18:24](#)), was described as "an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures."
- The apostle Paul made his sea journey to Rome aboard two Alexandrian ships ([Acts 27:6](#); [28:11](#)).

The earliest emphasis in biblical studies at Alexandria was Gnostic. This emphasis began under a teacher named Basilides and continued under his son Isidore.

Later, an allegorizing school developed. The allegorical method tried to find spiritual truths in every detail of the Bible, even in parts that might seem unimportant at first glance. It had regular support from wealthy supporters and an organized curriculum. Clement and Origen are the names most often associated with this school. The teaching emphasized three levels of meaning in the Scriptures: historical, ethical, and spiritual.

Arianism was a belief in early Christianity that was later considered heresy by the church. It was developed in Alexandria, an important city in ancient Egypt, by a man named Arius, presbyter of Alexandria. This school of thought said that Christ was not eternal. Arianism argued that since Christ was begotten he therefore had a beginning.

The chief opponent of Arianism was Athanasius, who was also from Alexandria. Athanasius played a

crucial role in defending the early church's understanding of who Jesus is and how he relates to God the Father. It was primarily through Athenasius's efforts that this wrong teaching lost its power and influence in the fourth century, and the Symbol of Nicaea (a statement of Christian belief) was confirmed at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381.

See also Alexander #1; Hellenism; Philo Judaeus; Hellenists.

Alexandrinus, Codex

One of the three most important "codexes," or bound books, containing early copies of the whole Bible in Greek. The other two most important codexes are the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus codexes. *See* Bible, Manuscripts and Text of the (New Testament).

Algum

A type of tree that produces valuable wood. The scientific name of the algum tree is *Juniperus excelsa* Bieb.

People used algum wood in building projects during ancient times. Algum was used to build the temple and the palace, as well as musical instruments. The timber from Lebanon mentioned in [2 Chronicles 2:8](#)) is probably the juniper tree. Algum wood may have also been brought from Ophir ([2 Chronicles 9:10-11](#)).

Some Bible translators believe that "algum" and "almug" are different Hebrew spellings of the same tree (see [2 Chronicles 2:8](#), marginal note). Others suggest the word "algum" might be an error made by someone copying the word "almug" incorrectly.

See Almug.

Aliah

Another name for Alvah, Esau's descendant ([1 Chronicles 1:51](#)).

See Alvah.

Alian

Another name for Alvan, Shobal's son ([1 Chronicles 1:40](#)).

See Alvan.

Alien

A foreigner, stranger, or non-native resident in a land.

See Foreigner.

Allammelech

A town in Asher's territory ([Joshua 19:26](#)).

Allegory

A method of interpretation (called "allegorizing"), especially used in biblical interpretation. Allegory seeks to find a deeper moral, theological, and spiritual meaning behind the text. These meanings are thought to be behind the plain words of the text.

Allegory began among the ancient Greeks. Hesiod and Homer, two important Greek writers, wrote epic poetry (long poems about gods and heroes). Their poetry provided the basis for religion and piety. These writings appeared outdated as the way people understood life and the universe developed. Eventually, historical, geographical, cultural, and social elements lost their meaning. Interpreters looked for ways to keep these traditions. They looked past these literary features to find lasting truths and values.

In Greek-speaking Judaism, the best example of an allegorist is Philo of Alexandria. Philo lived during the first century. He used allegory to make the Old Testament relevant in the Greco-Roman world. Later, a group of Christian interpreters in Alexandria also used allegory. It was their principal method of handling both the Old Testament and New Testament.

Different types of allegory became the main way to understand religious texts during the Middle Ages (a time period from about 500 to 1500 AD). Many Protestant and Roman Catholic groups still think allegory is useful today. Often, the people who use allegory are focused on personal faith and spiritual experiences.

Allegorizing is a personal way of understanding texts. Each person who uses allegory might do it differently. For allegorists, the plain meaning of a text is either irrelevant or less important. Allegory separates true meaning from the literal and historical details.

In more advanced applications of allegory, the external and obvious meanings are irrelevant. It does not matter if an event is historical or not. The author's intentions do not determine the "true," "spiritual" meaning of a biblical passage.

Allegory uses the details of a work as clues pointing to spiritual meanings. Allegorists use devices that establish random connections between ancient and contemporary events.

Allegory creates meaning from word roots. It also creates meaning by the possible relationship between similar words and sounds. It emphasizes prepositions. Allegory assigns symbolic meaning to individual parts. These parts include persons, places, things, numbers, and colors, among other details. It may claim to discover hidden truth in the shapes of letters.

The Christian church has used allegory for a long time. The apostle Paul uses it in [Galatians 4:24, 26](#). However, allegory has problems that cannot easily be separated from this method of interpretation. The Protestant Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin rejected allegory because they did not believe it was a valid method of interpreting Scripture.

Allegory has two serious problems:

1. Allegory separates the meaning of the text from the literal meaning.
2. Allegory cannot decide which meaning is right when people find different hidden messages in the same text.

Allegory does not have clear rules or guidelines to follow. Interpreters are at risk of putting their own ideas into the Bible instead of understanding Scripture's more obvious message.

See also Hellenism; Philo Judaeus.

Alleluia

The King James Version spelling for Hallelujah.

See Hallelujah.

Allemeth

The New American Standard Bible spelling of Alemeth in [1 Chronicles 6:60](#).

See Alemeth (Place).

Alliance

An alliance is a close association of powerful individuals or nations for a common goal. Such alliances were confirmed in various ways:

- giving gifts
- making oaths
- paying money to the family when marrying (dowries)
- arranging marriages between important families
- making special agreements (covenants)

In the time of the patriarchs (when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived), Israelites made alliances with foreign nations easily. Abraham made alliances with:

- three Amorites: Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner ([Genesis 14:13, 24](#))
- Abimelech, king of Gerar ([Genesis 21:22–34](#)).

Isaac, Abraham's son, also allied with Abimelech ([Genesis 26:26–31](#)).

Later, Moses did not allow alliances with the Canaanites for religious reasons ([Exodus 23:31–33](#); [34:12](#); [Deuteronomy 7:1–4](#)). In the time of the judges, the Israelites were reminded of this command ([Judges 2:1–3](#)). But, [Joshua 9](#) tells how Israel was tricked into an alliance with the Gibeonites.

During the monarchy, many kings made alliances and intermarried with foreigners:

- David (before he was king of all Israel) agreed with Achish, king of Gath, to fight with the Philistines against Saul's army ([1 Samuel 27:1-28:2](#)).
- Solomon made trade alliances with Hiram of Tyre ([1 Kings 5:1-18](#); [9:26-28](#)).
- Solomon also made trade alliances with the king of Egypt ([1 Kings 9:16](#)).
- Asa allied with Ben-hadad, king of Syria ([1 Kings 15:18-20](#)).
- King Ahab allied with Jehoshaphat to fight Syria ([1 Kings 22:1-4](#); [2 Chronicles 18:1-13](#)).
- King Pekah allied with Rezin, king of Syria, to fight Ahaz, king of Judah ([Isaiah 7:1-9](#)).
- King Ahaz allied with Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, to fight against Pekah and Rezin ([2 Kings 16:7-9](#)).
- King Zedekiah allied with Egypt to fight against the Babylonians ([2 Kings 24:20](#); [Ezra 17:1-21](#)).

These alliances often brought foreign religions into Jerusalem ([2 Kings 16:10-18](#)). This led the prophets to criticize them ([Hosea 8:8-10](#); [Isaiah 30:1-3, 15-16](#); [Jeremiah 2:18](#)).

Allogenes Supreme

The title of this Gnostic work means "The Most High Stranger." It was discovered in 1946 in an urn near Nag Hammadi in Egypt. The work of Allogenes is mentioned by the Neoplatonist historian Porphyry and by later Syriac Christian writings against heresy. The name Allogenes means "foreigner" or "stranger."

Allogenes Supreme is a Gnostic "apocalypse" written in Coptic. It describes the creation of the higher world and praises Barbelo, the heavenly mother. The surviving copy of this work was written during the fourth century AD. However, the original version may date back to the second century AD.

See also Apocrypha.

Allon (Person)

Ziza's ancestor from Simeon's tribe ([1 Chronicles 4:37](#)).

Allon (Place)

A landmark oak tree in Naphtali's territory. Some translations like the King James Version considered it to be the name of a town in [Joshua 19:33](#). The Berean Standard Bible better reads "the great tree of Zaanannim." *See* Zaanannim.

Allon-Bachuth, Allon-Bacuth

An oak tree near Bethel under which Deborah was buried ([Genesis 35:8](#)). Deborah is Rebekah's elderly nurse. The tree was named the "Oak of Weeping."

Allotment of the Land

After Israel conquered Canaan, the land was divided between the twelve tribes. However, the land was not divided according to what they won in battle. Instead, they fought together and divided the conquered land by casting lots (a way of making a random choice).

This method was similar to tossing a coin (to see which side would land facing up) or drawing sticks (where individuals pick from a set of concealed sticks, one of which is shorter or marked).

Lots were cast at other times in the Bible to determine God's will. By using lots, the tribes avoided arguments. It also showed that the land belonged to God, and he could give it to whoever he wanted (see [Proverbs 16:33](#)). The Lord gives orders to divide the land by lots in [Numbers 26:52-56](#) (see also [Numbers 34](#)). [Joshua 13-19](#) describes how the land was divided at Shiloh.

The southern part of the Transjordan (the land east of the Jordan River) was given to two and a half tribes by Moses in [Numbers 32](#). West of the Jordan, the remaining nine and a half tribes received plots of land by lot. However, this only happened after their faithful leader, Caleb, got his choice of the region around Hebron. The tribes were given their land in order of their relative locations.

1. Judah received territory in the South, including Caleb's lands, and extended north to Jerusalem.
2. Ephraim and Manasseh, the patriarch Joseph's sons, received large central portions of the land.
3. Benjamin received the land between Judah and Ephraim.
4. Simeon received land in southern Judah.
5. Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan received the land north of Manasseh ([Joshua 19](#)).

Originally, Dan received the land west of Judah. However, the Philistines lived in the land on the coastline. So, Dan migrated north and renamed the captured city of Lachish after their tribal ancestor, Dan (see [Judges 18](#)). From then on, the phrase "from Dan to Beersheba" meant all of Israel.

Assigning land by casting lots may seem strange, but to the customs of that time, it made theological sense. Rulers in the ancient Near East were believed to be representatives of their gods. They owned the lands and gave portions to whomever they wanted. After the exodus, Israel was a theocracy (God was their king). No human had power over God. So, no human owned the land. Therefore, God was the only one who could give them their land.

See also Conquest and Allotment of the Land; Israel, History of; Joshua, Book of; Chronology of the Bible (Old Testament).

Almighty

A name for God found in several books of the Bible. It is common in the books of Job and Revelation. *See* God, Names of.

Almodad

A son or descendant of Joktan. He is a member of Noah's family through Noah's son Shem ([Genesis 10:26](#); [1 Chronicles 1:20](#)).

Almon

Another name for Alemeth in [Joshua 21:18](#). *See* Alemeth (Place).

Almon-Diblathaim

An area in Moab where the Israelites camped during their 40 years of wandering ([Numbers 33:46–47](#)). Some identify it with Beth-diblathaim ([Jeremiah 48:22](#)).

See also Wilderness Wanderings.

Almond

A tree that looks similar to a peach tree. Its scientific name is *Amygdalus communis*. The almond tree has pointed leaves with jagged edges and gray bark. It grows to a height of 3 to 7.6 meters (10 to 25 feet). Almond trees bloom very early in the year.

The Hebrew name for almond (*shaqed*) comes from a word that means "to watch for." To the Jewish people, the almond was a sign of spring ([Jeremiah 1:11](#)).

Alms

Charitable gifts. The practice of giving alms to the poor. The English word "alms" comes from a longer Greek word used in the Septuagint to translate a Hebrew word for "righteousness." The Septuagint is an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Old Testament Teachings on Caring for the Poor

The Hebrew term is unrelated to almsgiving. The Old Testament has no specific reference to almsgiving. The Israelites were expected to care for the poor in their midst. The law of Moses contains many commands to treat the poor justly and humanely. Important among them is [Deuteronomy 15:7–11](#). This verse says that poor people will always live in Israel and commands Israel to take action to help.

Every seventh year all fields and gardens were to remain unharvested for the benefit of the poor and

needy ([Exodus 23:10-11](#)). Every third year, one-tenth of all produce had to be given to the Levites (a Hebrew tribe that had no property), the traveler, the fatherless, and the widow ([Deuteronomy 14:28-29](#)). Forgotten bundles of grain and the grain left behind from grain fields at each harvest were left for the needy and the stranger ([Leviticus 19:9; 23:22](#)). From every vineyard and olive grove, any fallen fruit and the imperfect and topmost clusters were reserved for them ([Leviticus 19:10; Deuteronomy 24:20-21](#)). Likewise, people traveling for the festival were expected to share food with those in need ([Deuteronomy 16:11-14](#)).

The Old Testament prophets continued to champion the theme of kind treatment for the poor. The strongest expressions of the social justice theme are found in Isaiah ([1:23; 3:15; 10:1-2; 11:4-5; 58:5-10](#)) and Amos ([2:6-8; 4:1; 5:11; 8:4](#)). Similarly, the Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes each show the need of the poor. These books provide hope to those who are suffering and ask others to take up their cause or to improve their condition. The requests were based on the belief that all human beings are created by the one God. He commanded Israel to deal with the poor who lived with them with kindness that included fair treatment, not just giving.

Almsgiving Between the Old and New Testaments

During the period between the Old and New Testaments, the giving of alms became more important. [Leviticus 19:18](#) offers a general command to show loving-kindness. This became defined as specific individual acts believed to contribute to personal merit and security. [Sirach 3:30](#) says "almsgiving atones for sin." [Tobit 4:10](#) says almsgiving "delivers from death." Along with prayer and fasting, almsgiving was considered one of the most important expressions of Jewish obedience ([Tobit 12:8-9](#)).

Almug

The almug is a valuable wood that King Solomon imported to build pillars in the temple and to make harps for the temple musicians ([1 Kings 10:11-12](#)). This wood was brought by ship from Ophir to Ezion-geber, a port near Elath. Today, scholars think Ophir might have been in Arabia, India, or East Africa near Mozambique. The word "algum" in [2 Chronicles 2:8](#) probably refers to the same type

of wood.

The scientific name of the almug tree is *Pterocarpus santalinus*.

See Algum.

Aloe

The aloe is a plant found mostly in Africa that looks similar to a lily. Some types of aloe provide both medicine and fiber. In the Bible, aloe is mentioned with other fragrant plants like myrrh and balm (see [Psalm 45:8; Proverbs 7:17; Song of Solomon 4:14; John 19:39](#)).

Most scholars believe these verses refer to two different plants:

- In the Old Testament, aloe likely refers to the eaglewood tree (*Aquilaria agallocha*). This large tree comes from northern India, Malaya, and Indochina. It can grow up to 36.6 meters (120 feet) tall with a trunk about 3.7 meters (12 feet) around. As its wood decays, it produces a strong fragrance. This makes it valuable for perfume, incense, and fumigation. In ancient times, people would burn fragrant woods to fill spaces with aromatic smoke.
- In the New Testament ([John 19:39](#)), aloe probably refers to the true aloe (*Aloe succotrina*). Egyptians used its bitter juice in the embalming process. Embalming is a process that preserves dead bodies. Though true aloe does not smell very pleasant, people sometimes used it as a medicine for horses.

Aloth

A place in one of Solomon's administrative districts ([1 Kings 4:16](#)). See Bealoth #2.

Alpha and Omega

A phrase used as a title in the New Testament for both God and Jesus Christ ([Revelation 1:8](#); [21:6](#); [22:13](#)). Alpha (Α) is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega (Ω) is the last letter. The English equivalent is “the A and the Z.” Similar titles are “the beginning and the end” and “the first and the last” ([Revelation 1:17](#); [2:8](#); [21:6](#); [22:13](#)).

Similar statements can be found in the Old Testament in [Isaiah 41:4](#); [44:6](#); and [48:12](#). They stress the unique and faithful sovereignty (supreme power and authority) of God and his Son, Jesus. They remind Christians that the creation of the universe and the end of all human history are both under the control of the living God. *See* God, Names of.

Alphaeus

1. Father of James, one of the 12 apostles ([Matthew 10:3](#); [Mark 3:18](#); [Luke 6:15](#); [Acts 1:13](#)). He is thought by some to be the same as Clopas of [John 19:25](#).

2. Father of Levi, the tax collector ([Mark 2:14](#)). He is also known in the gospels as Matthew ([Matthew 9:9](#)).

Altar

The platform used to offer animal sacrifice or burnt offerings to a god. Other offering rituals include burning incense ([Exodus 30:1–10](#)). The Hebrew word for altar and the verb “to slaughter” both come from the same root word. The meaning of both words refers to ritual sacrifice of animals to God as a covering for sin. Many communities in the ancient Middle East practiced this type of sacrifice. Israel’s neighbors the Canaanites had their own altars and rituals. The altar was always a raised-up place.

The Bible refers to several altars built by people in the Old Testament:

- Noah offered burnt offerings ([Genesis 8:20](#)).
- Abraham built an altar at Shechem, another at Bethel, and one on Mount Moriah ([Genesis 12:7](#); [12:8](#); [22:9](#)).
- Isaac built an altar at Beersheba ([Genesis 26:25](#)),
- Jacob built an altar at Shechem and Bethel (([Genesis 33:20](#); [35:7](#)).
- Moses built one at Rephidim and another at Horeb (([Exodus 17:15](#); [24:4](#)).

In each case, the individual erected the altar to commemorate help received from God.

The description of the tabernacle in Exodus 25—27 included two altars. The larger altar, made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze, measured 5 by 5 by 3 cubits (2.3 by 2.3 by 1.4 meters or 7.5 by 7.5 by 4.5 feet). This was the altar used for burnt offerings ([Exodus 27:1–8](#); [38:1–7](#)). The smaller golden altar for burning incense measured about 45 centimeters (18 inches) square and 90 centimeters (3 feet) high ([Exodus 30:1–10](#); [40:5](#)).

In [Exodus 20:24–26](#), God instructed Israel to make an altar from earth or uncut stones. God commanded Israel to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings in “every place where God caused his name to dwell.” This is why individuals build altars throughout the Old Testament:

- Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal ([Joshua 8:30-31](#)).
- The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar in Transjordan ([Joshua 22:10-16](#)).
- Gideon built an altar in Ophrah ([Judges 6:24](#)).
- The family of David built an altar in Bethlehem ([1 Samuel 20:6, 29](#)).
- David built an altar at the threshing floor of Araunah ([2 Samuel 24:25](#)). A threshing floor is a flat area where grain is separated from stalks.
- Elijah built an altar on Mount Carmel ([1 Kings 18:30](#)).

People built all these altars, except Elijah's on Mount Carmel, before Solomon's temple existed.

Like the tabernacle, Solomon's temple included 2 altars. One was 20 cubits square (about 7.6 meters or 25 feet) and 10 cubits high (about 3.8 meters or 12.5 feet). Made of bronze and used for burnt offerings, this altar was the center of temple worship. King Ahaz removed the bronze altar from its place at the command of the Assyrian ruler Tiglath-pileser ([2 Kings 16:14](#)). This altar was later restored to its proper place by Hezekiah ([2 Chronicles 29:18](#)). The second altar for incense, made of cedar and overlaid with gold, stood in front of the veil ([1 Kings 6:20-22](#)).

The destruction of Solomon's temple and the exile of the Jewish people made the prophet Ezekiel dream of restoring the temple. In his vision, the sacrificial altar rose in three levels to 10 cubits high (5.3 meters or 17.5 feet). The tall altar rested on a base about 20 cubits (35 feet or 10.6 meters) square. This outsized altar emphasized the need for atonement in Israel ([Ezekiel 43:13-17](#)). No reference to an incense altar appeared in the vision.

Zerubbabel built an altar of burnt offerings ([Ezra 3:2](#)). Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated this altar (made it unclean), probably with an image of Zeus ([1 Maccabees 1:54](#)). There was also an altar of incense. Antiochus Epiphanes removed the golden altar ([1 Maccabees 1:21](#)) in 169 BC. Both were later restored by Judas Maccabeus ([1 Maccabees 4:44-49](#)).

Christian worship does not require a sacrificial altar. The death of Jesus Christ serves as the final

sacrifice for sin. The Bible often refers to the altar of burnt offering and the altar of incense ([Matthew 5:23-24](#); [23:18-20, 35](#); [Luke 11:51](#); [1 Corinthians 9:13](#); [10:18](#); [Hebrews 7:13](#); [Revelation 11:1](#)). Some references apply to the earthly temple ([Luke 1:11](#)). Other references apply to the heavenly temple ([Revelation 6:9](#); [8:5](#); [9:13](#)).

See also Tabernacle; Temple.

Alush

A place where Israel set up camp during their journey through the wilderness. [Numbers 33:13-14](#) mentions it as being between Dophkah and Rephidim on the way to Mount Sinai.

See also Wilderness Wanderings.

Alvah

Esau's descendant and a chief of Edom ([Genesis 36:40](#)). Alvah is alternately called Aliah in [1 Chronicles 1:51](#).

Alvan

Shobal's son and a descendant of Esau ([Genesis 36:23](#)). Alvan is also spelled Alian in [1 Chronicles 1:40](#).

Amad

A town in northern Palestine near Mount Carmel. It is within the boundaries of Asher's territory ([Joshua 19:26](#)).

Amal

The name of Helem's son and a descendant of Asher. His name is found in [1 Chronicles 7:35](#).

Amalek, Amalekites

Where Did the Amalekites Come From and Where Did They Live?

Amalek was the son of Eliphaz by his concubine, Timna ([Genesis 36:12](#); [1 Chronicles 1:36](#)). Eliphaz was Esau's son. Amalek was the chief of Edom. His children were known as Amalekites. They settled in the Negev Desert and became allies of the Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, Ishmaelites, and Midianites. The Amalekites were enemies of Israel. Amalek was part of the brotherly battle that began with his grandfather Esau. Esau fought with Jacob. Since Jacob was one of the fathers of Israel, the conflict between Amalek and Israel had both a theological and political basis.

The Amalekites did not live in one area for long but moved from place to place. At times, their land in the Negev ranged from south of Beersheba to the southeast as far as Elath and Ezion-geber. They fought westward into the coastal plain, eastward into the Arabah wastelands, and possibly over into Arabia. In the Negev, they blocked the path of the Israelites during the exodus out of Egypt ([Exodus 17:8-16](#)).

Conflicts with Israel

Israel's first encounter with the warriors of Amalek came at Rephidim near Sinai. Moses stood on top of a hill and held up the rod of God until Israel won the battle. He built an altar and named it "The Lord Is My Banner" ([Exodus 17:1, 8-16](#)). The Amalekites attacked the Israelites who walked slower than the rest of the group during Israel's desert wanderings ([Deuteronomy 25:17-18](#)). When the Israelites reached the promised land's boundary, they rejected Caleb and Joshua's report. The unbelieving Israelites attacked the Amalekites and lost ([Numbers 14:39-45](#)).

When King Balak of Moab called Balaam to curse Israel, he turned his curse upon Moab. In his last divine message, he predicted the end of Amalek's tribe ([Numbers 24:20](#)). In his farewell speech, Moses reminded the children of Israel that Amalek's people had attacked them. He told them to remove all memory of the name Amalek ([Deuteronomy 25:17-19](#)).

During the period of the judges, the Amalekites continued to live in their traditional area. They became connected with the Kenites ([1 Samuel 15:5-6](#)). The Kenites are the descendants of Moses's father-in-law. He lived in the Negev south

of Arad ([Judges 1:16](#)). The Amalekites were still related to other nomadic tribes or groups of people who moved from place to place such as the Moabites, Ammonites, and Midianites.

Eglon was the king of Moab. Eglon got these nomadic tribes to unite to defeat Israel and seize Jericho ([Judges 3:12-14](#)). The Song of Deborah cites Amalek as one of a group of tribes against Israel ([Judges 5:14](#)). The name is omitted by many modern translations. Some translations translate "Amalek" as "into the valley" (Revised Standard Version). However, the Amalekite attacks is referred to in other passages of the time of Deborah and Barak ([Judges 6:3, 33; 7:12](#)). Gideon defeated the group ([Judges 7:12-25](#)). There is no evidence that the Amalekites were driven out of the Negev.

The Decline and Defeat of the Amalekites

According to 1 Samuel, Saul sent his armies out against the Amalekites ([14:47-48](#)). God commanded him to destroy them and everything they owned ([15:1-3](#)). He did attack their city ([15:4-7](#)), but he did not kill their king, Agag ([15:8](#)). Saul gave the best Amalekite livestock to his men ([15:9](#)). God punished him. He sent Samuel to tell Saul that his kingship was finished because of his sin ([15:10-31](#)). Samuel then killed Agag ([15:32-35](#)).

Some Amalekites remained. They must have escaped. They appear later as David's enemies while he was still a young warrior ([27:8](#)). Some Amalekites took David's two wives. He rescued them and killed most of the attackers ([30:1-20](#)).

The Amalekites were Israel's sworn enemies throughout King David's reign ([2 Samuel 1:1](#)). They are listed among the enemies of Israel ([2 Samuel 8:12; 1 Chronicles 18:11; Psalm 83:7](#)). The rest of the Amalekites were killed a few hundred years after David when King Hezekiah ruled the southern kingdom of Judah ([1 Chronicles 4:41-43](#)).

Amam

A town in the southern part of the kingdom of Judah. It is along the border of Edom ([Joshua 15:26](#)).

Amana

A mountain ridge, probably in the Anti-Lebanon range. [Song of Solomon 4:8](#) mentions it along with Mount Senir and Mount Hermon. It is perhaps the source of the Abana (or Amana) River ([2 Kings 5:12](#)). See Abana.

Amariah

A common Old Testament name, meaning "the Lord has spoken" or "the Lord has promised."

1. The son of Meraioth, a descendant of Aaron's son Eleazer ([1 Chronicles 6:7, 52](#)).
2. A high priest, Azariah's son, and Ahitub's father ([1 Chronicles 6:11; Ezra 7:3](#)).
3. Hebron's second son and Kohath's grandson from Levi's tribe ([1 Chronicles 23:19; 24:23](#)).
4. A chief priest during the reign of King Jehoshaphat of the southern kingdom of Judah ([2 Chronicles 19:11](#)).
5. A Levite who served faithfully under King Hezekiah of Judah ([2 Chronicles 31:14-15](#)).
6. One of Binnui's sons, who obeyed Ezra's recommendation to divorce his non-Jewish wife after the exile to Babylon ([Ezra 10:42](#)).
7. A priest who returned from Babylon after the exile with Zerubbabel ([Nehemiah 12:2, 13](#)) Along with Nehemiah and others, he signed Ezra's covenant (or agreement) of faithfulness to God after the exile ([Nehemiah 10:3](#)).
8. Shephatiah's son. He was a descendant of Judah and an ancestor of Athaiah. Amariah lived in Jerusalem after the exile ([Nehemiah 11:4](#)).
9. Hezekiah's son and ancestor of the prophet Zephaniah ([Zephaniah 1:1](#)).

10. A person mentioned in Ezra's list of ancestors in [1 Esdras 8:2](#) and [2 Esdras 1:2](#). In the first list, he is Uzzi's son and Ahitub's father. In the second, he is Azariah's son and Eli's father. He may be the same as Amariah above entries #1 or #2. Both sources list him as Ahitub's father.

Amarna Tablets

Clay tablets from royal archives with writing on them. The Amarna tablets are mostly letters. These are the only clay tablets with this type of writing (Cuneiform) ever found in Egypt.

The 379 Amarna tablets were discovered in old ruins. These ruins are on flat land next to the Nile River. They are about 190 miles (305.7 kilometers) south of Cairo, Egypt. The area is named after a group of people called the Beni Amran or Amarna tribe. This tribe moved there in recent times.

The site of the ruins is incorrectly called Tell el-Amarna. "Tell" is an Arabic word meaning "hill" or "mound," but this site lies on a plain. The nearby village "el-Till" contributed to the name el-Amarna.

The cuneiform script used on the tablets consists of nail or wedge-shaped marks pressed into clay in specific patterns. Each pattern, called a "sign," represents a sound or a word. Cuneiform could represent different languages, similar to how Latin script can represent English, French, and German. Most of the Amarna tablets are written in a version of the Akkadian language, except for three of the tablets. This Semitic language from Mesopotamia was used for international correspondence and diplomacy in the Near East during the second millennium BC.

Twenty-nine of the tablets seem to be practice materials for students learning to write. These include:

- lists of writing symbols
- lists of words
- practice copies of old Mesopotamian stories

The other 350 tablets are letters. These letters were sent to two Egyptian kings (pharaohs):

- Amenophis III
- Amenophis IV (his son)

These letters cover about 30 years. They start during Amenophis III's rule and end shortly after Amenophis IV died.

Most of these letters are from local rulers in Syria and Palestine. They wrote to the Egyptian kings about official matters.

Some letters are from kings of bigger, more powerful countries far to the north and east of Egypt.

The letters show different kinds of relationships between the Egyptian pharaoh and the people who wrote to him.

Some writers were seen as almost equal to the pharaoh. Others were seen as less important than the pharaoh.

Countries often made agreements (treaties) to become friends. Sometimes they would arrange marriages between royal families to make these friendships stronger.

Writers who were less important than the pharaoh:

- Called themselves "your servant" when writing to the pharaoh
- Called the pharaoh "my lord," "my sun," or sometimes "my god"
- Today, we call these writers "vassals" and their countries "vassal states"
- We call the pharaoh a "suzerain" in this kind of relationship

Writers who were almost equal to the pharaoh:

- Called themselves "your brother" when writing to the pharaoh
- Called the pharaoh "my brother"
- Today, we call this an "equal" or "parity" relationship

The pharaohs got letters from rulers who were seen as their equals. These letters talked about exchanging gifts, planning marriages, keeping friendly relations between countries, and promoting trade. They included lists of gifts sent or received, requests for presents, gold, or other valuable things. Letters came from rulers of

Babylonia, Mitanni, Assyria, Hatti (the Hittite kingdom), and Alashiya (Cyprus).

Some letters from Palestine ask for military help and refer to military activity. They mention the "Habiru," which was quickly linked to the word "Hebrew." The Habiru were in several locations in Palestine and were described as "plundering all the lands of the king." At first, it was believed that the Amarna letters were from the time when the Hebrews (Israelites) escaped from Egypt and invaded Palestine under Joshua's leadership. This would suggest reports from people who were alive in Palestine with the Israelites invaded.

Later, researchers looked at the Amarna letters again along with other information. They found out their first idea was wrong. The Habiru were not the invading Hebrews.

The word "Habiru" is a different spelling of "Apiru." This term is used in the Amarna letters and other texts to describe a class of people called "outlaws" or "renegades." People from different nations could be called "Apiru." A person became an Apiru due to their actions or by joining the group. The Apiru roamed Syria and Palestine without a specific home and sometimes worked as soldiers for hire or stole from people.

See Inscriptions; Egypt, Egyptian.

Amasa

1. Son of Ithra (Jether) and David's sister Abigail ([2 Samuel 17:25](#); [1 Chronicles 2:17](#)). He was, therefore, David's nephew. Amasa was a captain who supported Absalom in his rebellion against his father, David. After David's general Joab killed Absalom, David pardoned Amasa and replaced Joab with him ([2 Samuel 19:13](#)). This greatly offended Joab. He awaited his revenge. When given the opportunity, he killed his unsuspecting rival ([2 Samuel 20:4-13](#)). David could not punish Joab but instructed his son Solomon to see that Joab was executed for murdering Amasa and another of David's generals ([1 Kings 2:5-6, 28-34](#)).

2. Hadlai's son from Ephraim's tribe. Amasa supported the prophet Oded. Oded opposed making slaves of women and children captured from the southern kingdom of Judah in the time of King Ahaz ([2 Chronicles 28:8-13](#)).

Amenophis II of Egypt near the end of the 15th century BC.

Amasai

1. Elkanah's son and Mahath's father ([1 Chronicles 6:25; 6:35](#)). He is listed in the list of ancestors of Heman the singer.
2. A leader of 30 warriors who joined David at Ziklag after deserting King Saul ([1 Chronicles 12:18](#)).
3. A trumpeter priest in the procession when David brought the ark of God to Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 15:24](#)).
4. The father of another Mahath. This Mahath was Hezekiah's contemporary and a participant in his revival ([2 Chronicles 29:12](#)).

Amashai, Amashsai

Azareel's son. He was one of the leading priests who returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile ([Nehemiah 11:13](#)). Amashsai may possibly be identical with Maasai ([1 Chronicles 9:12](#)).

Amasiah

A military leader in the time of Jehoshaphat. He was in charge of 200,000 men. Amasiah was Zichri's son and a man of unusual piety ([2 Chronicles 17:16](#)).

Amaw

A region near the Euphrates River. It included the city of Pethor, to which King Balak of Moab sent messengers in search of the prophet Balaam ([Numbers 22:5](#)). Amaw's name appears in the Idrimi Inscription from 1450 BC. It also appears on the tomb of Qen-amun, who served under

Amaziah

1. The ninth king of Judah, who ruled from 796 to 767 BC. At age 25, he became king after his father, King Joash. Amaziah's mother was Jehoaddin. Assassins killed Joash after he was king for 40 years ([2 Kings 12:19-21](#)). Amaziah ruled Judah for 29 years before assassins also killed him ([14:18-20](#)). When Amaziah began his reign, another Joash was ruling the northern kingdom of Israel ([14:1-2](#)). Amaziah was not like his ancestor David ([2 Kings 14:3](#)). Like his father, Amaziah did things that pleased God but failed to remove the pagan shrines that were corrupting the nation's religious life. He respected the law of Moses, at least at the beginning ([14:4-6](#)). Amaziah did not act wisely toward the rival kingdom of Israel. He went to war against the Edomites. He hired 100,000 soldiers from Israel. But he was warned by a prophet not to use them in battle, so Amaziah sent them home.

On their way out of Judah, the angry soldiers raided cities. They killed 3,000 people. Amaziah's troops were victorious against the Edomites. At the Valley of Salt, they killed 10,000 of the enemy in battle. They killed another 10,000 prisoners ([2 Chronicles 25:5-13](#)).

Foolishly, Amaziah brought Edomite idols or false gods back with him after his conquest. He worshiped them. The Lord sent a prophet to tell Amaziah he would be destroyed for worshiping the idols ([2 Chronicles 25:14-16](#)).

Proud of his conquest of Edom, Amaziah soon declared war on King Joash of Israel. Joash warned him in a parable that Judah would be crushed like a flower. Amaziah refused to back down. The two armies met at Beth-shemesh in Judah. Amaziah's army was defeated. The Israelites captured Jerusalem and robbed the temple and

palace.

Amaziah was taken prisoner but was evidently left in Jerusalem. He outlived Joash of Israel by 15 years ([2 Chronicles 25:17-26](#)). Amaziah was murdered in Lachish. He had fled there when he heard about a plot against him in Jerusalem. His body was brought back to the capital city and buried in the royal cemetery ([2 Chronicles 25:27-28](#)).

2. The father of Joshah. He was a member of Simeon's tribe ([1 Chronicles 4:34](#)).
3. Hilkiah's son. He was a Levite of Merari's clan ([1 Chronicles 6:45](#)).
4. A priest of Bethel in the days of Jeroboam II. He was an opponent of the prophet Amos ([Amos 7:10-17](#)).

Ambassador

A messenger or envoy officially representing a higher authority. In the Old Testament, an ambassador was someone sent to speak for a king or ruler. This person would go on short trips to share messages or make agreements. They acted as the official voice of the leader who sent them. Examples include:

- the envoys of Pharaoh ([Isaiah 30:4](#)),
- the ambassadors of the rulers of Babylon ([2 Chronicles 32:31](#)), and
- messengers of Neco, king of Egypt ([2 Chronicles 35:21](#)).

In the letters of Paul, the apostle called himself an ambassador for Christ because he had an apostolic mission to share the gospel of Christ with the gentiles ([2 Corinthians 5:20](#); [Ephesians 6:20](#)).

Amber

The fossilized resin that comes from some cone-bearing plants. Over time the resin turns into a clear yellow or orange solid. The word is used in the King James Version to describe a color seen in visions of the Lord ([Ezekiel 8:2](#)). The color is

similar to that of polished brass or bronze ([Ezekiel 1:4, 27](#)). *See Color.*

Ambush

A surprise attack by people hiding and waiting for others, often used in warfare and conflicts.

See Warfare.

Amen

A Hebrew word meaning "so it is" or "let it be."

Amen comes from a verb meaning "to be firm or sure." Some translations of the Bible always keep the Hebrew word "amen" in the text. Others translate it with a statement such as "truly" or "I tell you the truth." Some translations omit it altogether. Because of its use in the Old Testament, "amen" was also used in Christian worship and religious writings, including the Greek New Testament.

Amen in the Old Testament

"Amen" has much more significance than being the last word in a prayer. In fact, that practice is not shown in the Bible. Saying "amen" at the end of a prayer was not common in ancient times. In the nearly 30 times it is used in the Old Testament, "amen" almost always occurs as a response to what has preceded. When someone says it as a response, it is as if what had been said were their own words. For example, in [Deuteronomy 27:15-26](#) (where "amen" appears 12 times) the people responded with "amen" after each statement of a curse directed toward those who disobey God.

Similarly, "amen" is used as a response after statements of promise or praise and thanksgiving ([Jeremiah 11:5](#); [1 Chronicles 16:36](#)). It was also used as a conclusion to the first four of the five "books" of Psalms ([Psalms 41:13](#); [72:19](#); [89:52](#); [106:48](#)). The only exceptions in the Old Testament are two occurrences in [Isaiah 65:16](#). There, the phrase "the God of amen" or "the God of truth" stresses that God is the one who is "firm." God is completely trustworthy and faithfully fulfills his promises.

Amen in the New Testament

The use of "amen" as a response to a preceding statement is continued in the New Testament

letters and the book of Revelation. It appears after each of the following:

1. Doxologies or statements of praise ([Ephesians 3:21](#))
2. Benedictions or statements of blessing ([Galatians 6:18](#))
3. Giving thanks ([1 Corinthians 14:16](#))
4. Prophecy ([Revelation 1:7](#))
5. Statements of praise ([Revelation 7:12](#))

From [1 Corinthians 14:16](#), it is clear that a response of “amen” after a statement of thanks was a means for worshipers to participate by showing agreement with what had been said.

Amethyst

A purple variety of quartz. It is used in jewelry. *See* Minerals and Metals; Stones, Precious.

Ami

An official in Solomon’s court. Ami’s descendants returned to Jerusalem after the exile to Babylon ([Ezra 2:57](#)).

Ami is also spelled Amon in [Nehemiah 7:59](#). *See* Amon (Person) #3.

Amillennialism

A belief that the thousand-year reign of Christ described in Revelation 20 is not a future event, but a symbol. The “thousand years” is not understood literally, but figuratively. It is a way of describing the entire period between Christ’s first coming (his life, death, and resurrection) and his second coming (the end times). During this time, Christ is the spiritual ruler over the church.

See Millennium.

Aminadab

The King James Version form of Amminadab in [Matthew 1:4](#) and [Luke 3:33](#).

See Amminadab #1.

Amittai

The father of the prophet Jonah from Zebulun’s tribe. Amittai came from the small village of Gath-hepher. Gath-hepher is northeast of Nazareth ([2 Kings 14:25](#); [Jonah 1:1](#)).

Ammah

A hill north of Jerusalem in the area of Gibeon. A battle was fought there between David’s troops under Joab and Ishbosheth’s troops under Abner. That battle began a long war between followers of Saul and followers of David ([2 Samuel 2:24–32](#); [3:1](#)).

Ammi

Ammi is a Hebrew word meaning “my people.” In the Old Testament, the phrase “people of God” is the most common way to describe the nation of Israel. This idea comes from God’s promise to Moses before the Israelites left Egypt: “I will take you as My own people (*‘ammi*), and I will be your God.” ([Exodus 6:7](#), BSB).

For Israel to be called “my people” showed how personal their relationship with God was. This was different from other nations that worshiped many gods (idols).

The word *ammi* represented God’s love for them. It represented his faithfulness to the promises he had made to their ancestors ([Deuteronomy 4:37](#); [7:8](#)). God gave the Israelites special privileges by calling them “my people.” But he also expected them to be faithful and obey him. The Israelites often failed to do this. The prophets (people who spoke God’s messages) often reminded the people of their duty to God.

Ammi in the Book of Hosea

An example of such prophetic warning is found in the writings of Hosea. The prophet saw his own marriage to an unfaithful wife as a picture of God’s relationship with his people. God had joined himself to a people who had forsaken him for other gods. The names Hosea gave his children reflected God’s attitude toward his unfaithful people.

The first child was named Jezreel ([Hosea 1:4](#)). Jezreel means two things:

- It is the name of the place where King Ahab murdered Naboth ([1 Kings 21:1–16](#)). It recalls a terrible experience in Israel's history.
- The name also means "God sows." This meaning expresses Hosea's hope that the people of Israel, despite all their failures, would soon return to God.

A second child was named *Lo-ruhamah* which means "Not pitied" ([Hosea 1:6](#)). That name expressed God's hatred for disobedience and his desire to turn from an unrepentant people.

Hosea's third child was named *Lo-ammi* which means "Not my people" ([Hosea 1:9](#)). That name represented the most important tragedy for Israel: the ending of God's covenant relationship with them. God was saying to Israel, "Name him *Lo-ammi*—'Not my people'—for Israel is not my people, and I am not their God" ([Hosea 1:9](#)).

Although everything seemed hopeless, Hosea's prophecy did not end on a note of doom. Rather, he foresaw that Israel would repent. In response, God would restore his covenant relationship with them: "And to those I called 'Not my people,' I will say, 'Now you are my people.' Then they will reply, 'You are our God!'" ([Hosea 2:23](#)).

Ammidians

A name used in a list of towns identifying groups of exiles that returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel around 538 BC ([1 Esdras 5:20](#)). The lists in [Ezra 2:25–26](#) and [Nehemiah 7:29–30](#) do not mention a group from such a place.

Ammiel

1. Gemalli's son. He was one of 12 men sent by Moses as a spy to the land of Canaan. Ammiel represented Dan's tribe ([Numbers 13:12](#)). He later died because of a plague ([Numbers 14:37](#)).

2. The father of Machir of Lo-debar. Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, was hidden from David in Machir's house ([2 Samuel 9:4–5](#)). Machir later helped supply David in his war with Absalom ([2 Samuel 17:27–29](#)).
3. The father of David's wife, Bath-shua or Bathsheba. ([1 Chronicles 3:5](#)). Ammiel is also called Eliam ([2 Samuel 11:3](#)).
4. The sixth son of Obed-edom. He along with his family served as gatekeeper in the temple during David's reign ([1 Chronicles 26:5, 15](#)).

Ammihud

1. The father of a leader of Ephraim's tribe, Elishama ([Numbers 1:10](#)). Ammihud was Joshua's great-grandfather ([1 Chronicles 7:26](#)).
2. The father of Shemuel from Simeon's tribe. Shemuel helped Moses divide the Promised Land ([Numbers 34:20](#)).
3. The father of Pedahel from Naphtali's tribe. Pedahel also helped Moses divide the Promised Land ([Numbers 34:28](#)).
4. The father of King Talmai of Geshur. Talmai gave refuge to Absalom when he fled after murdering Amnon ([2 Samuel 13:37](#)).
5. Omri's son and father of Uthai from Judah's tribe ([1 Chronicles 9:4](#)).

Amminadab

1. The father of Elisheba, who was Aaron's wife ([Exodus 6:23](#)). Amminadab was also the father of Nahshon, Judah's tribal leader in the wilderness ([Numbers 1:7](#); [2:3](#); [7:12](#), [17](#); [10:14](#); [1 Chronicles 2:10](#)). Amminadab is listed in the list of David's ancestors ([Ruth 4:18-22](#)). Later, he is listed in the list of Jesus Christ's ancestors ([Matthew 1:4](#); [Luke 3:33](#)). *See* Ancestry of Jesus Christ.
2. An alternate name for Izhar, one of Kohath's sons ([1 Chronicles 6:22](#)). *See* Izhar #1.
3. A Levite contemporary of King David who helped bring the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 15:1-4](#), [10-11](#)).

Amminadib

A word occurring in some English versions of the [Song of Songs 6:12](#): "Before I realized it, my desire had set me among the royal chariots of my people."

The American Standard Version [marginal reading] and New American Standard Bible [marginal reading] have "Amminadib" instead of "my people." More recent translators have not regarded the term as a proper name.

- The American Standard Version replaces "Amminadib" with "my willing people."
- The Revised Standard Version replaces "Amminadib" with "beside my prince."
- The New American Standard Bible replaces "Amminadib" with "my noble people."
- The New Living Translation replaces "Amminadib" with "in my princely bed with my beloved one."

Ammishaddai

Ahiezer's father. Ahiezer was the leader of Dan's tribe when the Israelites were wandering in the Sinai wilderness after their escape from Egypt ([Numbers 1:12](#); [2:25](#); [10:25](#)). As the leader he presented his tribe's offering at the dedication of the tabernacle ([Numbers 7:66, 71](#)).

Ammizabad

Benaiah's son. Both Benaiah and Ammizabad were high-ranking officers in King David's army ([1 Chronicles 27:5-6](#)).

Ammon, Ammonites

The Ammonites were a people of Semitic descent. They lived in a fertile region northeast of Moab, in the land called Transjordan (east of the Jordan River). Ammon was between two rivers, the Arnon River and the Jabbok River. The land also stretched east to the Syrian Desert. The main city of the Ammonites was Rabbah (also called Rabbath-ammon). Today, this city is called Amman. It is the capital of the modern country of Jordan.

Origins and Name

The Ammonites came from the family line of Lot's younger daughter ([Genesis 19:38](#)). The name *Ammon* in Hebrew first meant "son of my father's clan." This name kept the memory of an early family group and person. It also showed a connection between the Ammonites and the Israelites.

The name *Ammon* appears often in ancient writings from the middle of the second millennium BC. One form of the name appears in Assyrian writings. Other forms appear in Ugaritic writings from the 1400s BC. The name also appears in writings from Mari, Amarna, and Alalakh.

The Ammonites were a people group who first lived in the southern part of Transjordan. They lived there from about the early second millennium BC. The Ammonites came from mixed family lines but their language was very close to Hebrew.

The Ammonites used the old Canaanite-Phoenician script for writing. Israelites could likely read and understand it. The Ammonites often married people from Israel ([1 Kings 14:21, 31](#); [2 Chronicles](#)

[12:13](#)). Ammonite names also show some early Arabic influence.

The Ammonites were very similar to the Amorites in language, ethnicity, and physical appearance. These people groups were likely closely related. Both groups may have entered the land around the same time. When Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, both the Ammonite kingdom and the Amorite kingdom of Heshbon were already strong and well established.

Early History of the Ammonites

The Old Testament says that a race of giants once lived in the land of Ammon. These giants were called Rephaim or Zamzummim ([Deuteronomy 2:20-21](#); [Genesis 14:5](#), where they are called Zuzim). We do not know much about them.

The *Genesis Apocryphon*, a text found with the Dead Sea Scrolls, also mentions the Rephaim. It says they were defeated by an alliance of four kings ([Genesis 14:1-5](#)). One of these kings, Chedorlaomer of Elam, led an expedition that broke the power of these giants. This may have made it easier for the people of Esau, Ammon, and Moab to settle in the land. The Ammonites also knew of King Og ([Deuteronomy 3:11](#)). People believed he was one of the last descendants of the Rephaim. People honored his bed because it was so large.

When the Israelites came to Kadesh, they met the strong kingdom of Edom. The king of Edom refused to let them pass through his land ([Numbers 20:14-21](#)). The Israelites then traveled north toward the land of Ammon. At that time, an Amorite king named Sihon controlled the land. He also refused to let the Israelites pass. The Israelites fought him, won the battle, and took his land ([Numbers 21:21-24](#)). God told Moses that the Israelites must not fight for Ammonite land. That land had already been given to the descendants of Lot ([Deuteronomy 2:19, 37](#)).

Early Conflicts with Israel

As they continued north, the Israelites defeated King Og of Bashan ([Deuteronomy 3:1-11](#)), then went down to the Jordan Valley, where they camped on the plains of Moab. There, Balak, the king of Moab, hired a prophet named Balaam to curse the Israelites, but Balaam blessed them instead ([Numbers 22-24](#)). Because the Ammonites helped the Moabites, they were excluded from the assembly of the Lord for ten generations ([Deuteronomy 23:3](#); [Nehemiah 13:1-2](#)).

The tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh chose to settle in the fertile Transjordan region. This land had once belonged to the Amorites and to Bashan. These tribes settled near the border of Ammon ([Numbers 32](#); [Deuteronomy 3:16](#); [Joshua 13:8-32](#)). Later, these tribes built an altar beside the Jordan River. At first, the other Israelite tribes thought this was an act of rebellion. They feared it might become a rival place of worship ([Joshua 22:10-34](#)).

Before the Israelites entered Canaan, the Ammonites were not as organized or settled as the Moabites and Edomites. Even in the seventh century BC, the Ammonites still lived mainly as nomads (people who move from place to place). After Israel settled in Canaan, the Ammonites joined the Moabites and Amalekites in battle. They helped King Eglon of Moab, who tried to take back old Moabite land near the north end of the Dead Sea ([Judges 3:12-13](#)).

By the end of the 12th century BC, the Israelites were firmly living in Canaan. But they "did evil in the sight of the LORD" by worshiping the gods of the Syrians, Sidonians, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines ([Judges 10:6](#)). At this time, the Ammonites began to grow stronger. They attacked Israel and took land in Gilead ([Judges 10:7-8](#)). Then they crossed the Jordan River and attacked the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim ([Judges 10:9](#)).

In their trouble, the leaders of Gilead asked Jephthah for help. Jephthah was someone the people had rejected, but he was a strong military leader ([Judges 11:1-11](#)). He defeated the Ammonites in battle. The victory was so great that Jephthah did not need to fight more battles against the Ammonites west of the Jordan ([Judges 11:12-33](#)).

Conflicts with the Kings of Israel

Near the end of the 11th century BC, an Ammonite king named Nahash came to power. He wanted to take control of Israelite land in Transjordan. Around 1020 BC, he led a strong military campaign. He reached as far north as Jabesh-gilead. The people of Jabesh-gilead were ready to surrender. But they delayed and asked Saul, the new king of Israel, for help. Saul quickly gathered an army and defeated the Ammonites ([1 Samuel 11:1-11](#)). This victory kept the Ammonites from ruling in the Jordan Valley for many years. Later in his reign, Saul fought other battles against Israel's enemies,

including more fights with the Ammonites ([1 Samuel 14:47-48](#)).

When David became king, he took silver and gold from the Ammonites, Philistines, and Amalekites. Sometimes this was taken in battle, and sometimes it was given as tribute ([2 Samuel 8:11-12](#); [1 Chronicles 18:11](#)). Later, David sent Joab with a large army to attack the Ammonite land. They surrounded the capital city of Rabba ([2 Samuel 11:1](#); [1 Chronicles 20:2](#)). The battle lasted many months. Joab weakened the city, and David finished taking it ([2 Samuel 12:26-29](#)).

After the city surrendered, the Ammonite king's large gold crown was placed on David's head ([2 Samuel 12:30](#); [1 Chronicles 20:1](#)). David's army took the city's wealth and made slaves of the people. Other Ammonite cities were also captured. The nation became one of Israel's vassal states ([2 Samuel 12:31](#); [1 Chronicles 20:3](#)). The number of states under Israel's control was growing. David chose a ruler from the Ammonite royal family to govern the people of Ammon. Shobi, a son of Nahash, became their leader. He later helped David when Absalom rebelled ([2 Samuel 17:27](#)). One of David's best warriors was also an Ammonite ([2 Samuel 23:37](#)).

During the reign of Solomon, the Ammonites lived in peace with Israel. They shared in the wealth of that time. After Solomon died, the kingdom of Israel divided in two: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The armies of Shishak, king of Egypt, invaded Palestine and Ammonite land. The Ammonites then declared their independence from Israel and Judah.

Later, the Ammonites joined with the Moabites and Meunites to attack King Jehoshaphat of Judah (who ruled from 871 to 848 BC). Jehoshaphat prayed to God for help ([2 Chronicles 20:1-12](#)). Then the Ammonites and their allies fought each other. The people of Judah gathered the spoils of war for three days ([2 Chronicles 20:22-25](#)).

Ammon Under Babylonian Rule

The Ammonites soon recovered. By the end of the seventh century BC, Ammon was again strong and ruled much of southern Transjordan. But Ammonite independence did not last long. In 599 BC, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar led his army into Syria and began attacking southern Palestine. In 593 BC, Ammonite leaders met in Jerusalem with other nations to plan a rebellion against Babylon ([Jeremiah 27:1-3](#)). The prophet

Jeremiah warned them that God would cause their plan to fail ([Jeremiah 27:4-22](#)). Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem, destroyed the city in 586 BC, and took many Jews to Babylon.

The land of Ammon was not invaded right away. Many Judeans fled there ([Jeremiah 40:11](#)). One of them, Ishmael, worked with Baalis, king of Ammon. They plotted to kill Gedaliah, the governor of Judah, which was now a province of Babylonia. After the killing, Ishmael escaped to Ammon ([Jeremiah 40:13-16](#)). After killing Gedaliah, Ishmael escaped to Ammon ([Jeremiah 41:1-15](#)). Nebuchadnezzar's troops then attacked Rabbah and took captive many of the Ammonites. The city was not destroyed, but the land around it was ruined. Arab groups invaded. They destroyed what remained of Ammon's political power. This ended Ammon as an independent state.

Amnon

1. David's oldest son by his wife Ahinoam. He was born in Hebron ([2 Samuel 3:2](#); [1 Chronicles 3:1](#)). Amnon deceived and violated Tamar, his beautiful half-sister. He was killed in revenge by Tamar's brother Absalom ([2 Samuel 13:1-33](#)).
2. The first son of Shimon from Judah's tribe ([1 Chronicles 4:20](#)).

Amok

A priest who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile to Babylon. Amok was the ancestor of Eber, who was a priest under Joiakim ([Nehemiah 12:7, 20](#)).

Amon (Person)

1. The governor of the city of Samaria during the reign of Ahab in Israel ([1 Kings 22:26](#); [2 Chronicles 18:25](#)). Amon imprisoned the prophet Micaiah while Ahab did not listen to Micaiah's warning against attacking Ramoth-gilead.

2. King Manasseh's son, the 15th king of Judah. He ruled from 642 to 640 BC. Amon was 22 years old when he became king. He worshiped idols like his father. After a two-year reign, he was killed by people who took over the government ([2 Kings 21:19-26](#); [2 Chronicles 33:20-25](#)). See Israel, History of; Timeline of the Bible (Old Testament).
3. An official of Solomon. His descendants returned to Jerusalem after the exile to Babylon ([Nehemiah 7:59](#)). The spelling Ami is a variant of this name ([Ezra 2:57](#)).
4. An Egyptian god, likely connected to fertility and helping things grow ([Jeremiah 46:25](#)).

Amon (Place)

Part of the Hebrew name for Thebes. Thebes is the capital of Upper Egypt ([Jeremiah 46:25](#)). See Thebes.

Amorites

Semitic people found throughout the Fertile Crescent of the Near East at the beginning of the second millennium BC. Amorites are first mentioned in the Bible as descendants of Canaan in a list of ancient peoples ([Gn 10:16](#); cf. [1 Chr 1:13-16](#)). Some of these nomadic people seem to have migrated from the Syrian Desert into Mesopotamia, others into Palestine.

Akkadian cuneiform inscriptions mention a relatively uncivilized people called *Amurru* (translation of the Sumerian *Mar-tu*), perhaps named for a storm god. They overran the Sumerians and eventually most of Mesopotamia. The city of Mari, on the upper Euphrates River, fell to them about 2000 BC; Eshunna a short time later; Babylon by 1830 BC; and finally Assur around 1750 BC.

Farther to the west, Amorites had been in Palestine and Syria as early as the third millennium BC. Egyptian texts of the early part of the 19th century BC show that additional waves of Amorite nomads were entering Canaan at that time. Many of their

names are similar to the Amorite names from upper Mesopotamia. In fact, many names from the Mari tablets are identical with or similar to names in the patriarchal accounts in Genesis. People named Jacob, Abraham, Levi, and Ishmael were known at Mari, and names similar to Gad and Dan have been found there. Benjamin was known as the name of a tribe. Nahor was found to be the name of a city near Haran. According to Genesis, Abraham lived in Haran many years before going to Canaan. Jacob spent 20 years there and married two women from Haran.

Amorites appear prominently in the OT as major obstacles to the occupation of Canaan (the Promised Land) by the Israelites after the exodus. Calling Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, the Lord spoke of Canaan, then occupied by Amorites and others, as a good land ([Ex 3:8, 17](#); [13:5](#)). When the Israelites were in the wilderness, God promised to destroy those nations ([Ex 23:23](#)) and drive them out of the land ([Ex 33:2](#)). The Hebrew people were warned not to make covenants with any of them, to intermarry with them, or to tolerate their idol worship ([Ex 34:11-17](#)).

Spies sent into the land found Amalekites in the south; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites in the northern mountains and to the west of the Jordan River; and Canaanites by the sea and along the Jordan ([Nm 13:25-29](#)). At that time there were Amorites east of the Jordan as well ([Nm 21:13](#)).

God had instructed Israel to go up from Horeb and conquer the mountain Amorites on the west side of the Jordan all the way to the Mediterranean Sea ([Dt 1:7](#)). When they arrived at Kadesh-barnea they were at the foot of those mountains ([Dt 1:19-20](#)). But the people murmured and complained that God had brought them from Egypt only to be slaughtered by the Amorites. From the spies' reports, they pictured the Amorites as an awesome people, greater and taller than the Israelites ([Dt 1:26-28](#)). At first they refused to trust God enough to go in, so God told them to turn around and head back into the wilderness. Then they changed their minds, stubbornly attacked the Amorites against God's command, and were badly beaten ([Dt 1:34-44](#)). Finally, after 38 additional years in the wilderness, the Israelites once again faced the Amorites, but this time on the east side of the Dead Sea ([Nm 21:13](#)). The Amorite king, Sihon, refused to let them pass through his land. The Israelites were drawn up at the Arnon River, which flows into the Dead Sea about two-thirds of the way up its eastern shore.

Transjordan was controlled by two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. Israel had to face Sihon first. His city, Heshbon, lay due east of the north end of the Dead Sea ([Nm 21:21-26](#)). Sihon himself had taken this land from the Moabites. Moses knew of Sihon's reputation and quoted a poem that boasted of Sihon's victory over Moab ([Nm 21:27-30](#)). Nevertheless, the Israelites defeated Sihon and devastated his kingdom from Dibon, four miles (6.4 kilometers) north of the Arnon, to Medeba, seven miles (11.2 kilometers) south of Heshbon. King Og, farther to the north, received the same treatment ([Nm 21:31-35](#)). King Balak of Moab heard of the Israelite victories and was terrified ([Nm 22:2-3](#)).

Moses reminded the people that by relying on God's promises they had taken all of the land of the Amorites east of the Jordan ([Dt 2:24-3:10](#)). The conquered territory was given to the tribes of Gad and Reuben and to the half-tribe of Manasseh ([Nm 32:33](#)). Then, 40 years after the exodus began, Israel was standing on the east side of the Jordan, having dispossessed the two great Amorite nations there ([Dt 1:1-4](#)). But there were other Amorite kingdoms in the hills west of the Jordan, along with other nations ([Dt 7:1-2](#)). They were to be destroyed in the same way Sihon and Og had been defeated ([Dt 31:3-6](#)).

So famous was the victory of Israel east of the Jordan that Rahab and others in Jericho, west of the Jordan, knew of it and were frightened ([Jos 2:8-11](#)). The Israelites crossed the Jordan and took Jericho but were defeated at the smaller city of Ai in the hill country west of Jericho. They immediately assumed that they would be wiped out by the Amorites in those hills ([Jos 7:7](#)).

The Israelites regained God's favor, however, and defeated Ai. Their victory made an impression on the other kingdoms west of the Jordan in the hills, valleys, and coastlands up to Lebanon, who allied to fight Joshua ([Jos 9:1-2](#)). Gibeon, an Amorite city seven miles (11.2 kilometers) southwest of Ai, made peace with Israel, putting more fear in the hearts of the remaining kings ([Jos 10:1-2](#)). Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, was evidently the leader of the Amorite kings west of the Jordan ([Jos 10:3](#)). Jerusalem was only eight miles (12.8 kilometers) southeast of Gibeon. Adonizedek called together the kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, all within 50 miles (80.4 kilometers) of Jerusalem, to fight against Gibeon and Joshua ([Jos 10:3-5](#)).

Joshua came to Gibeon's defense and routed the Amorites, chasing them to the northwest and southwest. The Lord fought for Israel, raining

hailstones on the Amorites at Azekah, southwest of Gibeon, and causing the sun to stand still in order to provide a longer battle day ([Jos 10:6-14](#)).

In the far north, Jabin, king of Hazor, rallied the Canaanites and remaining Amorites all the way north to Mt Hermon ([Jos 11:1-5](#)). But they too were overcome ([Jos 11:10-23](#)). Toward the end of Joshua's career, he reminded the people that it was the Lord who had given them the land of the Amorites ([Jos 24:1-18](#)).

After the occupation of Canaan by Israel, Amorites still present in the land chased Dan's tribe into the mountains and continued to live near Aijalon, 17 miles (27.4 kilometers) west of Jerusalem. They still held the slopes toward the south end of the Dead Sea as well ([Jgs 1:34-36](#)). In the period of the judges, the Amorites and their gods posed a constant threat to Israel's well-being ([Jgs 6:10](#)).

At the end of the period of the judges, relations between Israel and the Amorites improved ([1 Sm 7:14](#)). David continued to honor Joshua's treaty with the Amorite remnant of Gibeon ([2 Sm 21:2-6](#)). Solomon conscripted his labor forces from the Amorites and other peoples still surviving from Israelite conquest ([1 Kgs 9:20-22](#)).

The OT treats the deliverance of the Amorites and their land into the hands of Israel as a great event comparable with the exodus itself, a victory to be remembered and celebrated ([Pss 135:9-12; 136:13-26](#)). If the people forgot, the Lord reminded them through his prophets ([Am 2:9-10](#)). Long after Sihon and Og had been defeated, the area east of the Jordan was still remembered as the land of "Sihon king of the Amorites" ([1 Kgs 4:19](#)). When the kings of Israel and Judah began to fail God, the memory of the Amorites provided a standard of comparison of evil. The Jews' continuing fascination with idolatry led God to address Jerusalem, representing the Jewish people, through the prophet Ezekiel: "Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite" ([Ez 16:45](#)). In the biblical view, the Amorites stood for everything that is abominable in the sight of God.

Amos (Person)

Amos was a Hebrew prophet (someone who delivered messages from God) who lived in the eighth century BC.

Who Was Amos?

Everything we know about Amos comes from the book named after him in the Bible. He was a shepherd living in Tekoa. Tekoa is a village about 16 kilometers (10 miles) south of Jerusalem. Amos lived here when God spoke to him in a vision ([Amos 1:1-2](#)).

At that time, the kingdom of Israel was divided. Uzziah was king of Judah in the south. Jeroboam II was king of Israel in the north. God gave Amos a vision. In this vision, God's powerful message was like a lion's roar. God was warning the people, especially the Israelites, to stop doing two wrong things: treating others unfairly and worshiping false gods.

The book of Amos tells us that he spoke God's message in a city called Bethel. Bethel was located about 19 kilometers (12 miles) north of Jerusalem. Bethel was just across the border in Israel. King Jeroboam I had made Bethel an important place of worship in Israel. He did this to compete with the main temple in Jerusalem, which was in Judah.

Amos's Message of Justice and Change

Amos prophesied that Israel would be overrun and its king killed. The priest of Bethel was Amaziah. He called Amos a traitor. He told him to go back to Judah and to prophesy there. Amos replied, "I was not a prophet...nor was I the son of a prophet; rather, I was a herdsman and a tender of sycamore-fig trees." But the Lord told him, "Go, prophesy to My people Israel." ([Amos 7:10-15](#)).

Amos was a God-fearing man and cared deeply about how rich people treated poor people unfairly. He did not want to be identified with an elite group of professional prophets. These prophets may have lost their original enthusiasm. His writings reflect the earthy background of a shepherd ([3:12](#)). But he spoke with authority the message given him by the Lord God of Hosts: "But let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" ([5:24](#)).

The message of Amos was a call to repentance of personal and social sins. Amos called God's people to return to the worship of the one true God and to the covenantal standards (the rules God gave to the Jewish people) that made them a nation. See Amos, Book of; Prophet, Prophetess.

Amos, Book of

Writings of the prophet Amos, one of the 12 minor prophets of the Hebrew OT. The book of Amos is called minor only because it is relatively short. Its message is as important as that of any of the major prophets. Indeed, Amos has one of the most powerful statements in the Bible of God's judgment against injustice, oppression, and hypocrisy. The book consists primarily of prophetic sermons preached by Amos at Bethel, royal sanctuary of the northern kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BC.

Preview

- Author
- Date, Origin, and Destination
- Background
- Content
- Significance

Author

The preacher of the sermons (or oracles) in the book was undoubtedly Amos, a herdsman and a dresser (farmer) of fig trees, from the village of Tekoa, south of Jerusalem. He received from God a vision of judgment on Israel and went north to Bethel, just across the border between Judah and Israel, to deliver his sermons. All we know about the prophet is contained in the superscription ([1:1-2](#)) and a biographical section ([7:10-14](#)) of the book of Amos, plus what can be learned about him from the style and content of the rest of the book.

Did Amos write down his prophecies himself? Although scholars have raised many questions about the authorship of Amos, there is no convincing reason to regard the book as the work of anyone else. Some have suggested that the sermons were passed on by word of mouth for a long time before they were written down in final form. The Hebrew text, however, is in much better shape than would be expected (had it come through prolonged oral transmission). The many first-person references and vigor of expression imply strongly that Amos himself put much of his prophecy into writing soon after delivering it at Bethel.

Another speculative proposal is that the visions described in the book ([7:1-9](#); [8:1-3](#); [9:1-4](#)) were compiled by Amos before he began his ministry to the northern kingdom, and the oracles (chs [1-6](#))

were composed after that time. The two sections could have been joined into one book much later, during or after the Babylonian exile, with some sections inserted at that time. Other prophecies, however, such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah, contain both oracle and vision sections that scholars have not attempted to divide, and the internal evidence does not make such a division necessary with Amos. Both sections contain similar concerns; in both the visions (7:1-3) and the oracles (5:1-7), Amos appears in the role of intercessor on behalf of Israel.

Date, Origin, and Destination

According to the superscription, Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (1:1), or between 792 and 740 BC. The content of his message fits what is known about the situation in Israel in that period. It is difficult to be more exact about the beginning and ending of Amos's prophetic ministry within that time span. The vision came to him "two years before the earthquake" (1:1), but another biblical reference to presumably the same earthquake places it during the days of King Uzziah of Judah (Zec 14:5). Archaeological excavations at Hazor seem to have yielded evidence for an earthquake, which has been dated at approximately 760 BC. Amos also contains a prophetic reference to a solar eclipse (8:9); such an eclipse has been calculated to have occurred about 763 BC. After King Uzziah was stricken with leprosy, he lived in isolation while Judah was under a co-regency (2 Chr 26:21). Therefore, Amos's mention of Uzziah as king (1:1) probably sets 760 BC as the latest possible date for Amos's ministry.

The doom that came upon Israel after Amos's prophecy was the conquest by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BC). Although Amos referred to impending captivity, he never mentioned Assyria as the captor, although he did say that captivity would take Israel to a land east of Damascus (5:27). Probably Amos was not thinking specifically of the rising power of Assyria but only of the inevitable consequences of Israel's idolatry and hypocrisy. When all the evidence is taken into consideration, it seems reasonable to date the beginning of Amos's prophecies at Bethel to about 760 BC, or approximately the middle of the period during which both Uzziah and Jeroboam II were on their thrones. We do not know how long his ministry lasted; it may have been only a few months.

Amos had been caring for his flocks in the Judean hills south of Jerusalem when God told him, "Go and prophesy to my people in Israel" (7:15, nlt). He may have been familiar with the more urban north from earlier trips there to sell wool or fruit, or the pagan worship and social wrongs there may have made a sudden impact on him after his call to prophesy. At any rate, his writings reveal not only his rural Judean background but also a firsthand knowledge of conditions in the northern kingdom of Israel. Although his prophecies were directed primarily to Israel, he also denounced the sin of Judah, predicting that its capital, Jerusalem, would be burned (2:4-5). Several passages are directed at inhabitants of Samaria, capital of Israel (4:1, 11; 6:1), with which Amos was obviously familiar. He could have traveled on to Samaria from Bethel, or he could have learned of its splendors from the boasts of its citizens. He could have addressed them directly as they came from the capital city to worship at Bethel.

Background

The eighth century BC was a critical time in Jewish history. Both kingdoms of the divided nation had risen to heights of economic affluence that had not been experienced since the days of Solomon. Yet internal religious decay was sapping the strength of both kingdoms, and their social fabric was being destroyed. A new wealthy class was benefiting from the affluence of the time, growing ever richer while poor people became poorer than ever.

In 803 BC, the conquest of Syrian Damascus by the Assyrian king Adad-nirari III had silenced one of Israel's major enemies. With the Syrians out of the picture, the kingdom of Israel was able to expand its borders under King Joash (2 Kgs 13:25), and for a time even the thrust of Assyrian power westward was diminished. Israel and Judah entered a period of rest from constant warfare and turned their attention to internal affairs.

Joash's son, Jeroboam II, became king of Israel in 793 and reigned until 753 BC. Uzziah was on the throne of Judah from 792 to 740 BC. Under these two kings, Judah and Israel controlled a territory that was almost as large as Solomon's empire had been. Their wealth had grown both from expansion of trade and from the booty of conquered territories.

Archaeology has yielded information about industrial activity within the nations, such as an impressive dyeing industry at Debir. Excavations at Samaria have produced large numbers of ivory

inlays that confirm Amos's description of the wealthy in the capital city (6:4). The city of Samaria was protected by a huge double wall of unusual thickness. A palace, probably Jeroboam's, dominated the city with a massive tower.

The splendor and prosperity of the time, however, was masking the spread of internal decay. Oppression of the poor by many in the wealthy classes not only threatened the unity of the nation but also meant that God's laws were being violated. In his denunciations of the cruel treatment of the poor (5:11-13; 8:4-10), Amos warned of the inevitable punishment for disobeying God's laws.

The nation of Israel was guilty of more than social sins against the covenant. It was also adopting pagan religious practices. Canaanite religious influence intruded into the fabric of the nation of Israel. Excavation of a palace storehouse in Samaria uncovered many *ostraca* (pieces of broken pottery used for writing short messages such as letters, receipts, etc.) containing Hebrew names compounded with "Baal," a chief god of the Canaanite religion.

In spite of the gradual deterioration, false optimism seems to have prevailed. Amos found people desiring the Day of the Lord (5:18) and sought to correct their misunderstanding: the Day of the Lord prophesied in the Scriptures would be a time of judgment on all sinners. A more immediate judgment was to come, however. Assyria began to strengthen its position in the world and to resume its expansionist policies. Under the leadership of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BC), Assyria regained a position of world dominance. Eventually, Israel was attacked by Shalmaneser V of Assyria. Soon afterward, in 722 BC, Samaria was occupied. No doubt when the Assyrians were sweeping into Israel, many of the people who had ignored the message of Amos then realized that a prophet of God had been among them.

Content

Superscription (1:1)

The prophet introduces himself as a shepherd, perhaps implying that it is more than sheep he wants to keep from straying.

Prophetic Oracles (1:2-6:14)

This section begins with a picture of the great power of God, who acts in history to judge the nations (1:2).

Judgment on Surrounding Nations (1:3-2:3)

The prophet first speaks against Damascus, then moves on, pronouncing doom on various peoples in ever closer concentric circles, "homing in" on Israel. One may imagine the citizens of Israel applauding God's judgment on other nations until, with shocking effect, Amos accuses Israel of similar sins.

Damascus was the capital of Syria, northeast of Israel, and the center of Syrian influence. Syria had mistreated Israel during Hazael's reign in Damascus (842-806 BC). Hazael "whittled down" Israel in a number of campaigns (2 Kgs 10:32-33; 13:3-5, 22-24). In their campaign into the territory of Gilead, the Syrians destroyed most of Israel's army as though they were dust on a threshing floor (2 Kgs 13:7). Hence, Amos denounces Syria for threshing Gilead as grain is threshed with iron rods (Am 1:3). He predicts that Syria will be destroyed and its people deported to Kir, which Amos understood to be their place of origin (9:7). (For the fulfillment of this prophecy, see 2 Kgs 16:9.)

Amos next turned to Gaza, a Philistine city in southwest Palestine. Gaza probably represents the Philistines as a whole, since three other of their five major cities are also mentioned (1:8). The fifth, Gath, had already been conquered by Hazael (2 Kgs 12:17). Amos denounced the Philistines for what must have been a border raid on Israel in which many were carried off into slavery (1:6).

The Phoenician city of Tyre is cited next. Tyre was on the Mediterranean, north of Israel and southwest of Damascus. Destruction of Tyre, like that of the Philistine cities, is predicted as punishment for making slaves of conquered Israelites.

Edom is next, south of the Dead Sea. Edom had perennially harassed the Israelites and is referred to in a negative light many times in the OT. Edom is said to have been pitiless toward Israel, his brother (1:11).

Ammon, just to the southeast of Israel, is also judged. The particularly violent incident referred to (1:13) evidently occurred in one of their many attempts to push northward into the Israelite territory of Gilead.

Moab is the last of the surrounding nations to be denounced, with reference to what may have been a well-known incident of desecration of the dead (2:1-3).

Oracles against Israel and Judah (2:4-16)

Although Judah and Israel were at peace at the time, their enmity had continued after dissolution of the united kingdom. Amos accuses Judah of rejecting “the law of the Lord” and predicts the burning of Jerusalem.

The oracle against Israel is longer than the others. Amos carefully specifies the social nature of Israel’s sin, making the point that Israel is no better than the surrounding nations. Israel deserves the same punishment. Just as some of the nations were guilty of taking people into slavery, Israel is selling her own poor who cannot repay their debts (2:6). Under Mosaic law it was illegal to keep overnight a garment pledged as security for a loan, since it might be the only source of warmth the debtor had (Ex 22:26–27). Rich people in Israel were attending religious feasts in such clothing “stolen” from the poor (2:8).

Amos reminds Israel of all the good things God has done for them (2:9–11). But because Israel has chosen to continue in disobedience, the nation will not escape impending judgment (2:12–16).

Denunciation of and Warning against Israel (3:1–6:14)

Amos substantiates his prophetic authority with a lesson on cause and effect (3:1–8). A lion roars when it has prey, and people fear when a trumpet sounds an alarm. If calamity comes to a city, God has allowed it. God, who reveals his secrets to his prophets, has spoken Israel’s doom, and Amos must proclaim it.

In a dramatic statement, Amos calls on Egypt and Assyria, great centers of oppression and cruelty, to witness Israel’s crimes, as though even they will be amazed at what they see (3:9–10). Only a ragged remnant will survive the punishment to come (3:11–12). Judgment will fall on objects that symbolize Israel’s religious disobedience (3:14) as well as on symbols of the wealth that led Israel away from the Lord (3:15).

Amos uses strong language to denounce luxurious and indolent living bought at the expense of the poor (4:1–3). Rich women whose love for luxuries drives their husbands to squeeze the needy still more are called “fat cows” who will someday be treated like cattle. Then Amos mocks those who worship at Bethel for going through the motions in the wrong spirit (4:4–5).

In the rest of the fourth chapter, Amos recalls incidents from Israel’s history that were meant to call the people back to God: famine, drought,

plagues, the destruction of some of their cities. Still they do not repent. “Prepare to meet your God!” warns the prophet, following his warning with a hymn to the mighty power of God (4:6–13).

The fifth chapter begins in the form of a funeral dirge, as though Israel were as good as dead already (5:1–2). There is no one to help Israel, whose own armies will be decimated when the disaster strikes (5:3). Of course, God is there to help: “Seek me and live” (5:4–6). The possibility of rescue, of “life,” stands in sharp contrast to the nation’s “death” pictured just before. Idols, as always, are a false hope (5:5). The call to seek the Lord is again followed by a hymn to his power (5:8–9).

In spite of the hope offered to Israel, Amos has to present a gloomy picture of what he sees (5:10–13). The judicial system is corrupt; taxes and high interest charges (usury) grind down the poor. Those injustices could be corrected if the people would “hate evil and love good” (5:15), but judgment is already on the way (5:16–17).

The people are full of hypocrisy, claiming to look forward to the Day of the Lord. That day will be a day of judgment on their sins, Amos says. Instead of empty gestures of offerings and praise, God wants to let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream (5:18–24). Their disobedient spirit goes back to the time of the exodus from Egypt, when God’s own people were attracted to pagan gods. The Lord God of Hosts will send those false gods into captivity with the people who looked to them (5:25–27).

The self-satisfaction felt by the upper classes in Israel had evidently spread to Judah, since Jerusalem as well as Samaria receives some harsh words (6:1). Amos tells those who are lounging in luxury to take a look at three neighboring kingdoms on which judgment has already fallen: Calneh, Hamath, and Gath. Does Israel think it will escape, since they did not? When the Day of Judgment comes, the rich, who have gone “first-class,” will be the first to go (6:2–7). The destruction will leave few survivors, but they will know that punishment came from God (6:8–11). Israel is behaving stupidly to be proud of themselves when they are actually so utterly self-deceived (6:12–14).

Prophetic Visions (7:1–9:10)

By describing three visions God gave him, Amos then dramatically communicates God’s revelation.

Israel's Destruction ([7:1-9](#))

The first vision is in three parts. In the first, Amos pictures the threat of a locust plague in which his prayer of intercession causes God to relent and withdraw the threat ([7:1-3](#)). Then he sees an all-consuming fire, and again his prayer averts a catastrophe ([7:4-6](#)). In the third part of the vision, Amos sees the Lord standing by a wall and holding a plumb line, implying that he has a standard for his people to live up to, an element missing from the two earlier images. This time, because the people have failed to measure up, the catastrophe cannot be averted ([7:7-9](#)).

Historical Interlude ([7:10-17](#))

At this point, Amos encounters Amaziah, priest of Bethel, because he has said that the vision of the plumb line means destruction of the idol altars and temples of Israel and of the house of Jeroboam with the sword. Amaziah sends word to Jeroboam that Amos is a traitor and tells Amos to go back to Judah. Amos disclaims any relationship with professional prophets, then specifically includes Amaziah's family in another prediction of Israel's disaster.

The Ripe Fruit ([8:1-14](#))

In the second vision, Amos is shown a basket of ripe (or summer) fruit. The Hebrew word for summer fruit is almost the same as the word for "end," so the play on words communicates that the nation is "ripe for punishment." Their ripeness is really moral rottenness. Greedy merchants can hardly wait for religious holidays to end so they can cheat the poor some more by using false weights, selling inferior goods, and foreclosing on debtors. When the captivity comes, their festivities will turn into funerals. A famine, not just of bread and water but of the words of the Lord, is coming upon them, causing even the strongest young people to drop to the ground.

Destruction of the Temple ([9:1-10](#))

The third vision is of the Lord destroying the shrine at Bethel when it is thronged with people engaging in their empty worship. The place where they hoped to find security is where they find destruction. Those who are not inside will be destroyed, too, no matter where they try to flee. They won't be able to hide from God in Sheol or on the heights of Carmel or in the depths of the sea ([9:1-4](#)). Another hymn to God's power follows the vision ([9:5-6](#)).

The final words of denunciation in the book of Amos are found in [9:7-10](#), but they are a prelude to

a message of hope. Amos shows that Israel is no better than any other nation in the eyes of God. Did he not bring Israel out of Egypt? Yes, but he also brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir. The religious significance of the exodus has been lost because of Israel's sin, so all but a faithful remnant will be lost.

The concept of the remnant was important in the prophetic preaching of the eighth century BC (cf. [Is 6:12-13](#); [Mi 6:7-9](#)). It recalled God's promise to maintain the nation of Israel for the sake of the covenant given to the patriarchs ([Lv 26:44-45](#)). In Amos's prophecy, Israel is to be sifted by other nations like grain in a sieve; the ungodly "chaff" will be scattered across the world, but the true "grain" will be preserved.

Israel's Hope ([9:11-15](#))

The expression of hope is expanded in the last section of the book in a series of startling and beautiful metaphors.

Restoration of the City of David ([9:11-12](#))

The first metaphor is of the city (literally "house") of David, a house fallen into disrepair. The monarchy, which had crumbled from internal decay and external threats, is envisioned as being restored to its former glory. Further, an expansion of the Davidic kingdom will include all nations that belong to the Lord.

In the NT, this passage was quoted by James to support the inclusion of Gentiles in the promise ([Acts 15:16-18](#)). The wording in Acts is slightly different from that of Amos because it was based on an early Greek translation of the OT (called the Septuagint). Those called by God's name or belonging to God include not only geographical entities such as nations but also individuals in any nation who have a close relationship to God. James saw that Amos was predicting inclusion of Gentiles in the kingdom of God, a kingdom far greater than the early monarchy. This prophecy has been fulfilled in part in the Christian church.

Restoration of Israel's Fortunes ([9:13-15](#))

A series of pastoral metaphors closes the book of Amos. They depict the abundance of blessing in the coming kingdom. Israel's fortunes are to be restored, far beyond the dismal events of the century in which Amos is speaking. Theologians differ in their understanding of the application of this prophecy. If it refers to the present age of the Christian church, it pictures the blessings of the

church now as “spiritual Israel.” If it refers to the future, to the millennial reign of Christ, it depicts what will happen on earth at that time.

The concept of a rejuvenated earth is found elsewhere in the Bible ([Rom 8:20–22](#)). Micah uses language somewhat similar to that of Amos to describe restoration of what seems to be the literal city of Jerusalem ([Mi 3:12–4:4](#)). It may be best to apply the prophetic finale of Amos to the restoration to be effected at the ultimate return of Christ. Whatever the correct application, the remnant must include the followers of Jesus Christ, and the blessings should be seen as intended for all who belong to the kingdom of God.

Significance

The major purpose of Amos in his prophecies was to denounce Israel’s disobedience to the covenant. Although the covenant promise given to Abraham ([Gn 22:15–18](#)) and reiterated throughout the OT is not mentioned explicitly in Amos, it is implicit in the total message of the book. Amos upheld the spiritual nature of the covenant and emphasized that its blessing was mediated through obedience.

Looking around him, Amos saw not only disobedience but hypocrisy. A basic aspect of his ethical teaching was insistence that outward adherence to religious ceremonies without a heart response to the will of God (as expressed in the law) was wrong. The law contained many injunctions that sought to engender love of God and fellow human beings ([Ex 23:1–13](#)). In Amos’s time, those social aspects of the law were being willfully disobeyed by the rich, who nevertheless clung to religious ritual. Amos saw what was in their hearts and condemned it. To him, religious obligations not observed in the proper spirit of responsibility to God could actually become sin ([4:4](#)). Religion could degenerate to the place where it becomes a curse, a mockery of the will of a holy God.

Amos saw the disobedience and hypocrisy of Israel as culminating in national disaster. Thus his prophecy served as a warning of impending doom to the nation. He saw that other nations besides Israel and Judah were held accountable to God because of their mistreatment of others ([1:3–2:3](#)). Their social sins were punished by God in history. Amos thus saw an aspect of the law extending beyond Israel and Judah to other nations. They were responsible to God under what might be called a universal moral law, and they were judged for their crimes against humanity.

The prophetic concept of the Day of the Lord, regarded by the people of Amos’s day as a time of vindication for their nation, was seen by Amos as a time of punishment for all sinners. Such punishment would not exclude the nation of Israel.

Yet denunciation was not the sole purpose of Amos’s prophetic activity. He proclaimed a future of hope for Israel in the reestablishment of the Davidic monarchy, evidently under Messiah, in a time that would be characterized by peace ([9:8–15](#)). The relationship of the Davidic kingdom to the messianic kingdom goes back to the promise given to David ([2 Sm 7:8–16](#)). Just as those in other nations participated by extension in the demands of the law and in judgment, so would those in other nations who belonged to God participate in the blessings of the promise ([9:12](#)).

The concepts of God drawn most sharply in the book of Amos are God’s sovereignty and God’s righteousness. He is sovereign over all the nations of the world, typified by those surrounding Israel, and he brings them to judgment ([1:3–2:3](#)). He is also sovereign over nature, as recognized in his control of the universe ([4:13](#); [5:8](#); [9:13–14](#)). His righteousness demands that he cannot allow his law to continue to be violated without retribution. But his righteousness is also the guarantee of hope for the believing remnant of Israel. It binds him to keep his promise to preserve Israel as a nation ([Lv 26:44–45](#)).

Amos held out the possibility of averting the national catastrophe looming on the horizon of world events. However, from his gloomy description of social conditions and of the hardness of people’s hearts at the time, it seems likely that he did not foresee any escape.

His message was presented in bold metaphors and vivid pictures that stick in the mind. That message is still relevant, for many of the sins that characterized the people of the prophet’s day are still prevalent in modern society and in the lives of individuals. Mistreatment of fellow human beings is as much a feature of the 21st century AD as it was of the 8th century BC.

Today’s reader of the book of Amos should note the prophet’s insistence on the consequences of sin; his emphasis on the responsibility that always accompanies privilege; his presentation of God’s faithfulness; and his message of hope, expressed in part today through the church.

If the book seems to be gloomy in its outlook, it should be remembered that the prophet faced a

gloomy picture. He was watching a nation crumble because of its unfaithfulness to God. But beyond the dismal prospect that faced Israel, Amos saw a new kingdom emerging. It was a kingdom of peace in which the people of God would realize the fulfillment of God's promises. *See* Prophecy; Prophet, Prophetess; Israel, History of.

Amoz

Isaiah's father ([2 Kings 19:2](#); [Isaiah 1:1](#)). This is not the same person as the prophet Amos.

Amphipolis

A city in ancient Greece. It was once the home of the Thracian Edoni tribe. Amphipolis occupied a strategic location in a fertile area on the eastern bank of the Strymon River. Its name means "around city." This may refer to the river which surrounds the city on three sides. It is located about 48.2 kilometers or 30 miles from Philippi. It eventually became an important station on the Roman road called the Via Egnatia. On his second missionary journey, Paul passed through this commercial center on his way to Thessalonica ([Acts 17:1](#)).

Amplias, Ampliatus

The name of a Christian to whom the apostle Paul sent greetings at the end of his Letter to the Romans ([16:8](#)). Ampliatus is called "my beloved in the Lord" by Paul. Nothing further is known of this Christian with a common Roman name.

Amram

1. Kohath's son. He was a member of Levi's tribe. Amram married Jochebed and had three famous children: Aaron, Moses, and Miriam ([Exodus 6:16-20](#); [Numbers 26:58-59](#)). During the Israelites' wilderness journey, the Amramites had a special responsibility. They were in charge of caring for the ark of the covenant and the table, lampstand, altars, and other furnishings used in the tabernacle ([Numbers 3:27, 31](#)). Later, the Amramites were one of the groups in charge of offerings placed in the temple treasury ([1 Chronicles 26:23-24](#)).
2. A priest from Bani's family. He obeyed Ezra's strong advice to divorce his non-Jewish wife after the exile to Babylon ([Ezra 10:34](#)).
3. The King James Version uses this as a form of Hamran to identify Dishon's son, in [1 Chronicles 1:41](#). Hamran itself is an alternate form of Hemdan (compare [Genesis 36:26](#)). *See* Hemdan.

Amramite

A descendant of Amram. He is Kohath's son ([Numbers 3:27](#); [1 Chronicles 26:23](#)). *See* Amram #1.

Amraphel

The king of Shinar or Babylonia. He helped King Chedorlaomer of Elam stop a revolt of five cities in Palestine ([Genesis 14:1-11](#)).

Amulet

A small object worn by an individual. It is usually worn around the neck. It is used as a charm or means of protection against evil, witchcraft, disease, or other physical and spiritual threats.

The word "amulet" is probably derived from either a Latin or Arabic term meaning "to carry." Amulets are also known as talismans. They have been made of various substances and come in many forms. Pieces of metal or strips of parchment (thin sheets of treated animal skin) are used with portions of sacred writings (even Scriptures). Herbs and animal preparations have also been used. Semiprecious gems (valuable stones) were often inscribed with a magical formula.

No Hebrew or Greek word in the Bible is translated "amulet" with certainty. The practice of wearing amulets is sometimes implied. It is generally used with disapproval. Some consider the gold earrings worn by the Israelites escaping from Egypt amulets ([Exodus 32:2-4](#)). Aaron fashioned these into a golden calf. The prophet Isaiah condemned the ornaments worn by the women of his day ([Isaiah 3:16-23](#)).

Most scholars regard the phylacteries and mezuzahs used by the Jews as forms of amulets. Phylacteries are small boxes that hold written Scripture verses. They have leather straps that are used to wear phylacteries during prayer. Likewise, mezuzahs are small containers that hold written Scripture verses and are placed on doorposts. Both are ways of living out the commands in [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#). See Phylactery; Magic; Frontlet.

Amzi

1. A person from the Merarite family group of the Levites and an ancestor of Ethan the musician ([1 Chronicles 6:46](#)).
2. An ancestor of Adaiah and a priest of Malchijah's division ([Nehemiah 11:12](#)).

Anab

A town in the hill country of Hebron where giant warriors lived. After Joshua eliminated the giants, Anab was allotted to Judah's tribe ([Joshua 11:21; 15:50](#)). Today, Anab is known as Khirbet 'Anab el-Kebireh.

Anael

The brother of Tobit ([Tobit 1:21-22](#)). Sennacherib, the King of Assyria, died in 681 BC. After this, Anael's son Ahikar was appointed by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon to a high court position in Nineveh.

Anah

1. The son of Zibeon the Hivite and father of Oholibamah. Oholibamah was one of Esau's wives ([Genesis 36:2, 18](#)).
2. The fourth son of Seir the Horite. Anah was a chief among the Horites who also had a daughter named Oholibamah ([Genesis 36:20, 25; 1 Chronicles 1:38, 41](#)).
3. The son of Zibeon who found hot springs in the wasteland ([Genesis 36:24](#)). This Zibeon was a brother to #2 above. See Zibeon.

Anaharath

A town in the valley of Jezreel. It was given to Issachar's tribe when the land was divided by Joshua ([Joshua 19:19](#)).

Anaiah

1. A priest and assistant of Ezra who explained to the people passages from the law read by Ezra ([Nehemiah 8:4](#)).
2. A political leader who signed Ezra's covenant of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile to Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:22](#)). He may be the same person as #1 above.

Anak, Anakim, Anakites

Anak was the ancestor of a group of very tall people called giants who lived in ancient Canaan.

When Israel first reached Canaan, the Anakim were well established in Hebron. Ten of the 12 spies Moses sent into Canaan were terrified by the size of the Anakim ([Numbers 13:17-22; 31](#)). Their fear led to a rebellion at Kadesh-barnea ([Numbers 14:39-45; Deuteronomy 1:19-46](#)). It also led to another 38 years of wandering. When the Israelites were finally ready to enter Canaan, God promised his help against the famed Anak giants ([Deuteronomy 9:1-3](#)).

The two spies who were not afraid of the Anakim were both involved in their defeat. Joshua defeated the Anakim living in Hebron, Debir, Anab, and all the region of Judah ([Joshua 11:21-23](#)). Those who survived were left only in the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. The other spy, Caleb, was responsible for the defeat of the Anakim chiefs Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai at Hebron. Caleb's nephew Othniel was the hero of Debir ([Joshua 15:14-17](#)).

Hebron had earlier been called Kiriath-arba for Anak's father Arba. He was a great hero of the Anakim ([Joshua 14:15; 21:11](#)). The fact that the Anakim survived in the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod leads to the supposition that Goliath of Gath may have been a descendant of these giants ([1 Samuel 17:4-7](#)).

See also Giants.

Anamim, Anamites

An unidentified group of people, possibly related to the Egyptians. They are mentioned in the biblical records of the earliest nations ([Genesis 10:13; 1 Chronicles 1:11](#)).

Anammelech

A god associated with Adrammelech. The people of Sepharvaim worshiped him. The Assyrians relocated the people of Sepharvaim in Samaria after 722 BC.

Anammelech is the Hebrew rendering of the name for a Mesopotamian deity, Anu-melek. The name means "Anu is King." Anu was the name of the chief god of Assyria, the sky god.

The Sepharvites in Samaria included child sacrifice as a part of their worship of Anu-melek ([2 Kings 17:31](#)). The burning of children in the Anu cult may have been brought from Sepharvaim or it may have

been something new that developed when the Sepharvites came to Canaan.

See also Mesopotamia; Syria, Syrians.

Anan

One of the chiefs of the people. Anan agreed to follow God's law by putting his seal on a covenant organized by Ezra. The covenant was a special agreement meant to help the people obey God's teachings ([Nehemiah 10:26](#)).

Anani

One of seven sons of Elioenai. He is a descendant of David ([1 Chronicles 3:24](#)).

Ananiah (Person)

Azariah's grandfather. Azariah was one of three men who repaired the Jerusalem wall near their homes after the exile to Babylon ([Nehemiah 3:23](#)).

Ananiah (Place)

A town in Benjamin's territory after the exile to Babylon ([Nehemiah 11:32](#)). It may have become the Bethany of the New Testament. "Bethany" is a contraction of Beth-ananiah.

Ananias

1. A member of the early church in Jerusalem. His wife was Sapphira. He and Sapphira died suddenly as God's punishment for lying about the money they had given to the church ([Acts 5:1-5](#)).

2. An early convert to Christianity who was living in Damascus. Saul of Tarsus (also called Paul) arrived in Damascus to arrest Christians. Ananias knew that Paul had been hurting and killing Christians. But God told Ananias not to worry, explaining that he had chosen Paul to tell many people about Jesus ([Acts 9:13-16](#)). God sent Ananias to help Paul, who had become blind after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus. Ananias helped Paul regain his sight ([Acts 9:17-19](#)). He explained to Paul what his meeting with Jesus meant ([Acts 22:12-16](#)). Ananias likely introduced Paul to the church in Damascus as a new Christian brother rather than someone who wanted to attack the church. Some traditions say that Ananias later became one of the 70 disciples of Jerusalem. Some identify him as a bishop of Damascus. Some identify him as a martyr.
3. A high priest who presided over the Sanhedrin (the Jewish religious court) when the apostle Paul was arrested and questioned by that council in Jerusalem. This happened at the end of Paul's third missionary journey ([Acts 22:30-23:10](#)). Ananias was one of the witnesses who testified against Paul in Caesarea. Paul was on trial before Felix, the Roman governor ([Acts 24:1](#)). This Ananias was appointed high priest by Herod Agrippa II in AD 48. He served until AD 59. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote that he was wealthy, selfish, and corrupt. He was known for his collaboration with the Romans. He was also known for being harsh and cruel. He was hated by the Jews who revolted against Rome. He was killed by them when war with Rome broke out in AD 66.

Ananias

The grandfather of Tobit. His name appears in [Tobit 1:1](#).

Anath

1. The parent of Shamgar, one of the judges of Israel ([Judges 3:31](#); [5:6](#)). Since the name Anath is feminine, it is likely that Anath was Shamgar's mother.
2. Canaanite goddess of fertility. *See* Canaanite Deities and Religion.

Anathema

A Greek word meaning "cursed" or "banned." It is associated with destruction. *See* Curse, Cursed.

Anathoth (Person)

1. Becher's son from Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chronicles 7:8](#)).
2. A political leader who signed Ezra's covenant of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile to Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:19](#)).

Anathoth (Place), Anathothite

A town in Benjamin's territory given to the Levites to live in ([Joshua 21:18](#); [1 Chronicles 6:60](#)). Anathoth may have been named by the Canaanites for their goddess Anath or later by the Israelites for one of Benjamin's descendants ([1 Chronicles 7:8](#)).

The town was probably located at Ras el-Karrubeh near the modern town of Anata 4.8 kilometers (three miles) north of Jerusalem. Its residents were sometimes called Anethothites or Anetothites ([2 Samuel 23:27](#); [1 Chronicles 27:12](#)).

One of David's military leaders, Abiezer, was from Anathoth ([1 Chronicles 11:28](#), King James Version "Antothite"). The soldier Jehu ([1 Chronicles 12:3](#)) and the priest Abiathar ([1 Kings 2:26](#)) were also from Anathoth.

It was also the hometown of the prophet Jeremiah ([Jeremiah 1:1](#)). Some of its residents violently opposed him ([Jeremiah 11:21, 23](#)). Just before Judah fell to Babylon, Jeremiah bought a field in Anathoth as a sign that Israel would be restored to her land ([Jeremiah 32:7-9](#)). Years later, 128 men of Anathoth returned from the exile. They resettled the town ([Nehemiah 11:32](#)).

Anchor

An object used to keep a ship or boat in one place in the water. An anchor is attached to a ship by a cable or chain. When it is thrown overboard, its weight and ability to dig into the sea bottom keep the boat from drifting.

Anchors were used many centuries before the time of Christ. They began as simple stone weights. They developed into wooden hooks weighted with lead or stone.

Not long after the time of Christ, iron anchors of the familiar modern shape were used. Anchors are mentioned in Luke's account of the apostle Paul's voyage to Rome ([Acts 27:13, 29-30, 40](#)). [Hebrews 6:19](#) uses "anchor" as a symbol to indicate the stability of God's promise of salvation to those who believe in him.

Ancient of Days, Ancient One

The name of God that Daniel used to describe God as a judge ([Daniel 7:9, 13, 22](#)). See God, Names of.

Andreas

The chief of the bodyguard of Egyptian king Ptolemy Philadelphus. The king sent him to Palestine to get scribes to translate the Old Testament into Greek about 275 BC. This translation is known as the Septuagint. During this time, Eleazar was the Jewish high priest. Eleazar praised Andreas as a good man who was distinguished by his learning.

Andrew, the Apostle

One of Jesus's 12 apostles (special messengers chosen by Jesus).

Andrew's Early Life and Call to Follow Jesus

Andrew first appears in the New Testament as a disciple of John the Baptist ([John 1:35, 40](#)). John said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ([John 1:36](#)), referring to Jesus. Andrew and another unnamed disciple followed Jesus and stayed with him for a day ([John 1:36-39](#)). Andrew then told his brother, Simon Peter, that he had found the Messiah (God's chosen leader) and brought Peter to Jesus ([John 1:40-42](#)).

From then on Andrew faded into the background. Andrew's brother became more well-known. Whenever the relationship between the two is mentioned, Andrew is always described as the brother of Simon Peter. It is never the other way around ([Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16; John 1:40; 6:8](#)). Andrew is also mentioned without reference to his relationship to Peter ([Mark 1:29; 3:18; 13:3; John 12:22](#)).

Andrew's father was John ([Matthew 16:17; John 1:42; 21:15-17](#)). His hometown was Bethsaida ([John 1:44](#)). Bethsaida is a village on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

The Gospel of John mentions disciples being with Jesus ([2:2; 4:2](#)). Andrew likely was one of that early group. However, he returned to his activity as a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. Andrew shared a house with Peter and his family in Capernaum ([Matthew 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-18, 29-33](#)). While they were fishing, Andrew and Peter received a definite call to follow Jesus and become those who fish for people. From among the disciples of Jesus, a group of 12 were later specially chosen as apostles. Andrew is always listed among the first four named, along with Peter and two other brothers, John and James ([Matthew 10:2-4; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13](#)).

Andrew's Role Among the Twelve Apostles

Andrew is named in only three other contexts in the Gospels. At the feeding of the 5,000, he called attention to the boy who had five barley loaves and two fish ([John 6:8-9](#)). When certain Greeks came to Philip, asking to see Jesus, Philip told Andrew and then the two of them told Jesus ([John 12:20-22](#)). Finally, Andrew is listed among those who were questioning Jesus privately on the Mount of Olives ([Mark 13:3-4](#)). The last New Testament mention of Andrew is in the list of apostles waiting in the upper room in Jerusalem. The disciples were waiting for the promised outpouring (or coming) of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 1:12-14](#)).

Later Traditions About Andrew

Various writings associated with Andrew, such as the Acts of Andrew mentioned by the early church historian Eusebius, are of doubtful value. Some traditions indicate that Andrew ministered in Scythia. According to the Muratorian Canon, Andrew received a revelation at night that the apostle John should write the fourth Gospel. Tradition is rather uniform that Andrew died at Patrae in Achaia.

A story developed that he was martyred (killed for his faith) on an X-shaped cross. This X-shaped cross is known as a “decussate” or “saltire” cross. It has become known as Saint Andrew’s Cross. Another tradition is that an arm of the dead Andrew was taken into Scotland as a relic by Regulus. Andrew became known as a patron saint of Scotland. A patron saint is a saint who is looked to for protection. On the calendar of saints of the Roman and Greek churches, Andrew’s date is set as November 30. *See* Apocrypha (Specific Titles of Apocryphal Writings): Andrew, Acts of; Andrew, Story of; Andrew and Matthias, Acts of; Andrew and Paul, Acts of.

See also Apostle, Apostleship.

Andronicus

1. The second-in-command of the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes. This Andronicus angered the Jews by murdering Onias, the high priest. Then Antiochus gave the order for Andronicus to be put to death ([2 Maccabees 4:31–38](#)).
2. The officer in charge of Gerizim after Antiochus Epiphanes destroyed Jerusalem ([2 Maccabees 5:21–23](#)).

3. A Christian greeted by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans ([16:7](#)). He is not mentioned elsewhere. Paul called Andronicus his kinsman. The word could mean fellow countryman, fellow Jew, member of Paul’s own family, or other relative. Andronicus may also have been a fellow prisoner for the cause of Christ. He could have perhaps even been in the same prison with Paul ([2 Corinthians 6:4–5](#); [11:23](#)). Paul described him as important among the apostles and recognized him respectfully as an “older” Christian.

Anem

A town in Issachar’s territory given to the priestly family of Gershon ([1 Chronicles 6:73](#)). It was also called En-gannim ([Joshua 21:29](#)). It was probably located southeast of Mount Tabor.

See also Levitical Cities; En-gannim #2.

Anemone

A plant of the buttercup family, with cup-shaped flowers that are usually white, pink, red, or purple. *See* Plants (Lily).

Aner (Person)

An Amorite ally of Abram and brother of Mamre and Eshcol ([Genesis 14:13](#)). With his brothers, Aner helped Abram defeat a group of four kings who had robbed Sodom and Gomorrah and had captured Abram’s nephew Lot ([Genesis 14:14–16, 21–24](#)).

Aner (Place)

A city in Manasseh’s territory that was given to the Levites ([1 Chronicles 6:70](#)). *See* Cities of Refuge.

Anethothite, Anetothite

King James Version forms of Anathothite. An Anathothite was a person who was a resident of Anathoth ([2 Samuel 23:27](#) and [1 Chronicles 27:12](#))

See Anathoth (Place), Anathothite.

Angel

A messenger of God or supernatural being, either good or evil. Angels in the Bible are more powerful than humans.

The first kind of angels mentioned in the Bible are cherubim (plural of "cherub," a Hebrew word). They were celestial beings sent by God to guard the tree of life in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 3:24](#)).

Authors of biblical books represented angels symbolically:

- on the ark of the covenant ([Exodus 25:18-22](#)),
- in the tabernacle ([Exodus 26:31](#)), and
- in the temple ([2 Chronicles 3:7](#)).

The prophet Ezekiel saw angels in a vision of the restored Jerusalem ([Ezekiel 41:18-20](#)). Two angels, Gabriel and the archangel (or chief) Michael are named in the Bible ([Daniel 8:16](#); [9:21](#); [10:13](#); [Luke 1:19, 26](#); [Jude 1:9](#); [Revelation 12:7-9](#)).

In the Bible, angels are spiritual beings who often serve as messengers. The English word "angel" comes directly from a Greek word for messenger. In [Luke 9:52](#), Jesus sent "messengers" ahead of him. Usually, the same word is translated "angel" and indicates a spiritual messenger from God.

In the Old Testament also, one Hebrew word can refer either to a human messenger or to a spiritual being. It is not always immediately clear which is meant, especially since angels sometimes appeared in human form. In certain passages, "the angel of God" or a similar phrase may refer to God delivering his own message (see [Genesis 18:2-15](#)).

Roles and Functions of Angels in the Bible

Angels appeared to people in the Bible to:

- announce good news ([Judges 13:3](#))
- warn of danger ([Genesis 19:15](#))
- guard from evil ([Daniel 3:28](#); [6:22](#))
- guide and protect ([Exodus 14:19](#))
- nourish ([Genesis 21:14-20](#); [1 Kings 19:4-7](#))
- instruct ([Acts 7:38](#); [Galatians 3:19](#))

When Christ came to earth as the Savior, angels:

- announced his birth ([Luke 2:8-15](#))
- guided and warned his parents ([Matthew 2:13](#))
- strengthened him when he was tempted ([Matthew 4:11](#))
- strengthened him in his last distress ([Luke 22:43-44](#) in some manuscripts)
- observed his resurrection ([Matthew 28:1-6](#))

The New Testament includes several examples of angels interacting with humans:

- Jesus spoke about the guardian angels of little children ([Matthew 18:10](#)).
- An angel guided Philip ([Acts 8:26](#)).
- An angel rescued apostles from prison ([Acts 5:19](#); [12:7-11](#)).
- In a scary situation, an angel encouraged the apostle Paul ([Acts 27:21-25](#)).

Physical Descriptions and Visions of Angels

Biblical encounters with angels often describe distinct physical differences from ordinary people. The angel who moved the stone from the entrance to Jesus' tomb had an appearance like lightning and clothing white as snow ([Matthew 28:3](#)).

Many passages about angels are descriptions of dreams or visions. "Jacob's ladder" with angels ascending and descending ([Genesis 28:12](#)) is an example. In another dream an angel spoke to Jacob ([Genesis 31:11](#)). An angel appeared to Cornelius in a vision ([Acts 10:1-3](#)). Major passages of this type include [Isaiah 6](#) (the seraphim), much of the book

of Ezekiel (the cherubim), and much of Daniel and Zechariah.

In the New Testament, over a third of the references to angels are in the book of Revelation. In most cases, the angelic beings are glorious or grotesque figures seen in visions and are not to be confused with human persons. The language describing angelic visions is often mystical, metaphorical, and difficult to interpret.

Angels in Christian Theology

Angelology, the doctrine of angels, is not a major theme in Christian theology in spite of the many references to angels in the Bible. Angels are included in descriptions of all that God created ([Psalm 148:2](#); [Colossians 1:16](#)). There are hints that they saw the creation of the world ([Job 38:7](#)). No matter how close to God angels may be, they share with humankind the status of creatures.

As wholly spiritual creatures, angels are free from many human limitations. They do not die ([Luke 20:36](#)). They do not marry, so they could be regarded as sexless ([Matthew 22:30](#)). In all appearances, angels in human form were taken to be men, never women or children. Angels' ability to communicate in human language and to affect human life in other ways is basic to their role in the Bible.

Angels' power and awesome appearance sometimes tempted people to fear or worship them ([Matthew 28:2-4](#)). The New Testament does not condone the worship of angels ([Colossians 2:18](#); [Revelation 22:8-9](#)). Though angels are stronger and wiser than human beings, their power and knowledge are also limited by God ([Psalm 103:20](#); [Matthew 24:36](#); [1 Peter 1:11-12](#); [2 Peter 2:11](#)). See Cherub, Cherubim; Seraph, Seraphim; Demon; Demon-possession; Satan.

Anger

The word commonly used in the Bible to refer to rage, fury, and indignation. In most instances, anger is considered to be wrong. [Psalm 37:8](#), for example, commands: "Refrain from anger and abandon wrath." Jesus paralleled anger with murder when he said, "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" ([Matthew 5:22](#)). It is just as if the person had actually committed the murder he felt in his angry heart. [Ephesians 4:31](#) and [Colossians 3:8](#)

both list anger, along with bitterness, wrath, malice, and slander, as attitudes that Christians must rid themselves of once and for all. In Paul's list of attributes for a bishop or pastor of a church, the apostle said that a Christian leader should not be prone to anger or easily provoked ([Titus 1:7](#)).

The Bible recognizes that humans get angry. It does not condemn experiencing anger as an emotion, but what often happens as the result of anger. Humans have a habit of letting their anger control or influence their actions, causing them to sin. That is why the apostle Paul said, "Be angry, yet do not sin" ([Ephesians 4:26](#)). The longer a person allows anger to continue, the greater the danger that it will develop sinful qualities, giving Satan a foothold (see [Ephesians 4:27](#)).

Good anger is also spoken of in the Bible. "Righteous indignation" refers to the extreme displeasure of a holy heart unable to tolerate sin of any kind. The anger of God contains this element: humans should be good, yet they sin—and God is angry "because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went and served other gods, and they worshiped gods they had not known—gods that the LORD had not given to them" ([Deuteronomy 29:25-26](#)). It was in that sense also that Moses's anger burned on Mount Sinai and caused him to smash the tablets of the covenant on the ground when he saw the golden calf and Israel's idolatry ([Exodus 32:19](#)).

In the New Testament, Mark says that Jesus looked with anger at the Pharisees, who were hoping to catch him breaking their law ([Mark 3:5](#)). Jesus's anger was also shown in his cleansing of the temple ([John 2:13-22](#)). The temple should have been a place of prayer but was being used as a place of business. So Jesus "entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves" ([Matthew 21:12](#)). His holy indignation was neither a weakness nor a sin. Such anger is an appropriate response to sin and injustice, especially when they are apparently unpunished.

Aniam

Shemida's son from the tribe of Naphtali, which is one of the twelve tribes of Israel. His name is listed in [1 Chronicles 7:19](#).

Anim

One of 44 cities of the hill country that Joshua gave to Judah's tribe ([Joshua 15:50](#)). Anim is probably modern Khirbet Ghowein et-Tahta.

Animals

In the Bible, "animals" refers to all living (and extinct) creatures except humans and plants. Animals are mentioned throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

Animals are important in many Bible stories, including:

- When God created the world
- When Adam and Eve disobeyed God
- When Noah saved the animals from the great flood
- When God sent ten plagues to Egypt
- When the Hebrew people used animals in their worship
- During the life of Jesus

The people who lived in Bible times, both in the Old Testament and New Testament, spent much of their time around animals. They knew a lot about different kinds of animals. This is why Jesus and the people who wrote the Bible often used animals as examples to teach important ideas.

The Bible and modern science group animals in different ways.

Modern scientists group animals based on what they look like on the outside and inside. This way of grouping animals was started by Carolus Linnaeus, a plant expert who lived in Sweden during the 1700s.

The Bible groups animals based on where they live. In [Genesis 1](#), God created different types of animals:

- Animals that live in the sea ([Genesis 1:20](#))
- Animals that live in the sky ([Genesis 1:21](#))
- Animals that crawl on the ground ([Genesis 1:24](#))
- Domesticated animals that live with humans ([Genesis 1:24](#))
- Wild animals ([Genesis 1:24](#))

This same way of grouping animals appears in other parts of the Bible, including [Leviticus 11](#).

Because these two ways of grouping animals are different, we list the Bible's animals in order from A to Z. This list includes:

- Reptiles (cold-blooded animals that usually have scaly skin, such as snakes)
- Fish (animals that live in water, such as sardines)
- Invertebrates (animals without backbones, such as insects, spiders, and worms)

Specific types of animals are listed below. Birds are discussed in a separate article (*see* [Birds](#)). Click on an animal listed below to access the full-length article.

Types of Animals

- Adder: Several kinds of poisonous and nonpoisonous snakes, particularly the common viper in Europe and Asia.
- Ant: A small, hard-working insect that lives in colonies and builds underground nests.
- Antelope: An antelope is a fast-running, deer-like animal with slender legs and curved horns.
- Ape: A large, intelligent primate that has no tail.
- Asp: A venomous snake known for its quick strike and smooth, pale-colored scales.
- Donkey: A strong, hoofed animal with long ears, often used for carrying loads or pulling carts.
- Badger: A small, burrowing animal with short legs and a black-and-white striped face.
- Bat: A small, nighttime animal that flies with its soft, thin wings and uses sound to find its way in the dark.
- Bear: A large, strong animal with thick fur, known for living in forests and often eating plants or animals.
- Bee: Flying insects that produce honey and wax.
- Behemoth: A large, powerful creature mentioned in the Bible, often thought to be a giant animal or symbol of strength.
- Camel: A large animal with a hump on its back, known for living in deserts and able to go without water for long periods.
- Caterpillar: Wormlike larva of a butterfly, moth, and some other insects.
- Cattle: Large farm animals that are raised for their milk, meat, and leather.

- Chameleon: A small lizard known for changing its color to blend into its surroundings.
- Coral: A small ocean-dwelling animal that lives in groups and builds hard, colorful structures known as coral reefs.
- Cricket: A small insect with long legs that makes a chirping sound, often heard at night.
- Crocodile: A large, reptile with a long, tough body, sharp teeth, and lives in rivers and swamps.
- Deer: A gentle animal with antlers (in males) and is known for living in forests and grasslands.
- Dog: A dog is a loyal, friendly animal often kept as a pet, known for its barking and companionship.
- Donkey: A strong, hooved animal with long ears, often used to carry loads or pull carts.
- Dragon: A large, imaginary creature often shown with wings, scales, and the ability to breathe fire.
- Fish: A cold-blooded animal that lives in water, has scales, and breathes through gills.
- Flea: A small, jumping insect that lives on the blood of animals, often causing itching.
- Fly: A small insect with wings that can quickly fly and is often seen buzzing around food.
- Fox: A small, clever animal with a bushy tail, known for living in forests and fields.
- Frog: A small, jumping animal that lives in water and on land, known for its smooth skin and croaking sound.
- Gazelle: A fast, graceful antelope with slender legs and curved horns, often found in grasslands.

- Gecko: A small lizard known for its ability to climb walls and make a chirping sound.
- Gnat: A tiny flying insect that is often found in swarms and can bite, causing itching.
- Goat: A strong, hardy animal with horns, often raised for its milk, meat, or wool.
- Grasshopper: Plant-eating insect with long hind legs used for leaping.
- Hare: A small, fast, long-eared mammal similar to the rabbit.
- Hippopotamus: A large, heavy animal that lives in rivers and lakes, with thick skin and big teeth.
- Horse: A large, strong animal with hooves, often used for riding, farming, or racing.
- Hyena: A wild animal with a strong body and a distinctive laugh-like sound, known for living in groups and scavenging for food.
- Jackal: A wild animal that looks like a small wolf, often found in deserts or grasslands, and is known for hunting in groups or scavenging.
- Leech: A slimy, blood-sucking worm that lives in water or damp places.
- Leopard: A large, spotted cat known for its strength and ability to climb trees.
- Leviathan: A great sea monster or large aquatic reptile.
- Lion: A large, powerful cat with a mane (in males) and is known for living in groups.
- Lizard: A small reptile with scaly skin, four legs, and a long tail.

- Locust: Various insects known especially for their swarming, mass migration, and tremendous destruction of vegetation.
- Mole: A small, burrowing animal with dark fur, known for its strong front paws and poor eyesight.
- Moth: A flying insect with soft wings, often active at night, and is attracted to light.
- Mouse: A small, furry animal with a long tail, often found in homes and fields.
- Mule: A strong, hybrid animal that is the offspring of a donkey and a horse, often used for carrying loads.
- Pig: An animal with a snout, known for being intelligent and raised for its meat.
- Porcupine: A porcupine is a small animal covered in sharp quills that it uses to protect itself.
- Scorpion: A scorpion is a small animal with a curved tail and a stinger, often found in dry places.
- Sheep: An animal with soft wool, often raised for its wool, meat, and milk.
- Snail: A small animal with a soft body and a hard, spiral shell on its back.
- Snake: A long, slithering animal without legs, known for its smooth scales and ability to crawl.
- Spider: An eight-legged insect that spins webs to catch its food.
- Sponge: A soft, porous animal that lives in water and filters tiny particles for food.
- Unicorn: In the Bible, the term "unicorn" is used in some translations, but it likely refers to a wild ox or an animal with a strong, single horn, rather than the mythical creature commonly known today.

- Whale: A large marine mammal that lives in the ocean, known for its size and ability to breathe air through a blowhole.
- Wild Ox: A large, strong animal that lives in the wild and is known for its horns and strength.
- Wolf: A wild, meat-eating animal that lives in packs and is known for its sharp teeth and howling sound.
- Worm: A small, soft-bodied animal that lives in the soil and helps break down organic matter.

Anise

The King James Version translation of dill in [Matthew 23:23](#).

See Plants (Dill).

Anna

Phanuel's daughter from Asher's tribe. She was an elderly prophetess in Jerusalem when Jesus was a young child. She worshiped with prayer and fasting day and night in the temple. When Jesus was brought by his parents and presented to the Lord in the temple, she visited the family. She thanked God and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem ([Luke 2:36-38](#)).

Annan

The father of five sons who divorced their foreign wives as Ezra had instructed ([1 Esdras 9:32](#)). He is also called Harim ([Ezra 10:31](#)).

Annas

Annas was the Jewish high priest from AD 7 to 15.

Quirinius, who was the Roman governor of Syria, appointed him to this position. Later, Valerius Gratus, the procurator (governor) of Judea, removed Annas from his role as high priest. After Annas, three other people briefly served as high priest. Then Caiaphas, who was married to Annas's

daughter, became the high priest ([John 18:13, 24](#)). Caiaphas was the high priest from AD 18 to 36. This means Caiaphas was the high priest during Jesus's public ministry.

Annas continued to have power and influence even after his removal from that office. The high priest held a lifetime appointment. It is likely the Jews strongly resented the Roman removal of Annas as high priest. Even though Annas was no longer officially high priest, many people still called him by this title. This was because they believed someone chosen as high priest should keep this honor for life. Examples of this are found in the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus. These examples clarify those references in the New Testament to Annas as high priest during the same period as Caiaphas ([Luke 3:2](#); [John 18:19, 22-24](#); [Acts 4:6](#)).

Annas privately questioned Jesus after he was arrested but before they took Jesus to Caiaphas ([John 18:13, 19-24](#)). This shows that Annas continued to have power among the Jewish religious leaders.

The book of Acts tells us that Annas helped question Peter and John about their teaching ([Acts 4:6-21](#)). The religious leaders warned Peter and John to stop teaching about Jesus but then let them go free. This was very different from what happened to Jesus, who was put to death.

Annias

The ancestor of a family of 101 sons. They moved from Babylon with Zerubbabel according to [1 Esdras 5:16](#). Similar biblical books do not include this family ([Ezra 2:16-20](#); [Nehemiah 7:21-25](#)).

Anniuth

Another name for Bani, which appears in [1 Esdras 9:48](#). See Bani #10.

Annunciation

The word Annunciation refers to an important event in the Christian faith when an angel named Gabriel came to a young woman named Mary. Gabriel told Mary that God's Holy Spirit would give her a son in a miraculous way ([Luke 1:26-38](#)).

The Angel's Message to Mary

Mary would face many difficulties because she became pregnant before marriage. But the angel Gabriel greeted her with special words, calling her “highly favored” or “richly blessed” ([Luke 1:28](#)). Like all people who meet angels in the Bible, Mary felt afraid when she saw Gabriel. Mary “wondered what kind of greeting this might be” ([Luke 1:29](#)). Gabriel comforted her and told her that God had chosen her to have a son, who would be named Jesus.

“Jesus” is the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Joshua.” It means “the Lord is salvation.” Matthew described an angel’s appearance to Joseph also to announce that Mary was pregnant with a child conceived by the Holy Spirit. He who would be called Jesus, “because He will save His people from their sins.” ([Matthew 1:18-21](#)).

God's Promise About Jesus

Using figures of speech drawn from the Old Testament, Gabriel prophesied concerning the child that Mary would bear ([Luke 1:32-33](#)). Like John the Baptist, Jesus would be great. Jesus’s greatness would be of a different kind. John was to be “great in the sight of the Lord” ([Luke 1:15](#)), but Jesus would be great and be “called the Son of the Most High” ([Luke 1:32](#)).

Jesus would be given the throne of his father David ([Luke 1:32](#)). He would receive the power to rule promised in the Old Testament to the Messiah-King of David’s line. The Messiah or “anointed one” was a king or priest-like figure. Unlike David, Jesus would reign forever ([2 Samuel 7:12-16](#); [Psalms 2:7](#); [89:26-29](#)).

Mary’s question in [Luke 1:34](#), “How can this be...since I am a virgin” did not express doubt. It expressed curiosity as to how the event should take place. Gabriel explained that “the power of the Most High,” the Holy Spirit, would “overshadow” Mary. Her child would be conceived by God’s power, like no child before it.

Gabriel reassured Mary, “For with God nothing will be impossible.” This echoes the Lord’s word to Sarah when he announces Isaac’s birth ([Genesis 18:10-14](#)). Because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, he would be called the “Holy One” and would be recognized as “the Son of God” ([Luke 1:35](#)).

Mary's Response and Legacy

It required courage for Mary to reply to Gabriel, “I am the Lord’s servant” and “May it happen to me according to your word” ([Luke 1:38](#)). As a handmaid or slave, Mary could not but do the will of her master. However, as an unmarried pregnant woman, she faced the possibility of disgrace ([Matthew 1:19](#)). She even faced the death penalty ([Deuteronomy 22:20-24](#); [John 8:3-5](#)). Still, Mary realized that because of the mighty thing God would do in her, “From now on all generations will call me blessed” ([Luke 1:48](#)).

Since December 25 is celebrated as the traditional date of Christ’s birth, churches that follow a structured church calendar celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation (Incarnation) nine months earlier, on March 25.

See also Virgin Birth of Jesus.

Annunus

One of the men the Lord supplied in response to Ezra’s request for priests to serve in Jerusalem ([1 Esdras 8:48](#)). Annunus was probably one of Jeshaiiah’s brothers ([Ezra 8:19](#)).

Anoint

To pour oil or ointment onto a person or object as a part of a ritual or ceremony.

The Hebrew word for anoint first appears in [Genesis 31:13](#), when Jacob pours oil on the stone of Bethel ([Genesis 28:18-19](#)). Later, the ceremony was repeated ([Genesis 35:9-15](#)). This was a religious ceremony that signified the place’s sacred use.

As a religious act, the anointing was meant to give the anointed person some of the qualities of the god involved. From ancient times, the Hebrew people started the service of new leaders in their community by pouring special oil on their heads. The same practice was used to set objects apart as special for God’s use.

The Bible does not give many details about how official things and people were anointed. Jacob simply poured oil on a rock and said something. When anointing Israel’s first king, Samuel (a prophet and judge) took Saul aside to teach him ([1 Samuel 9:25-27](#)). Then Samuel “took a flask of oil,

poured it on Saul's head, kissed him, and said, 'Has not the LORD anointed you ruler over His inheritance?'" ([1 Samuel 10:1](#)).

For anointing the tabernacle (a special tent for worship) and its priests, they made a special oil. Skilled perfume makers mixed the best spices (myrrh, cinnamon, sweet cane, cassia) with olive oil ([Exodus 30:22-25](#)).

The Lord said everything set apart for God should be anointed. This included the tabernacle, the ark, the table and its tools, the lampstand and its tools, the incense altar, the main altar, and the washbasin. Aaron the high priest and his sons, who were priests, were also to be anointed ([Exodus 30:26-32](#)). This made a holy place with holy furniture, holy worship tools, and holy ministers that were special to God.

In Israel, three main jobs were linked with anointing: prophet, priest, and king. Prophets were sometimes, but not always, given their job through official anointing ([1 Kings 19:16](#)). People could call them God's anointed ones ([1 Chronicles 16:22](#); [Psalm 105:15](#)). When the Levite priesthood began, all priests were anointed for their jobs. This included Aaron's sons and Aaron himself ([Exodus 40:12-15](#); [Numbers 3:3](#)). After this, they did not anoint regular priests again when they started their work. Anointing was kept mainly for the high priest ([Exodus 29:29](#); [Leviticus 16:32](#)).

Before the Israelites had their own king, they knew about anointing as a way to start a king's rule ([Judges 9:8,15](#)). Anointing became a God-ordered ceremony for all kings of Judah and Israel ([2 Kings 9:1-6](#); [11:12](#)). This started with Saul ([1 Samuel 10:1](#); [1 Kings 1:39](#)). David was anointed three times ([1 Samuel 16:1, 13](#); [2 Samuel 2:4](#); [5:1-4](#)). "The Lord's anointed" became a common term for Israelite kings ([1 Samuel 12:3-5](#); [2 Samuel 1:14-16](#); [Psalm 89:38, 51](#); [Lamentations 4:20](#)).

Anointing was not only for religious reasons. Both the Egyptians and the Syrians used anointing for health and beauty. The Bible shows that Israelites also used anointing in this way ([2 Samuel 12:20](#); [Ruth 3:3](#); [Micah 6:15](#)). When people did not anoint or put perfume on themselves, it showed they were sad or in trouble ([2 Samuel 14:2](#); [Daniel 10:3](#); [Matthew 6:17](#)).

In the New Testament, the Bible recommends anointing sick people with oil. This happens when a sick person asks for it. Church leaders pray for healing while doing this ([James 5:14-16](#)). The apostles (early Christian leaders) also used

anointing with oil when they healed people ([Mark 6:12-13](#)).

Anointed One, Anointed Ones

Anointing is choosing someone for a special role or purpose. In the Bible, this often involved putting oil on the person, but it also meant being filled with God's Spirit for a special task.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is shown as having three important roles:

- Prophet (someone who speaks for God)
- Priest (someone who helps people connect with God)
- King (a ruler who leads people)

Jesus is God's Anointed One. "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word meaning "anointed one." "Christ" comes from the Greek word meaning "anointed one."

The true anointing of Messiah is spiritual ([Psalms 2:2](#); [Daniel 9:25-26](#)). It is an anointing by the Holy Spirit ([Isaiah 61:1](#); [Luke 4:1, 18-19](#)). Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Anointed One or Messiah of Old Testament prophecy. This was confirmed by his anointing by the Holy Spirit and by the miracles that followed ([John 1:32-51](#); [Luke 4:33-37](#)). Like Jesus, Christians also are said to be anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit helps them understand their faith and to live lives that please God ([2 Corinthians 1:21-22](#); [1 John 2:20, 27](#)).

See also Messiah.

Ant

An insect used as an example of active workers that store food in the summer ([Proverbs 6:6](#); [30:25](#)).

Ants are mentioned only twice in the Bible, both times in the book of Proverbs. For many years, some blamed Solomon for a biological error. [Proverbs 6:8](#) says "prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food at harvest". Critics of the Bible pointed out that, so far as was then known, ants do not store up food. They assumed that Solomon had probably kicked an ant hill. He mistook the cocoon husks for grain. Or, he saw ants

carrying bits of grain, leaves, and other matter to their nests.

At least three species of grain-storing ants are now known. Two occur in Israel and the other in Mediterranean countries. The particular species referred to by Solomon in [Proverbs 6:6-8](#) and [Proverbs 30:24-25](#) is probably the harvester ant (*Messor semirufus*). Its homes are flat chambers that are connected by galleries. They are scattered over an area about 1.8 meters (six feet) in diameter and .3 meters (one foot) deep in the ground.

Seeds are collected from the ground or picked from plants. The head, the softest part of the kernel, is bitten off to prevent growth. The shell and empty capsules are thrown on refuse piles outside the nest. Individual granaries may be 12.7 centimeters (five inches) thick and 1.2 centimeters (one and a half inches) high. Some nests are known to be 12 meters (40 feet) in diameter and approximately two meters (six to seven feet) deep with several entrances.

Antediluvian

The name given to the time before the flood during Noah's lifetime. As an adjective, which literally means "before the flood [deluge]," it refers to a significant time in biblical history. As a noun, "antediluvians" refers to the people who lived in that time. Toward the end of the antediluvian period, society was described as being very evil. So, according to the Bible, God commanded their destruction by the flood. *See* Flood, The.

Antelope

A fast-running animal that looks similar to a deer.

Several antelope-like creatures are referred to in the Scriptures. One seems to be the white oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*), referred to as "antelope" in [Deuteronomy 14:5](#) and [Isaiah 51:20](#). The oryx was probably the antelope. Its long horns made it easy to catch. So, it was a common food source.

Another antelope mentioned in the Bible is the addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*). It is probably the "antelope" of [Deuteronomy 14:5](#) ("pygarg" in the King James Version). It lives in North Africa. It has grayish-white hind parts, a white patch on its forehead, and twisted, ringed horns. The word "pygarg" comes from a Greek word meaning "white

rump." The addax is about the size of a donkey. Its body is closely covered with short hair. It has a short mane on the underside of its neck that makes the head look somewhat like that of a goat. The hooves are broad and flat, and the tail resembles that of a donkey. It is common in Africa and in Arabia, where Arabs hunt it with falcons and dogs.

Antelopes are very graceful and run with their heads held high. Both sexes have long, permanent, hollow horns. Oryx horns go straight back while addax horns twist into rings. Antelope are alert, skittish, and perceptive. They are usually found in herds of from two to a dozen. If injured or cornered, an antelope attacks with its head down. Its sharp horns point forward. Antelopes feed on grasses and shrubs, drinking from streams and water holes. When there is not much water, they eat melons and juicy bulbs. Both addax and oryx were clean in Jewish law.

Anthothijah

A Benjamite and Shashak's son. His name is listed in [1 Chronicles 8:24](#).

Anthropology

The study of humans and human cultures. In a theological sense, anthropology is the study of what the Bible says about humans. Anthropology focuses on how humans actually relate to God and how they should relate to God. *See* Human Being.

Anti-Lebanon

A mountain range stretching from Mount Hermon in the south toward the north-northeast ([Judith 1:7](#)). It runs parallel to the Lebanon range west of it. Most of the water for the Jordan River comes from water draining from the two mountain ranges. In the Old Testament, the range was known as Sirion ([Deuteronomy 3:9](#); [4:48](#); [Psalm 29:6](#)) or Senir ([1 Chronicles 5:23](#); [Song of Solomon 4:8](#); [Ezekiel 27:5](#)).

Antichrist

According to 1 John, anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ, that he is the unique Son of God, or

that he has come in the flesh. The biblical term, however, primarily refers to a particular person who becomes a significant denier in the final stage of history.

The word “antichrist” occurs only four times, all in John’s letters ([1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3](#); [2 John 1:7](#)). [First John 2:18](#) refers also to “many antichrists.” John assumed that his Christian readers knew about the Antichrist and had been taught to expect his coming ([1 John 2:18–27](#)). The presence of many antichrists indicated that the end times had arrived. But John warned that a final Antichrist would appear and deny that Jesus is the Christ.

John said anyone or message that did not “confess Jesus” is of the spirit of the antichrist ([1 John 4:3](#)). John’s second letter describes “many deceivers” who would not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh ([2 John 1:7](#)). Such a person was “the deceiver and the antichrist.”

See also False Christs, False Messiahs; Mark of the Beast; Prophets, False; Beast; Revelation, Book of.

Antigonus

The name of three Greek kings and two Hasmonean (Jewish) kings in the period between the Old Testament and New Testament.

1. Antigonus I, also called Cyclops. Cyclops means the “one-eyed,” which in Greek is *Monophthalmus*. Antigonus was born in 382 BC. He served under Alexander the Great and became the provincial governor of Phrygia in 333 BC. After Alexander’s death in 323 BC, his empire was divided. Four of Alexander’s top generals took control of different parts (compare [Daniel 8:8; 11:3–4](#)):

- Cassander ruled Macedonia.
- Lysimachus ruled Thrace and Asia Minor.
- Seleucus ruled Syria.
- Ptolemy ruled Egypt.

Antigonus wanted to unite what had been the Alexandrian Empire, but the other generals also wanted to do the same. Antigonus was a brilliant military strategist and gained a lot of territory, including much of Cassander’s inheritance and the island of Cyprus. Antigonus lived to be 80 years old. He was the founder of the Antigonid dynasty, to

which the next two Antigonuses (Antigonus II and Antigonus III) belonged.

2. Antigonus II, also known as Gonatas. He was born in 319 BC. He was a son of Demetrius I Poliorcetes and grandson of Antigonus I. His major achievement was to rout the Seleucid ruler Antiochus I from Syria. This eliminated any threat to his own rule over Macedonia (northern Greece). This Antigonus also lived to be 80.

3. Antigonus III, son of Demetrius the Fair in 263 BC. He was a half-nephew of Antigonus II. He maintained the Antigonid dynasty and held Greece together through the Hellenic League (224 BC) against various efforts to dissolve its united parts.

4. Antigonus, son of John Hyrcanus. He was born in 135 BC and died in 104 BC. His grandfather was Simeon, and his great-grandfather was Mattathias. Therefore, he was a grandnephew of the famous Jewish military leader Judas Maccabeus. By the time this Antigonus came to power the Hasmonean family was not as powerful as it used to be. The dynasty lost power quickly. The Hasmonean family destroyed itself due to internal fighting and a lack of trust.

5. Antigonus II Mattathias, nephew of Antigonus (#4) and the son of Aristobulus II. He was the last Hasmonean king. This Antigonus spent a good part of his life in Rome trying to convince Julius Caesar that he (Antigonus) rather than Antipater II should rule Judea. After Caesar’s assassination in 44 BC, Antigonus made his way eastward and in the year 40 BC established his rule in Jerusalem.

However, it was unstable and did not last long. The routed King Herod eventually gathered enough Roman support to retake what Antigonus had conquered, and three years later Antigonus was beheaded by Mark Antony, the new Roman emperor.

See also Hasmonean.

Antilegomena

A term used to refer to writings that some Christians doubted should be a part of the Bible.

See “Antilegomena: The Books That Didn’t Make It”; Bible, Canon of the.

Antioch of Pisidia

A city in Asia Minor between the districts of Phrygia and Pisidia. The apostle Paul traveled there to introduce the gospel. Paul was invited by the elders of the synagogue in Antioch. They invited him to deliver any message of encouragement he might have at their Sabbath or Saturday meeting ([Acts 13:14–15](#)).

According to the record in Acts, many begged to hear more ([13:42](#)). Some of the Jewish leaders were jealous of Paul because he was popular. They began to say harmful things about him ([13:45](#)). Paul then turned to gentile listeners ([13:46–48](#)). Some of the Jewish authorities forced him to leave the city ([13:50](#)). The same Jews from Antioch continued to attack Paul as he traveled to Lystra ([Acts 14:19](#)). Paul traveled through Antioch a second time while on his way to Perga and Attalia ([14:21](#)).

The city of Antioch was built around 300 BC by Seleucus Nicator. He named the city for his son, Antiochus I. As a result of the Roman conquest in 188 BC, the area was declared free from the rule of the Seleucid kings. The Romans began immediately making it more like their cities. In about 36 BC, Antony made Antioch part of the territory of the Galatian king, Amyntas. Upon the death of Amyntas 11 years later, the city was given colony status and became Caesarea Antiochela. It was the capital of southern Galatia.

Antioch of Syria

The main city among 16 others of the same name. It was built about 300 BC by the Syrian emperor Seleucus I in honor of his father Antiochus. This Antioch is modern Antakya, Turkey. It is located on a fertile plain in a western bend of the Orontes River that ends in the Mediterranean Sea.

Where Was Antioch and Why Was It Important?

In ancient times 500,000 people lived in Antioch. Antioch was a busy city. It was located on water and boats could travel 24 kilometers (15 miles) to a Mediterranean port. It also had easy access through passes in the Taurus Mountains eastward to the central part of Syria. Its location made it a city busy with trade, religious activity, and high levels of intellectual and political life. Under Roman authority, Antioch received special attention in the

form of beautiful public works, harbor improvements, and special trade advantages.

What Was Life Like in Antioch?

The city had both good and bad aspects. While some people enjoyed art and education, others participated in violent sports and dangerous religious practices. Some of these religious practices included worship of gods that people believed would help crops grow, as well as secret religious groups called mystery cults. Two other important groups lived in Antioch. One was a large Jewish community that had special rights and lived well in the city. The other was a group of government officials who helped run the city.

Many Jews in Antioch became Christians and members of the early church in Antioch. The government officials provided police protection, stability, and order. They also had a strong desire for expensive lifestyles. They participated in gambling, chariot races, brothels, exotic banquets, and the like.

How Did Antioch Help Christianity Spread?

Antioch of Syria played an important role in the book of Acts. A man named Nicholas from Antioch became one of the first deacons in the early church ([Acts 6:5](#)). Jerusalem Christians fled to Antioch from fierce persecution ([11:19](#)). [Acts 11](#) gives details of Barnabas and Paul's teaching in the Antioch church. The Antioch church was generous and a blessing to the suffering Christians in Jerusalem. The term "Christians" was first used in Antioch ([11:26](#)). [Acts 13](#) records that the first missionaries were sent from there. The Jerusalem church council's statement on requirements for gentile believers was in part a result of the work in Antioch among gentiles (see [Acts 15](#) and [Galatians 2](#)).

From the third century to about the eighth century, Antioch was an important center for the development of Christian theology. The approach to Scripture and to the nature of Christ taken in Antioch tended to be historical and rational. In contrast, the approach taken in Alexandria (Egypt) was overly spiritualized and allegorical. Theologians such as Origen and Clement are representative of this symbolic or non-literal interpretation in Egypt.

Antiochians

Jews from the time between the Old and New Testaments who had largely abandoned their Judaism for Greek ideas and practices. The Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes reigned during the second century BC. During his rule, Palestine was subjected to an intensive “Hellenizing” program, encouraging others to “be Greek” in every way. Many people in Jerusalem faced pressure to adopt Greek ways of life. This pressure came from both social and economic sources. As a result, many of these people gave up or ignored their Jewish religious traditions. They did this to fit in with Greek culture as much as possible.

Jason became the high priest by paying a bribe to replace his brother Onias. Jason worked together with King Antiochus Epiphanes. Their goal was to encourage people in Jerusalem to adopt Greek ideas and ways of life. Jason built a place for education and physical training called a gymnasium. He also introduced new customs that went against Jewish traditions.

Many Jewish people changed their ways because of Jason’s encouragement. They left behind the faith of their fathers. Even the priests stopped performing their usual religious duties. Instead, they joined in the new activities that Jason and his supporters offered. These activities were more focused on Greek ways of life. In [2 Maccabees 4:15](#), it says that these people were “putting the highest value on Greek forms of prestige.” In [2 Maccabees 4:9](#), this group of Jews was called “citizens of Antioch.” Antioch was the capital city of Syria.

See Maccabean Period; Hasmonean.

Antiochis

A concubine of the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes ([2 Maccabees 4:30](#)). The cities of Tarsus and Mallus were given to Antiochis as a gift. Their residents revolted in protest.

Antiochus IV

A Hellenistic king called Epiphanes meaning the “illustrious” or “god manifest.” He was the eighth in the Seleucid dynasty. The Seleucids ruled Syria and beyond. He lived from around 215 to 164 BC. He was the younger son of Antiochus III the Great.

Early Life and Rise to Power

In 189 BC, Antiochus IV was a prisoner in Rome after the Battle of Magnesia. He was educated there. Later, he took the Syrian throne in Antioch after the murder of his brother Seleucus IV. He ruled from 175 to 164 BC.

Antiochus Epiphanes is the most important of all the Seleucid rulers as far as the Bible is concerned. He is known as one of the cruelest tyrants of all time. Antiochus IV was an enthusiastic believer in the Greek god Zeus. He hoped to unify his territories by spreading Hellenistic culture, law, and religion. This brought him into violent conflict with the Jews in Judah.

Conflict with the Jews

At the beginning of his reign, Antiochus IV interfered in the appointment of Jewish high priests. From 171 to 168 BC, he fought against Egypt. He defeated Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VII. He then captured Jerusalem. He restricted Judaism with cruel persecution. He looted the temple. He tried to establish the worship of Greek gods by building an altar to Zeus over the altar of burnt offering ([1 Maccabees 1:10-62](#); [2 Maccabees 4:7-42](#)). This altar is probably the “abomination of desolation” of [Daniel 11:31](#). Antiochus IV plays a major role in the book of Daniel. He is probably the “little horn” of [7:8](#); [8:9-14](#), [23-25](#) and the oppressor of the “saints of the Most High” ([7:25](#)).

By Antiochus’s command, Judaism was made illegal under pain of death. The Jews were forced to participate in pagan festivals. Open rebellion broke out in 167 BC under the leadership of the Jewish priest Mattathias. This happened when a representative of the king was enforcing obedience in a village named Modein near Jerusalem. Mattathias killed the representative and then fled to the surrounding hills. Many of Mattathias’s followers were killed. However, a group of devoted Jews called the Hasidim joined him. Together, they began to fight against the king’s army using surprise attacks from hiding places.

The Maccabean Revolt and the Decline of Antiochus IV

After he died in 166 BC, Mattathias was succeeded by his son Judas Maccabeus who escalated the war. He was victorious over the Syrian generals. Antiochus was unable to personally lead the suppression of the Jewish revolt because of serious rebellions in Parthia and Armenia. He assigned this

task to his regent Lysias who was give instructions to remove the people of Judah, enslave the Jews, and leave the land bare. This did not happen.

Judas defeated Gorgias at Emmaus. The Syrians fled from Judah. Then Lysias personally led a larger army against the Maccabees. Lysias badly lost at Beth-zur. In 164 BC, Judas rebuilt and cleaned the temple and returned the daily sacrifices. By 160 BC, every vestige of the power of Antiochus IV had been erased from Jerusalem.

Antiochus Epiphanes was known to be wild, unpredictable, and rash to the point of madness. Antiochus became more mad for two reasons:

1. Judas Maccabeus was successful.
2. Antiochus could not suppress the Jewish revolt.

After these events, he moved his army to Persia. He is said to have died in Persia insane.

Antiochus V

Antiochus V was also called Antiochus Eupator, which means “of a noble father.” He lived from 173 to 162 BC. He was the son of Antiochus IV. Antiochus V was king of Syria from 163 to 162 BC.

In 163 BC, Jerusalem was under attack and surrounded by enemy forces. So, Antiochus V traveled to Jerusalem with Lysias, his advisor who ruled in his place since Antiochus V was still a child. They went to Jerusalem to help end the attack on the city. Antiochus V eventually made peace with Judas Maccabeus, a Jewish leader who was fighting against Syrian rule.

After this, Antiochus V returned to Antioch, the capital city of Syria. There, his cousin Demetrius I, who also wanted to be king, betrayed him. In 162 BC, both the young king Antiochus V and his regent Lysias were killed.

Antiochus Vii

Antiochus VII, also known as Antiochus Sidetes, was a king of Syria from 139/138 to 129 BC. He was born around 159 and died in 129 BC. He was the son of Demetrius I and brother of Demetrius II. After Demetrius II was captured, Antiochus VII became the third husband of his brother’s queen

Cleopatra Thea. He removed Trypho, who had taken control of the throne, in 139 BC.

Antiochus VII was at war with the Jews from 138 to 134. He destroyed part of Jerusalem and caused John Hyrcanus to submit to his rule. He died while fighting in the Parthian War.

Antipas

1. An early martyr in the church at Pergamum ([Revelation 2:13](#)).
2. The son of Herod the Great. *See* Herod, Herodian Family.

Antipater

1. A goodwill ambassador sent out with Numenius to the Spartans and Romans by Jonathan, the high priest ([1 Maccabees 12:16](#); [14:22](#)).
2. The father of Herod the Great. *See* Herod, Herodian Family.

Antipatris

A city about 41.8 kilometers (26 miles) south of Caesarea. It was rebuilt by Herod the Great in 9 BC in honor of his father, Antipater. Before Herod rebuilt it, the city was known as Aphek. When Paul was a Roman Prisoner, he traveled through Antipatris on his way from Jerusalem to Caesarea ([Acts 23:31](#)). Antipatris was a Roman military relay station. It also marked the border between Judea and Samaria.

See also Aphek.

Antitype

Something that completes or explains an earlier example or symbol. In Bible study, this often means how things in the New Testament match up with and explain things from the Old Testament. *See* Type.

Antothijah

The King James Version spelling of Anthothijah, Shashak's descendant ([1 Chronicles 8:24](#)).

See Anthothijah.

Antothite

The King James Version spelling of Anathothite, a resident of Anathoth, in [1 Chronicles 11:28](#) and [12:3](#).

See Anathoth (Place), Anathothite.

Anub

One of Koz's sons from the tribe of Judah. Judah is one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Anub is listed in [1 Chronicles 4:8](#).

Apame

A concubine of Darius I of Persia. She is described as sitting at Darius's right hand in [1 Esdras 4:29](#).

Ape

A large, tailless primate. Apes, or perhaps other monkeys and baboons, are not native to Palestine. They were imported to Israel by King Solomon ([1 Kings 10:22](#); [2 Chronicles 9:21](#)).

There are two references to apes in the Old Testament ([1 Kings 10:22](#); [2 Chronicles 9:21](#)). They discuss Solomon's importing the apes on his trading ships, with other treasures. There is some question about where those primates came from. Some believe the mention of "ivory" suggests they were apes from East Africa. Others, believing they came from India or Ceylon, suggest that they were actually monkeys.

Baboons (*genus Papeio*) were considered sacred to the god Thoth. Males of that genus were kept in temples, and the more tame females were often kept as house pets. Such baboons often had some of their teeth removed or ground down to reduce the risk of their biting. Mummified baboons found in Egypt show they were highly regarded.

Apelles

A Roman Christian who received special greetings from the apostle Paul. Paul complemented Apelles as one who is "approved in Christ" ([Romans 16:10](#)).

Aphairema

One of the cities Demetrius Nicator (the Conqueror) took from Samaria and added to Judea ([1 Maccabees 11:34](#)). Demetrius was the king of Syria. The name Aphairema is thought by some scholars to be a corruption of Ephraim. Aphairema may be the modern et-Taiyibeh.

Apharsachites, Apharsathchites, Apharsites

Three words used in the book of Ezra to designate certain groups of people in Samaria. These groups joined in writing King Artaxerxes of Babylon to stop the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

Apharsathchites could refer to a specific ethnic group or government leaders ([Ezra 4:9](#), King James Version). A similar Old Persian word meant "messengers."

Apharsachites could be a shortened form of Apharsathchites ([Ezra 5:6](#); [6:6](#), King James Version). It could also be derived from an old Persian word for "investigators."

Apharsites is similar to the Hebrew word for "Persians" and has been translated that way ([Ezra 4:9](#), King James Version).

Aphhek

1. A Canaanite city west of the Jordan River. It was conquered by Israel and later included in Ephraim's territory ([Joshua 12:18](#)). It was located near the source of the Yarkon River in the plain of Sharon. Aphhek was later captured by the Philistines ([1 Samuel 4:1](#); [29:1](#)). In Roman times, Herod the Great rebuilt the city and named it Antipatris. It is mentioned in [Acts 23:31](#). Its modern name is Ras el-'Ain. See also Antipatris.

2. A place in Phoenicia (modern Lebanon). It remained unconquered after Joshua's campaigns ([Joshua 13:4](#)). This Aphek was probably located near the source of the river Ibrahim, east of Byblos.
3. A town given to Asher's tribe in the distribution of conquered cities ([Joshua 19:30](#)). Asher's tribe failed to drive out the pagan inhabitants ([Judges 1:31](#)). Here it is spelled "Aphik". Aphek was located on the plain of Acco. This is the present site of Tell Kurdaneh near the source of the river Na'man.
4. A city east of the Jordan River. It is on the main highway between Damascus and the valley of Jezreel. The Syrian king Ben-hadad was defeated by King Ahab of Israel. Ben-hadad retreated into Aphek. Here a falling wall demolished the rest of his army ([1 Kings 20:26, 30](#)). A century later Elisha prophesied to King Joash of Israel that he would defeat the Syrians in the same city ([2 Kings 13:17](#)).

Aphekah

A city in the hill country of Canaan. Joshua gave it to Judah's tribe after the conquest of the promised land ([Joshua 15:53](#)).

Aphiah

An ancestor of King Saul. He is a member of the tribe of Benjamin. His name appears in [1 Samuel 9:1](#).

Aphik

Another form of Aphek in [Judges 1:31](#).

See Aphek #3.

Aphrah

The King James Version translation for Beth-leaphrah. It might have been the name of a Philistine city mentioned in [Micah 1:10](#).

See Beth-leaphrah.

Aphses

The King James Version form of Happizez, a priest in David's time, in [1 Chronicles 24:15](#).

See Happizez.

Apocalypse

A term which means a "revelation" or a "disclosure." An apocalypse is a type of writing that shows or tells about hidden things. The books of Daniel and Revelation are the two apocalypses in the Bible. See Apocalyptic; Daniel, Book of; Revelation, Book of.

Apocalypse of Abraham

Apocalypse of Abraham

The Apocalypse of Abraham is a Jewish work that has survived only in old Slavonic translations. These translations likely come from an earlier Greek version, which may have been translated from a Hebrew or Aramaic original.

The Apocalypse of Abraham starts with the patriarch Abraham turning away from idolatry. It is based on old rabbinical traditions about Abraham's youth. It describes how he became aware of God's call on his life and came to understand that God is one and holy. An angel named Jahoel (whose functions and powers also come from rabbinical sources) takes Abraham to the seventh heaven. There, he is shown past and future events. He witnesses Adam and Eve's temptation through sexual sin and Cain's murder.

Azazel, an evil being, plays the role of Satan. These details may indicate that there was a tradition holding that Abraham wrote the first parts of the Bible. The revelation then shifts to the future. It shows the temple's destruction, plagues on those who do not believe, and the coming of the Messiah. The final form of the document was probably

completed in the last generation of the first century AD.

Like in the book of Genesis, Abraham questions why God allows evil to exist. God shows him that evil comes from human free will. This story expresses how faithful Jews tried to understand suffering and injustice at a time when their people were experiencing great hardship. It also illustrates the unusual teachings about angels that were common in that time.

Some scholars believe the text was later edited by Gnostic and Christian writers.

See also Abraham; Apocrypha.

Apocalypse of Adam

The Apocalypse of Adam is one of the best-known examples of Gnostic apocalyptic writings. Gnostic apocalyptic writings are ancient texts that combine Gnostic beliefs with apocalyptic visions. They reveal secret spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*) about how the world began, the conflict between good and evil powers, and how souls can return to the true God.

In 1946, a farm worker discovered ancient texts in a cave about 10 kilometers (6 miles) north of Nag Hammadi in Egypt. This discovery included 13 codices (early forms of books) that contained both Christian and non-Christian works. These texts were not immediately revealed. As a result, it was only in 1958 that a French scholar, Jean Doresse, revealed the existence of the Apocalypse of Adam to the public. This apocalypse is written in Coptic and is the last of five works in Codex V.

We do not know the true identity of the author of the Apocalypse of Adam. The title falsely claims that Adam revealed this message to his son Seth: "An Apocalypse that Adam revealed to his son Seth in the seven hundredth year." Writers of Gnostic literature often portrayed Seth as a messenger of truth (for example, the Gospel of the Egyptians and the Paraphrase of Shem).

The estimated date of the earliest known copy of the Apocalypse of Adam is about AD 300 to 350. It is possible it was written much earlier. It contains many Gnostic references, relies on Jewish history, and mentions baptism. As a result, some scholars suggest that this work might have originated from Jewish groups that practiced baptism in the first and second centuries. There are also similarities

between this work and third-century Manichean literature. Manicheanism was a form of Gnosticism.

The Apocalypse of Adam is very important for the study of the origins of Christianity. Scholars have long debated whether Gnosticism was a heretical movement that came out of Christianity or whether it had independent origins. Some scholars argue that the Apocalypse of Adam is an example of early independent Gnosticism. If this proved to be true, it would make the debate easier to settle.

Besides its introduction and conclusion, the Apocalypse of Adam has three parts:

1. Adam's summary of important past events,
2. prophecies of the evil attempts to destroy humanity by the creator god, and
3. prophecies about the arrival of the "Enlightener," who will guide his people to the true God.

The story begins with Adam on his deathbed. He reveals hidden truths to his son, Seth. Adam says that three angels gave him these secrets in a vision. He mourns becoming a servant of the evil creator god after the fall of humankind and the loss of *gnosis* (spiritual knowledge). It is typical in Gnostic writings to distinguish between an evil creator god who rules the earth and the true God of the universe. Knowing the true God gives real life.

Adam predicts the jealous creator-god will try to destroy humanity. He will do this with the flood during Noah's time and by bringing fire on Sodom and Gomorrah to keep them from knowing the true God. However, the intervention of angels from the God of truth will keep the evil god's plan from succeeding. In time, the true God will send the "Enlightener" to teach *gnosis* to humanity so they can know him. The creator-god will try to defeat the Enlightener but will only be able to harm his physical body. With the Enlightener's message spreading, humanity will turn away from the creator-god. Then they will seek the true God through *gnosis*.

See also Adam (Person); Apocrypha; Gnosticism.

Apocalypse of Bartholomew

These Coptic fragments resemble the Gospel of Bartholomew, an ancient apocryphal writing (a

text not included in the Hebrew Bible but accepted by some Christian groups). A few scholars thought these fragments represented two different writings: a gospel and an apocalypse. Most scholars no longer hold this view, but some still refer to these fragments as the Apocalypse of Bartholomew.

See also Apocrypha; Bartholomew, the Apostle; Gospel of Bartholomew.

Apocalypse of Baruch

The Apocalypse of Baruch refers to two different Jewish writings that were written under Baruch's name. Baruch was the friend and secretary of the prophet Jeremiah ([Jeremiah 36:4–8](#)). His name was later attached to several ancient writings composed long after his death. These include both *apocryphal* and *pseudepigraphal* works (ancient texts written under someone else's name).

The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Baruch)

The first book, called the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch or 2 Baruch, has 87 chapters. It was first written in Hebrew, then translated into Greek and Syriac. Only a few lines of the Hebrew version remain, which are quoted in Jewish rabbinic writings. The Syriac manuscript, from the sixth or seventh century AD, is the only complete text. Evidence suggests that more than one author worked on it. This book is based on the book of 2 Esdras in the Apocrypha. Many phrases in it are similar to New Testament writings, which suggests the author wrote it in the late first or early second century AD.

The book has seven main sections, written in both prose and poetry. It talks about the Messiah and his future kingdom, Israel's past troubles, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The text is not consistent in addressing questions of theology like sin and suffering, free will, how many people the Messiah will save, and the resurrection of righteous people.

Some parts of the book are hopeful about Israel's future, while others are deeply sad. It sees the world as full of evil but promises that God will bring a new and spiritual world. One passage says, "Whatever is now is nothing, but that which shall be is very great. For everything that is corruptible shall pass away, and everything that dies shall depart and all the present time, which is defiled

with evils." This means that all evil will end and a new age will come.

The mix of hope and sorrow may reflect how Jewish people's experiences changed during the first and second centuries AD. These centuries were a time of loss, rebuilding, and expectation. The tension between optimism and despair might also show that more than one person wrote parts of the book.

The message of hope is for those who follow the law of Moses: "For the righteous justly hope for the end, and without fear depart from this habitation, because they have with Thee a store of works preserved in treasuries."

The book's final section is called "the letter Baruch, son of Neriah, sent to the nine and a half tribes." It claims he sent it by tying it to an eagle's neck. This probably means the book was sent to Jews living outside Palestine (the Diaspora).

The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch)

The second document, known as the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch or 3 Baruch, has 17 chapters. It survives in Greek, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Slavonic versions. The first printed edition appeared in Venice in 1609 and again in 1868. The early Christian scholar Origen mentioned its existence long before.

Like 2 Baruch, this apocalypse appears to have brought together different writings from the second century AD. It is a Christian document meant to warn Jews who have not converted and to encourage Christians to be patient with them.

See also Apocrypha; Baruch.

Apocalypse of James

There are two Gnostic works called the Apocalypse of James. They are often referred to as the "first" and "second" Apocalypse of James. Both are found in Codex V of the *Nag Hammadi* collection. The collection was discovered in 1945 in Egypt, West of the Nile River, near the city of Chenoboskion. They are different from the Apocryphon of James, which is part of the New Testament Apocrypha.

The first one is over 20 pages long. It claims to be a revelation from the Lord to James, the brother of Jesus. He was also known as James the Righteous. Some parts of this revelation would have taken

place before Christ's crucifixion, and others would have taken place after.

The second apocalypse is 20 pages of Coptic text. It claims to record a speech that James the Just gave while standing on the fifth step of the temple. The book includes many references to, and echoes of, the canonical Scriptures. It ends with a story of a crowd throwing James down from the temple and stoning him, in a way that recalls the martyrdom of Stephen in [Acts 7](#).

See also Apocrypha; James.

Apocalypse of Paul

The Apocalypse of Paul is a Christian writing from the late fourth century AD. The story expands on the brief description in [2 Corinthians 12:2-4](#), where Paul mentions a man who was taken up into the "third heaven." The unknown author assumes that Paul was describing his own experience and imagines what he might have seen and heard during that vision.

The author describes in detail the punishments in hell suffered by a presbyter, a bishop, and a deacon (chapters 34-36). He also praises the faith and devotion of monks and nuns (chapters 7-9) and of those who live as virgins or remain chaste (chapter 22). From this, it seems likely that the author was a monk who disliked the false and hypocritical religion he saw among both ordinary people and church leaders.

The Apocalypse of Paul was first written in Greek. It survives in a relatively complete form in Latin. The fact that it was translated into Ethiopic, Coptic, Syriac, and Latin shows that it was popular.

The book is loosely structured in seven sections.

1. It starts with a brief introduction explaining why the book was unknown from the first to the fourth century AD (chapters 1-2). The story takes place during the rule of Emperor Theodosius I "the Great" and Cynegius, showing the document was probably written in AD 388. According to the story, an unknown respected person received a revelation from an angel at that time. That man lived in Tarsus, in a house he claims was once occupied by the apostle Paul. The angel instructed him to dig up the foundations and to publish what he would find. The angel punished him for not obeying. Then he finally dug up the foundations and discovered a marble box. He immediately delivered it to the emperor. The emperor opened the box and found the original version of the Apocalypse of Paul (which he copied), along with a pair of shoes Paul used on his missionary journeys. The book continues by detailing the content of the mysterious document.
2. In chapters 3-6, Paul receives a message from God. It says all creation is under God's control, except for humans.
3. Chapters 7-10 describe how guardian angels of every man and woman report to God every morning and evening about their deeds. Some people are very good, while others are exceedingly wicked.
4. In chapters 11-18, Paul is taken up to the third heaven in the Holy Spirit. He asks to see the souls of the righteous and sinners as they leave the world. The angel who is with Paul shows him a righteous man leaving the world, an ungodly man, and the soul of someone who thought he was righteous but was not.

5. Chapters 19–30 describe Paul lifted up to the third heaven (see [2 Corinthians 12:2–4](#)). There he saw a golden gate between golden pillars. Golden tablets on top of the pillars contained the names of the righteous. In "Paradise," Enoch and Elijah welcomed him and showed him things he could not share with others (chapter 21; compare with [2 Corinthians 12:4](#)). From there, he went to the second heaven and then to the firmament surrounded by Ocean (chapter 21). At that place, he saw the waters of Lake Acherusia that were white like milk. There was the city of Christ. He was brought to the city in a golden boat while 3,000 angels sang a hymn. At the river of honey, he met Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets (chapter 25). At the river of milk, he saw the infants killed by Herod (chapter 26). At the river of wine, he met Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Lot, and Job (chapter 27). At the river of oil, he met those fully dedicated to God (chapter 28). In the center of the city, by a great altar, King David sang the hallelujah to God.
6. Paul's tour of hell is described in chapters 31–44. It is a place of sorrow and distress, in which flows a river of boiling fire. In the river, some of those condemned to hell have water going up to their knees. For others, the river goes up to their stomach or lips, depending on their sins (chapter 31). Chapters 34–36 describe the tortures of a priest, a bishop, and a deacon. This section seems to enjoy detailing the most horrible tortures a person could imagine. Finally, in chapter 44, Christ decides that, for Paul's sake, there would be no torture on Sundays from that time on.

7. Paul's travel guide is an angel who takes him to Paradise (chapters 45–51). There the righteous from all times are eager to meet him. He meets the Virgin Mary (chapter 46), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, along with his 12 sons (chapter 47). He also meets Moses, who weeps for the Jews who have not become Christians (chapter 48). He meets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, each describing their martyrdom. In addition, he meets Lot and Job (chapter 49), Noah (chapter 50), Elijah, Elisha, Zechariah and his son, John the Baptist, and Adam (chapter 51). The document may end here. In other versions, it ends with Paul's miraculous journey to the Mount of Olives, where he and the other disciples receive a divine mission.

The document contains many contradictions and inconsistencies. Many translated versions do not agree with each other in all the details. This document is mostly useful in providing insights into the way some late fourth-century AD Christians thought.

See also Apocrypha; Paul, the Apostle.

Apocalypses

A group of writings not included in most Jewish or Christian Bibles, which are apocalyptic (they reveal hidden things or future events related to the end times). These writings claim to be written by biblical characters. *See* Apocrypha (Apocalyptic Apocrypha).

Apocalyptic

A word that comes from a Greek word meaning "revelation" (showing something that was hidden). It is used to refer to a way of thinking and a type of writing. Both of these deal with what will happen in the future, especially about judgment (this is called "eschatology," which means the study of end times).

What Is Apocalyptic Writing?

“Apocalyptic” writings are stories that claim to be messages from God. The authors say they received these messages, often through visions. These writings usually have two parts:

1. A detailed description of the vision
2. An explanation of what the vision means

The second half of Daniel is filled with these visions ([Daniel 7–12](#)). The whole book of Revelation also includes such visions. Revelatory visions also occurred frequently in Old Testament prophetic writings (for example, [Isaiah 6](#); [Amos 7–9](#); [Zechariah 1–6](#)). They were particularly prominent in apocalyptic literature. They determined the basic literary form and structure of such writings. Sometimes, as in Daniel, the apocalyptic seer received the revelatory message through a dream.

In another type of vision as in Revelation, the apocalyptic seer was taken up to heaven. In heaven, the writer saw and heard messages to share with people on Earth (compare Paul’s experience in [2 Corinthians 12:1–4](#)). The apocalyptic seer was often unable to understand the meaning of the visions he received. In such instances, an “interpreting angel” clarified the meaning of the vision ([Daniel 8:15–26](#); [9:20–27](#); [10:18–12:4](#); [Revelation 7:13–17](#); [17:7–18](#)).

Two Ways of Thinking About the End Times in the Bible

Two primary ways of thinking about the end times (eschatology) are found in the Bible:

1. Prophetic eschatology (the main type found in the Old Testament) believes that:
 - God will act within human history.
 - God will restore humans and nature to the perfect state that existed before humans first disobeyed God.
1. Apocalyptic eschatology believes that:

- God will destroy the current imperfect world.
- God will then create a new, perfect world (often called paradise).

Both of these views share a core belief: God will soon act to save his people and punish those who harm them.

In Israel, apocalyptic end-times thinking became popular when foreign nations ruled over them. This change began in the early 6th century BC. During this time, prophetic end-times thinking started to decline, while apocalyptic end-times thinking grew more popular.

The book of Daniel, written in the 6th century BC, is the oldest known example of apocalyptic writing. Later, in the 5th century BC, the book of Malachi was written. Malachi was the last prophetic book in ancient Israel. After Malachi, no more prophetic books were written in Israel until Christianity began. Most Jewish apocalyptic writings came later than Daniel. They were written between the 3rd century BC and the early 2nd century AD.

Key Features of Apocalyptic Thought

Apocalyptic writings emphasized the conflict between God and Satan. These writings divided everyone and everything into two groups: those on God’s side and those on Satan’s side. This included:

- People
- Nations
- Supernatural beings (like angels and demons)

The Bible has always described Satan as an enemy of God and humans. We can see this in stories like:

- Adam and Eve in the garden ([Genesis 3:1–19](#))
- Satan challenging God about Job ([Job 1:6–12](#); [2:1–8](#))

However, apocalyptic writers believed that Satan’s power was limited as long as the people of Israel followed God’s laws faithfully.

For a long time, Israel was ruled by foreign nations. This made the idea of Satan’s temporary control over the world feel very real to the Jewish people. Apocalyptic writers wrote about specific nations

that controlled Israel at different times in history. They saw these nations as working for Satan and opposing God and God's people. The writers believed that because these nations opposed God, they would eventually be defeated.

The most important belief in apocalyptic writing was this: Even when things seemed very bad, God's people believed they would win in the end. This was not the same as believing that nothing could be changed. Instead, they trusted that God was in control and would help his people defeat all their enemies, both on earth and in the spiritual world.

Many apocalyptic writings told about what would happen to Israel (or to the Christian church) in the future. These stories always ended with God and his people winning a great final victory. For example, in the book of Daniel, God showed King Nebuchadnezzar a dream. Daniel explained what the dream meant. In the dream, there was a huge statue made of different materials. Each part of the statue stood for a different kingdom that would rule over other nations. Then, a stone came from a mountain—not cut by human hands—and destroyed the statue. This stone represented God's kingdom([Daniel 2:31–45](#)).

Differences Between Prophetic and Apocalyptic Thinking

The two ways of thinking about the end times (prophetic and apocalyptic) were different in several ways. One big difference was about how God would bring about his victory.

In apocalyptic writings, most authors believed that God would cause a great disaster that would affect the whole world before his final victory. Different books described this in different ways:

- In the book of Daniel, God would step into human history, defeat evil, and set up his kingdom.
- In the book of Revelation, God would completely destroy the old world first, then create an entirely new world ([Revelation 21:1](#); compare [2 Peter 3:10](#)).

The general view was that things would get much worse before they got better. From about 1000 to 600 BC, the people of Israel were strong and independent. During this peaceful time, they did not worry much about future disasters. But

everything changed in 586 BC when the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem.

After this, many Jewish writers believed that only God could solve their problems. They thought God would need to step in and take direct control over what was happening in the world to help his people.

Writers who wrote about the future had an important belief: they saw the world's time divided into two different periods. They believed the present time was bad, but a better time was coming. "This age" is present and evil. It is dominated by Satan and his minions. "The age to come" would bring the blessings of the kingdom of God.

Before the new age could begin, many important events would happen. These events would end the current evil age and start God's new age of goodness. When Paul spoke of the "god of this age" in [2 Corinthians 4:4](#), he was referring to Satan's domination of "this age."

Another characteristic of apocalypticism was the longing for God to shorten the present evil days. People who wrote apocalyptic books hoped God would quickly usher in the kingdom of God. Just as Daniel could ask, "How long until the fulfillment of these wonders?" ([Daniel 12:6](#)), so John could exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus!" ([Revelation 22:20](#)). The desire for God's quick intervention and victory made it possible to maintain hope in difficult circumstances. It encouraged God's people to live in a manner worthy of the coming kingdom ([2 Peter 3:11–13](#); [Revelation 21:5–8](#)).

Important Apocalyptic Texts

The book of Daniel is the only apocalypse in the Old Testament canon of Scripture. The book of Revelation is the only apocalypse within the New Testament canon. There are other Jewish and Christian books about end-time visions that were not included in the Bible. These other books were written at different times:

- Jewish apocalyptic books were written between about 300 BC and AD 150.
- Christian apocalyptic books were written between about AD 100 and AD 400.

The style of end-time writing can be found in other parts of the Bible too, not just in books that are

completely about the end times. For example, Jesus gave an important teaching about the future on the Mount of Olives. This teaching is recorded in three in [Mark 13](#), [Matthew 24](#), and [Luke 21](#). Bible scholars often call this teaching 'the little apocalypse' because it talks about the end times in a similar way. For a book to be considered true end-time writing, it needs to have most of the special features we will discuss next.

Most books about the end times, except for Daniel and Revelation, were written by authors who used someone else's name. They often used the names of important people from the Bible to make their books seem more important.

One example is the book called "1 Enoch." Different unknown writers worked on this book between about 200 BC and AD 100. They said it was written by Enoch, one of Adam's early descendants ([Genesis 5:21-24](#)). But Enoch had lived many years before the book was actually written. Because so many of these books used false names, scholars often call them 'false writings.'

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Other Jewish apocalypses were attributed to such important Old Testament characters. These characters included Adam and Eve, Moses, Isaiah, Baruch, Solomon, and Ezra. They were written after the close of the Old Testament canon. Their real authors may have thought to receive a favorable reception they needed to be identified with some important Old Testament figure. Early Christian apocalypses often bore the names of such important figures as Peter, Paul, and Thomas.

Other Jewish writers also wrote books about the end times using names of important people from the Old Testament, such as:

- Adam and Eve
- Moses
- Isaiah
- Solomon
- Ezra

These books were written after the Old Testament was completed. The writers probably used these famous names because they wanted people to read and trust their books.

Christian writers did the same thing. They wrote books and signed them with the names of

important Christian leaders like Peter, Paul, and Thomas.

See also Apocrypha for a discussion on each of the books just mentioned.

Apocalyptic Apocrypha

The *Apocalyptic Apocrypha* are a group of early Jewish and Christian writings that reveal visions about the end of the world and the coming of God's kingdom. These works are called *apocalyptic* because the word *apocalypse* means "disclosure" or "revelation." It was generally used for Jewish and Christian writings that resemble the New Testament Revelation of John, which calls itself an apocalypse in [Revelation 1:1](#).

Like the authors of other types of apocryphal writings, the authors of Jewish and Christian apocalypses commonly wrote under the name of a famous biblical person. They attributed Jewish apocalypses to important Old Testament characters like Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, or Ezra. Similarly, Christian apocalypses from the second century AD and later presented themselves as written by important New Testament characters like Peter, Thomas, or James. The Revelation of John is a notable exception to this practice.

From the late Old Testament period to New Testament times, some Jewish groups developed an apocalyptic view of history. They produced writings such as 1 Enoch (which has five parts), the Assumption of Moses, 2 Esdras, and the Apocalypse of Baruch. These books are important for New Testament study because they make important connections between Old Testament and New Testament ideas about the kingdom of God.

Purpose and Setting

Apocalypses were written in response to historical situations that raised questions of theodicy (the justice of God). After the time of the priest and scribe Ezra, the law became more important in the life of the Jewish people than before. In earlier prophetic times, Israel often turned away from the law and worshiped the gods of foreign nations. The prophets urged Israel to turn back to God and to follow the law. After the time of Ezra and during the New Testament period, Israel followed the law more faithfully than ever. The Jews rejected the worship of false gods and were dedicated to worshipping only God. Yet his kingdom did not

come. Instead, the Jews experienced severe persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the Maccabean period, under the worldly rule of the Hasmoneans, and under Pompey and the Roman occupation.

In AD 66–70, Rome attacked Jerusalem and destroyed it. It was natural for the faithful to wonder where God was while these things were happening, and also to wonder why God did not save his faithful followers. They wondered why God's kingdom did not come. Apocalypses were written to provide answers to these questions.

Two Ages in History

A main idea in apocalyptic teaching is that history has two separate periods or "ages." The first is "this present age," which is filled with trouble and suffering. The second is "the age to come," when God will rule and make all things right. Old Testament prophets often compared what was happening in their time with a future when God's kingdom would be established. Apocalyptic writers made this contrast even stronger. This way of speaking of different ages appears twice in 1 Enoch, although it is not fully stated. It appears fully in 2 Esdras and in the Apocalypse of Baruch, which were both written around the end of the first century AD.

So, [2 Esdras 7:50](#) states that "the Most High has made not one age but two" and [2 Esdras 7:113](#) that "the day of judgment shall be the end of this age and the beginning of the immortal age that is to come." [2 Esdras 8:1](#) also reads: "this age the Most High has made for many but the age to come for few" (see also Apocalypse of Baruch 14:13; 15:7; *Pirke Aboth* 4:1, 21–22; 6:4–7).

According to these apocalyptic writers, the shift from this age or era to the next can only happen through a powerful intervention of God that will transform the created order. In the apocryphal Assumption of Moses, there is no Messiah (no chosen savior figure). It is God himself who comes to rescue Israel. In the Similitudes of Enoch, the change between the two ages happens through the coming of a heavenly Son of Man who existed before creation. In 2 Esdras, the Old Testament Messiah from the family line of David is combined with the Son of Man mentioned in the book of Daniel.

These apocalyptic beliefs differ from Old Testament beliefs proclaimed by the canonical prophets. Indeed, apocalyptic writers did not

consider that there was much hope for change in the present age. However, they did have hope for the future. Their main message is that God will eventually intervene and save his people. According to these apocalyptic writers, for now, as long as this age continues, God has ceased to intervene in the history of Israel. Evil angels and forces of demons control the present age, making it evil beyond hope. God has left this age to evil, and only in the future age will God bring salvation. So, writers of this kind of apocalyptic literature did not see the relationship between present history and the end of time that can be observed in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Non-canonical apocalyptic writers no longer expected God to intervene in this era. For them, God had become the God of the future as opposed to the God of the present.

In the dream-visions of Enoch (1 Enoch 83–90), God guided Israel throughout its history. Then God withdrew his leadership, abandoned the temple, and let other peoples harm his people. God "remained unmoved, though he saw it, and rejoiced that they were devoured and swallowed and robbed, and left them to be devoured in the hand of all the beasts" (1 Enoch 89:58). After the Babylonian captivity of Israel, a number of Jews believed God was no longer working in history. They viewed the present world as given over to evil, and all hope of salvation was reserved for a future age.

Broader Influence of Apocalyptic Writings

Many other apocryphal works are apocalyptic in nature. These works are supplemented by other types of apocryphal writings, such as the Apostolic Constitutions and Canons. In addition, Gnostic compositions found at Nag Hammadi include works claiming to represent the teachings of Christ as well as "secret" instructions compiled by Gnostic writers and a few other apocryphal compositions.

Scholars who compare different writings have found that the New Testament apocryphal books often keep only weak or distorted traditions about Jesus and the teachings of early Christianity. Some of these stories have little or no historical value and include ideas very different from the spirituality of the New Testament. Even when they seem to agree with traditions known in parts of the early church, their evidence is usually less trustworthy than what is found in other sources. A few of these writings are so minor that it is hard to understand why they were preserved at all. Others were lost

long ago and survive only as quotations in later books.

Despite this, New Testament apocryphal writings are important because they show what appealed to ordinary people at the time. They seemed to need imaginary stories in addition to accepted spiritual truths. Some stories were vivid and creative, while others, like the apocalypses, offered an escape from the harsh realities of life. Regardless of their nature, New Testament apocryphal writings had a significant influence that went beyond their real value.

See also Apocrypha.

Apocrypha

The word *Apocrypha* is a plural word used to designate specific Jewish and Christian books. The word originally comes from the Greek *apocryphos*, which means "hidden" or "secret." These books often present themselves in one of three ways:

- as works from famous biblical persons,
- as revelations from God, and
- as key teaching on biblical faith.

The Apocrypha were well known and often used by both Jews and Christians. However, people debated whether they should be accepted as Scripture. Over time, the word *Apocrypha* came to describe books that were not considered inspired or authoritative in the same way as the books of the Bible.

Some Christian traditions, including the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, accept certain ancient Jewish books as part of their Bible. These books were written during the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament. These traditions call them the *Deuterocanon* (meaning "second canon," or "second list" of books recognized as Scripture). In Bibles from these traditions, these books are often placed between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Introduction

The books of the Old and New Testaments were not the only books written on biblical faith in ancient times. The Old Testament occasionally mentions some books that have been lost since, such as the Book of Jashar ([Joshua 10:13](#)). The New Testament

also contains some allusions to written sources outside the Bible (see, for example, [Jude 14–15](#)).

Jewish Background and the Old Testament Apocrypha

Some books of that kind were included in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that was completed in the second century BC). The books included in the Septuagint are known as the Old Testament Apocrypha. The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church consider many of these books as deuterocanonical, although they do not agree on which books should be included in the deuterocanonical list. Jewish communities and most Protestant churches do not accept these writings as part of the inspired and authoritative Word of God.

Christian Use and the New Testament Apocrypha

Some writings from the early Christian era are called the New Testament Apocrypha (a group of books that imitate or expand the stories of the New Testament). Some of these were valued for devotion or moral teaching, but many were quickly recognized as teaching ideas that did not agree with biblical truth and were rejected as heretical (false or opposed to accepted faith).

All of the New Testament Apocrypha have been excluded from the Biblical canon (the official list of books recognized as inspired and authoritative). Only some parts of the Eastern Orthodox Church consider a few of these writings to be canonical.

Authorship and the Pseudepigrapha

Most of the writers of apocryphal books did not include their names. However, some presented their writings as if they were written by a well-known Old Testament person or a famous early Christian leader.

The Old Testament Apocrypha became a small yet important part of Jewish literature written between the Old Testament and that of the New Testament. Many of these Jewish writings came from a time when Jewish people felt their faith and way of life were under threat from Greek culture (Hellenism) and later from Roman rule.

A certain number of apocryphal books are also called *Pseudepigrapha* (from the Greek words *pseudes* and *epigraphe*, meaning "false" and

"name/inscription"). The term Pseudepigrapha reflects the fact that these books claim:

1. to have been written by a biblical person (such as Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Bartholomew, or Thomas), or
2. to contain a revelation originally given to a biblical character (such as Adam and Eve or Isaiah).

In other words, these books falsely claim to have been written by a biblical person or to offer revelation originally given to a biblical person.

Pseudepigraphal books often show a strong interest in apocalyptic themes such as the creation of the world, the future of Israel and the nations, the glory of God and his angels, the messianic kingdom, and life after death.

Many of the Pseudepigrapha are Jewish writings that were never accepted by the Jewish or Christian communities. They were written in the same general period as the rest of the Apocrypha (about 200 BC–AD 110). However, the nature of their contents was such that they were only recognized by certain groups. Since some of these books imitate parts of the canonical Scriptures, these groups might have held their authority and inspiration to be comparable to that of biblical books.

Other Religious Writings of the Period

Other religious writings from that time did not claim to be Scripture. These works preserved some Jewish and early Christian traditions. Sometimes, they added legends and other stories that did not record accurate history, or teachings that differ from those of the Bible. At that time, there were not many books about biblical faith outside those of the Bible.

As a result, these few other books tended to be well-known among Jews and Christians. The Torah, or law of Moses, had always been recognized as the standard of theological orthodoxy for the Jews. However, life was difficult for the Jews under pagan rule, and they loved the stories in these other books because they spoke about endurance under persecution or about how some enemies of God's people were defeated.

In the same way, early Christians found many other books related to the New Testament interesting, even if they were not part of the group of approved

books, which included the Jewish Old Testament and the books we now know as the New Testament. Those other works often told stories about what Jesus and his followers did and included claims to revelations as well as spiritual teachings. Some of the material in these books was unhistorical and strange. Other material in these books reflected the spirit of Christ and the apostolic teachings to a certain extent.

For the Jews, as for the early Christians, it became important to officially identify a canon, that is, an official list of the books recognized to be the inspired and authoritative as the Word of God. This process helped distinguish the canonical books of the Bible from other books that taught other doctrines, heresies, or made-up stories.

Early Christian Views of the Apocrypha

In the early centuries, some Christian teachers used the word Apocrypha to describe writings that were not accepted into the Old Testament or the New Testament canons. The word comes from the Greek *apokrypha*, which means "hidden things." By calling these writings Apocrypha, early Christian scholars meant that they should not be read publicly in worship. They believed that these books contained special knowledge that was not suitable for general audiences.

An example of this distinction between books for general use and those reserved for individuals who had received special instruction is found in [2 Esdras 14:1–6](#) (2 Esdras is sometimes called 4 Esdras). In this passage, the writer claims that God told Ezra to make some writings (such as the *Torah*) available to everyone, but to keep other writings secret. These hidden books contained apocalyptic (end-time) traditions about the end of the world.

[2 Esdras 14:42–46](#) speaks of 70 books that evidently were not part of the canon, as they were written after the 24 books of the Hebrew canon. By the end of the first century AD, the Jews had for the most part made the difference between the writings that were fit for public use and those that were not.

The word *Apocrypha* was also used in a negative sense to describe books that should be hidden because they contained harmful or false teachings. These teachings were intended to corrupt rather than build up the faith of the readers. It was easier to prevent the spread of such writings at that time

because far fewer copies of books existed and were in circulation.

The Term in the Fifth Century and Later Church Traditions

In the fifth century AD, the word *Apocrypha* began to be used to mean "not part of the canon." The Church Father Jerome taught that books in the Septuagint and in Latin Bibles that were not present in the Hebrew Old Testament should be considered apocryphal. Jerome believed that people should not reject these writings completely because they are an important part of Jewish literature.

However, he also taught that they should not be used as the foundation for Christian doctrine but could be read for encouragement and inspiration. The Protestant Church follows Jerome's view in excluding these books from the biblical canon. Some Protestant groups value them for devotional reading, but most do not consider them Scripture.

Formation of the Canon

When Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek in Egypt during the rule of Ptolemy II (285–246 BC), they included several of these additional books. They were not part of the accepted Hebrew canon, but were important to Jewish history and society. This could indicate that at least in some Jewish circles, the distinction between canonical and non-canonical books had not yet been clearly made.

Ancient manuscripts and fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls show that the last of the canonical Hebrew books was probably written several decades before Alexander the Great's conquests in the Near East (356–323 BC). While it is clear that the Torah was regarded as the word of God, the recognition of other books as part of Scripture was a longer process.

It was only after these books had become sufficiently known, read, and compared to the teachings of the Torah that they also became recognized as Scripture. In this way, regular use and general agreement played an important role in helping to distinguish between *canonical* and *apocryphal* writings in orthodox Judaism.

Earlier scholars once believed that a council was held at Jamnia in ancient Palestine around AD 100 to decide the list of canonical Old Testament books. This idea was based on references in ancient Jewish sources.

However, later studies have questioned whether such a council ever took place. These studies also show that Jewish leaders at the time viewed non-canonical writings as obstacles rather than helps to faith and devotion.

Books of the Jewish Apocrypha

The Jewish community regarded the following writings as outside their canon and therefore apocryphal:

- 1 Esdras
- 2 Esdras
- Tobit
- Judith
- Additions to Esther
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach
- Baruch
- Letter of Jeremiah
- Additions to Daniel
 - Prayer of Azariah
 - Song of the Three Young Men
 - Susanna and the Elders
 - Bel and the Dragon
- Prayer of Manasseh
- 1 and 2 Maccabees

Several Septuagint manuscripts included some *pseudohistorical* writings (stories that appear historical but are not) under the titles of 3 and 4 Maccabees. These differences in content among the apocryphal books are reflected in the various manuscript traditions.

Debates in the Early Church

Some Christian scholars from the first centuries disagreed about which books should be included in the Old Testament canon or regarded as Apocrypha. The writings of Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD) played a decisive role in advancing the view that the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha were of equal authority with the other writings of the canonical Hebrew and Christian

Scriptures. This marked a change from earlier Hebrew and rabbinic tradition.

Although some leaders supported Jerome's opposing view, the Roman Catholic Council of Trent in 1546 accepted Augustine's position. This became the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Many churches in the regions that later split from the Roman Catholic Church and that became the Eastern Orthodox Church also used the Old Testament Apocrypha. Some of these books are officially recognized by Eastern Orthodox authorities, though not always the same ones. In some countries, none are recognized by Eastern Orthodox authorities. Protestant churches consider as apocryphal all the writings found in the Septuagint that are not part of the Hebrew Old Testament canon.

Books Accepted by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches

The Roman Catholic Church officially includes the following writings as part of the Deuterocanonical Scriptures:

- Tobit
- Judith
- Additions to Esther
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach
- Baruch
- Additions to Daniel
 - Prayer of Azariah
 - Song of the Three Young Men
 - Susanna and the Elders
 - Bel and the Dragon
- First and Second Maccabees

The Orthodox Church also includes 3 Maccabees in its Deuterocanonical list. Articles on each of these books are provided in this dictionary.

Christian Apocrypha and Canon of the New Testament

Christians in the New Testament period were already familiar with Jewish apocryphal works,

including the apocalyptic speculations found in 2 Esdras. Therefore, not long after most of the New Testament books were written and had been circulating, other people started to write and spread their own works about Christianity. In order to distinguish these books from the inspired and authoritative Scriptures, it was important to clearly define the official canon of the books of the New Testament.

The earliest list of approved New Testament writings that we have, the Muratorian Canon, was not compiled until about AD 200. Therefore, a considerable period of time passed before an official church statement could appear on what was to be considered New Testament Apocrypha. In the meantime, many writings of a predominantly religious nature were written and began circulating. They presented themselves as teaching truth and describing various aspects of historic Christianity. However, New Testament apocryphal literature ultimately failed to achieve its intended purposes because the church recognized it as spurious.

Types of New Testament Apocryphal Writings

For more information on the different types of New Testament apocryphal writings, see:

- **Apocryphal Gospels:** These writings expand on the life and teachings of Jesus.
- **Apocryphal Acts:** These writings claim to tell stories about great deeds of the apostles that are not recorded in the Bible.
- **Apocryphal Epistles:** These letters are attributed to apostles or early Christian figures outside the New Testament.
- **Apocalyptic Apocrypha:** These are visions and revelations about heaven, judgment, and the end times.

Specific Apocrypha Books

Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

These are Jewish writings composed between the Old and New Testament periods that expand, interpret, or retell biblical traditions.

Apocalypses and Testaments

These are revelatory and farewell writings that describe visions of heaven, final judgment, or the final words of great patriarchs.

- Apocalypse of Abraham
- Apocalypse of Baruch
- Fourth Book of Ezra
- Assumption of Moses
- Testament of Abraham
- Testament of Job
- Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
- Testament of Solomon

Wisdom and Moral Literature

These are collections of moral instruction, reflections on virtue, and ethical guidance.

- Book of Ahikar
- Book of Eldad and Medad
- Life of Adam and Eve
- Psalms of Solomon

Historical and Legendary Writings

These are narratives that retell early biblical history or legendary episodes to fill perceived gaps in the Old Testament record.

- Book of Noah
- Book of Jubilees
- Genesis Apocryphon
- Letter of Aristeas
- Joseph and Asenath

Prophetic and Visionary Writings

These are texts claiming divine visions or oracles that reinterpret Israel's history and destiny through prophetic insight.

- Apocryphal Ezekiel
- Prayer of Joseph
- Sibylline Oracles

New Testament Apocrypha

These Christian writings imitate the literary forms of the New Testament, expanding on the life, teachings, and miracles of Jesus and the apostles.

Apocryphal Gospels

These are stories that expand on the life and teachings of Jesus.

- Gospel of the Ebionites
- Gospel of the Egyptians
- Gospel of Thomas
- Gospel of Truth
- Gospel of Eve
- Gospel of Basilides
- Gospel of the Twelve Apostles
- Gospel of Barnabas
- Gospel of Bartholomew
- Book of John the Evangelist
- Protoevangelium of James
- Birth of Mary
- Gospel of the Birth of Mary
- Arabic Gospel of the Infancy
- Armenian Gospel of the Infancy
- History of Joseph the Carpenter
- Arabic History of Joseph the Carpenter
- Life of John the Baptist
- Book of the Cock
- Book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew
- Gospel of Judas Iscariot
- Life of the Virgin
- Discourse of Theodosius
- Assumption of the Virgin

Apocryphal Acts

These are stories about the apostles' deeds and missions not found in the New Testament.

- Acts of Andrew
- Acts of Andrew and Matthias
- Acts of Andrew and Paul
- The Story of Andrew
- Acts of Bartholomew
- Acts of Barnabas
- Acts of Paul and Thecla
- Acts of Thomas
- Acts of Thaddeus
- Passion of Peter and Paul
- Slavonic Acts of Peter
- Passion of Paul
- Doctrina Addaei
- Apostolic History of Abdias
- Preaching of Peter
- Acts of Pilate
- Martyrdom of Matthew

Apocryphal Epistles

These are letters attributed to apostles or early Christian figures.

- Epistle of the Apostles
- Epistle of Barnabas
- Third Corinthians
- Peter's Letter to Philip
- Letter of Eugnostos
- Teachings of Silvanus
- Letter of Lentulus
- Letters of Christ and Abgarus

Apocalyptic Apocrypha

These are visions and revelations concerning heaven, judgment, and the end times.

- Apocalypse of Bartholomew
- Apocalypse of Adam
- Apocalypse of James
- Apocalypse of Paul
- Ascension of Isaiah
- Ascents of James
- Allogenes Supreme
- Dialogue of the Redeemer
- Pistis Sophia
- Akhmim Fragment

Apocryphal Acts

The Apocryphal Acts are a collection of early Christian writings that claim to describe the achievements of the apostles that are not found in Scripture. These “Acts” became the source of many widely known traditions. Among these stories are the crucifixion of Peter upside down and the account of Thomas traveling to India.

The truth of these traditions is uncertain because the writings also include ideas that clearly disagree with the teachings of the New Testament. However, some small details may have come from true events, even though most of the stories are fictional.

Because these writings often contained false or heretical (wrong) teachings, church leaders rejected them. In some cases, church councils even ordered them to be destroyed. This happened at the Council of Nicaea in AD 787.

Here are examples of teachings found in these writings that the church rejected:

- The Acts of John says that Jesus spoke to John on the Mount of Olives during the crucifixion and told him that what was happening on the cross was only a show or illusion.
- The Acts of Thomas says that Jesus appeared in the form of the apostle Thomas and told a newly married couple to remain virgins for life.

A common theme in these writings is sexual abstinence (not having sexual relations). This idea came from Greek philosophy, especially from the philosopher Plato, who taught that the physical body was less valuable than the spirit.

Many scholars believe that the Acts of John is the earliest of these writings and may have been written before AD 150. Other major “Acts” (those of John, Paul, Peter, Andrew, and Thomas) were probably written during the second and third centuries AD. These opened the way for the writing of other “Acts” that were mainly miracle stories meant for entertainment rather than for teaching.

See also Apocrypha.

Apocryphal Epistles

Apocryphal epistles are letters that are not part of the official list of books recognized as Scripture. Even though they are not included in the Bible, many of them were valued for their religious or historical importance.

Many apocryphal writings are categorized as letters. These works, often written under false names (pseudonyms), come from different time periods.

Examples include:

- The Legend of Abgar
- Letters of Paul and Seneca
- The Epistle of Pseudo-Titus
- Paul’s Letter to the Laodiceans
- Third Corinthians

The last two examples (Paul’s Letter to the Laodiceans and Third Corinthians) are based on allusions found in the New Testament, much like some Old Testament Apocrypha are also based on

allusions found in the Old Testament. For example, First and Second Corinthians mention other letters that have since been lost. Third Corinthians presents itself as another letter that Paul and the church in Corinth would have exchanged. Paul also mentions a letter to the Laodiceans in [Colossians 4:16](#), and the apocryphal Letter to the Laodiceans presents itself as that letter. However, these writings are not genuine letters written by the apostle Paul.

See also Apocrypha.

Apocryphal Ezekiel

Apocryphal Ezekeiel is a non-canonical book mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus in the first century AD. Several early Christian writers also quoted or referred to it. Five early Christian writings cite passages from an apocryphal Ezekiel. Bishop Epiphanius, in the fourth century, cited an Ezekiel parable about a blind man and a lame man working together to steal fruit from a group of trees. He used this story to explain how the resurrection of both the soul and the body could be understood.

Around AD 90, Clement of Rome quoted from a non-canonical book of Ezekiel in his letter to the Corinthians. About one hundred years later, Clement of Alexandria also quoted from this book in two of his writings. The pseudo-Athanasian canon mentions an Ezekiel apocryphon (a non-canonical writing attributed to Ezekiel). This canon claims to list all the books that belong in the Bible. The book is also named in the *stichometry* (prose written in rhythmic phrases) of Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople from AD 806 to 815. In 1940, Campbell Bonner published Greek papyrus fragments that confirm the existence of an apocryphal Ezekiel.

See also Apocrypha; Book of Ezekiel; Ezekiel.

Apocryphal Gospels

A large number of New Testament apocryphal writings are called *apocryphal gospels*. These writings include stories about Christ and some of his teachings. Because many of them contain unrealistic or imaginary stories, they were never accepted as part of the Bible canon (the official list of books that are considered Scripture).

Types of Apocryphal Gospels

The apocryphal gospels can be divided into three main categories:

1. Texts similar to the Synoptic Gospels: These include the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of the Egyptians, and papyrus fragments like Oxyrhynchus 840 and Papyrus Egerton 2. Other collections of sayings also sound similar to the canonical Gospels.
2. Gnosticism was a belief system from the second century AD that focused on secret or special knowledge (*gnosis*) about the universe and human nature. These *gnostic gospels* are often written as conversations between Jesus and his disciples. Examples include the Coptic Gospel of Thomas, the Apocryphon of John, the Wisdom of Jesus Christ, and the Dialogue of the Redeemer. Some also claim to come from all twelve apostles, such as the Memoirs of the Apostles.

3. **Infancy and Passion gospels:** *Infancy gospels* tell legendary stories about the earliest years of the life of Jesus. *Passion gospels* also fit into this category. These writings were often created to satisfy curiosity about the early or final events of the life of Jesus, but they go beyond what the New Testament teaches. The New Testament does not provide much information about the early years of Jesus. The "infancy" gospels tried to fill that gap with stories that sound like miracles but are not historically reliable. For example, in the Gospel of Thomas, someone accuses five-year-old Jesus of breaking the Sabbath day by making clay sparrows by a stream. When his father Joseph comes to see him, Jesus claps his hands, and the clay birds come to life and fly away. "Passion" gospels were written to add details to the biblical accounts of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. These writings sometimes aimed to support Christian teaching, but they often introduced ideas that went beyond what the New Testament teaches. Stories that tried to tell what happened during the parts of Jesus's life that the Gospels do not talk about do not come from true gospel tradition. Some writings also described the final judgment of unbelievers in ways that go far beyond what the New Testament says.

Purpose and Use

In several cases, authors connected with Gnostic groups intentionally spread false teachings (teachings that did not agree with the faith of the early church). They claimed to have received these ideas from apostles or other early followers of Jesus. One example is the Gospel of Thomas, discovered around 1945 in Nag Hammadi near the Nile River in Egypt. Its author tried to spread unusual sayings and false ideas by presenting them

as the words of Jesus, hoping that people would believe and share them widely.

See also Apocrypha.

Apollonia

A town located on the Egnatian Way in eastern Macedonia. Paul passed through Apollonia on his second missionary journey ([Acts 17:1](#)). He was traveling west from Philippi to Thessalonica, a trip of about 90 miles (145 kilometers). Apollonia is usually identified with modern Pollina.

Apollonius

Name of probably four different men in the ancient Jewish texts about the Maccabean revolt.

1. Apollonius of Tarsus, the son of Menestheus ([2 Maccabees 3:5-7; 4:4](#)). The Greek historian Polybius identifies him as this governor of Coelestria and Phoenicia. He served under Seleucus IV. He retired to Miletus when Antiochus IV began to rule. Apollonius used his skill in diplomacy when he served as ambassador to Egypt ([2 Maccabees 4:21](#)). His son was also named Apollonius (#4 below). His son served as governor under Demetrius II.
2. Apollonius, a cruel captain of the Mysians sent by Antiochus IV to kill all adult Jewish males ([1 Maccabees 1:29](#); [2 Maccabees 5:24](#)). He was killed by Judas Maccabeus ([1 Maccabees 3:10-12](#)).
3. Apollonius, Gennaëus's son. He was a governor who along with other local leaders continued to harass the Jews ([2 Maccabees 12:2](#)).

4. Apollonius, the grandson of Menestheus. In 147 BC, he began to serve as governor of Coele Syria. His father also had this role. He was appointed by Demetrius II. This Apollonius led forces against Jonathan Maccabeus. Jonathan moved faster than Apollonius and defeated his army. Apollonius fled ([1 Maccabees 10:69-85](#)).

See also Maccabean Period.

Apollophanes

A Syrian warrior during the period between the Old Testament and New Testament. The army of Judas Maccabeus killed Apollophanes at a fortress named Gazara ([2 Maccabees 10:37](#)). Apollophanes's death happened after an important battle. In the battle, the Jewish army relied on the Lord for victory. However, the Syrians fought from violent uncontrolled anger ([2 Maccabees 10:24-31](#)).

Apollos

Apollos was a Christian Jew who was a skilled preacher at the time of the apostle Paul's missionary journeys. He was born in Alexandria (Egypt). The main biblical passage about Apollos is [Acts 18:24-19:1](#).

Apollos's Early Ministry

From Alexandria, Apollos went to Ephesus in Asia Minor. Apollos was very enthusiastic about his faith. He was well-educated and knew a lot about culture. He had studied the Old Testament Scriptures carefully. He knew the way of the Lord and spoke boldly and openly in the synagogue at Ephesus. Apollos knew about Jesus and taught about him correctly. However, Apollos only knew what John the Baptist had said about Jesus. John the Baptist was a man who came before Jesus to prepare people for his arrival.

Apollos Learns from Priscilla and Aquila

Priscilla and Aquila were Paul's friends and former associates. They heard Apollos speak in Ephesus. They realized that he had not heard what had happened to Jesus. They took him aside privately and explained the way of God to him more clearly.

Apollos had been convinced of the importance of John's baptism and John's message that Jesus was the Messiah (God's chosen leader). Apollos did not know about such teachings as justification by faith in Christ or the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Justification by faith in Christ is being made right with God by believing in Jesus. The work of the Holy Spirit in salvation is how God's spirit helps people become followers of Jesus. Priscilla and Aquila helped Apollos learn this information.

Apollos's Ministry in Greece

Soon after this instruction, Apollos left Ephesus for the Roman province of Achaia in Greece. He brought letters from the Ephesian Christians. These letters urged the disciples in Achaia to welcome Apollos as a Christian brother. On arrival, he forcefully and publicly argued with the Jews. He used his knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

Paul considered Apollos's work in Corinth valuable. Paul described Apollos as the one who watered the seed that Paul had planted as the founder of the church ([1 Corinthians 3:5-11](#)). From 1 Corinthians, it is also clear that one of the groups dividing the Corinthian church was a group centered around Apollos. However, Apollos was not directly responsible for it ([1 Corinthians 1:12](#); [3:1-4](#)). Paul had difficulty convincing Apollos that he should return to Corinth. This may be because Apollos did not want to encourage the continuance of that little group ([1 Corinthians 16:12](#)).

Apollyon

An angel of the "bottomless pit" (a very deep, dark place of punishment). Apollyon is also called Abaddon ([Revelation 9:11](#)). *See* Abaddon.

Apostasy

Turning against God by abandoning or rejecting former beliefs. The term refers to a deliberate rejection of the faith by someone who used to believe. It does not refer to not understanding or being mistaken. Apostasy is different from heresy (denial of a part of the faith) and from changing denominations. Also, it is possible to deny the faith, as Peter once did, and reaffirm it later.

Originally, *apostasy* meant literal rebellion. So, the Jewish people were described as "rebels" against

King Artaxerxes ([1 Esdras 2:23](#)). Also, Jason was described as a "rebel against the laws" ([2 Maccabees 5:6-8](#)). The Old Testament lists many examples of spiritual rebellion:

- departure from the law ([Joshua 22:22](#))
- forsaking temple worship ([2 Chronicles 29:19](#))
- willful disobedience toward God ([Jeremiah 2:19](#))

Isaiah and Jeremiah provide many examples of Israel's rebellions ([Isaiah 1:2-4](#); [Jeremiah 2:19](#)). Israelite kings were often guilty of apostasy:

- Rehoboam ([1 Kings 14:22-24](#))
- Ahab ([1 Kings 16:30-33](#))
- Ahaziah ([1 Kings 22:51-53](#))
- Jehoram ([2 Chronicles 21:6, 10](#))
- Ahaz ([2 Chronicles 28:1-4](#))
- Manasseh ([2 Chronicles 33:1-19](#))
- Amon ([2 Chronicles 33:21-23](#))

In New Testament times, many disciples separated themselves from Christ ([John 6:66](#)). Judas Iscariot is the most well-known example. The Greek word where we get *apostasy* from is only in two passages. The apostle Paul was accused of apostasy for teaching others "to forsake Moses" ([Acts 21:21](#)). Apostasy will be significant in the end times ([2 Thessalonians 2:3](#)). Christians were warned not to be carried away and tricked by the apostasy to come in the end times before the Lord's return. This apostasy is because of the rise of a rebellious figure who will be used by Satan to do his work ([2 Thessalonians 2:3-12](#); compare [1 Timothy 4:1-3](#)).

Apostle, Apostleship

The official title given to certain leaders in the New Testament churches. Apostleship refers to the work and duties of an apostle. People have many different ideas about where New Testament apostles came from, what they did, and their history. Different church traditions do not agree on these things. To understand the words "apostle" and "apostleship" better, we can look at where

these words come from and what ideas are connected to them.

Where Did The Words "Apostle" and "Apostleship" Come From?

The Greek word for "apostle" is not used outside the New Testament in the same sense as it is in the New Testament. It comes from the word meaning "to send." It is often used when discussing the sea, meaning a "ship" or "group of ships," a "marine expedition," or the "leader" of such an expedition. The term's usage is typically impersonal and passive, with no indication of personal initiative or authorization. Later papyri, ancient documents written on material made from a plant called papyrus, use the word to mean "bill," "invoice," or "passport." These words are also used by sailors.

Jesus Chooses His Twelve Apostles

In the New Testament, "apostle" refers to those sent by Jesus to proclaim the gospel. From the larger group of his followers, Jesus selected twelve men ([Matthew 10:1-4](#); [Mark 3:13-19](#); [Luke 6:12-16](#)). These twelve men:

- had a close relationship with him,
- received private instruction, and
- witnessed his miracles and disputes with Jewish authorities.

Jesus sent these twelve to:

- preach repentance,
- cast out demons,
- heal the sick, and
- minister in ways similar to his own work ([Matthew 10:1-15](#); [Mark 6:7-13, 30](#); [Luke 9:1-6](#)).

They represented Jesus personally, as expressed in the saying "Whoever listens to you listens to Me; whoever rejects you rejects Me; and whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me" ([Luke 10:16](#); compare [Matthew 10:40](#)). The Twelve were not just supposed to teach what Jesus said. They were also meant to represent Jesus himself.

After the resurrection, Jesus commissioned the twelve apostles to proclaim God's act in Christ for all people ([Matthew 28](#); [Luke 24](#); [John 20-21](#)). Only those who had been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry to his resurrection could be his

apostles ([Acts 1:21–22](#)). Paul was qualified because he had seen the risen Christ ([1 Corinthians 15:4–10](#)).

How Is "Apostle" Used in Paul's Writings?

In Paul's writings, there are two main uses of the word "apostle":

- Sometimes, Paul uses "apostle" to mean people chosen by local churches to safely bring gifts to other Christians ([2 Corinthians 8:23](#); [Philippians 2:25](#)).
- More importantly, "apostle" is used in a technical sense with the qualifying phrase "of Jesus Christ" ([1 Corinthians 1:1](#); [2 Corinthians 1:1](#); [11:13](#); [Galatians 1:1](#); [Ephesians 1:1](#); [Colossians 1:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:6](#)).

The "sent one" is the "sent one of Jesus Christ" ([Romans 16:7](#); [1 Corinthians 9:1, 5](#); [12:28](#); [Galatians 1:17–19](#)). Paul says he has the right to be called an apostle. He bases this on the same ideas about apostles that Jesus taught. Paul always connects his claim to a specific event in his past. This event was when the risen Jesus appeared to him ([1 Corinthians 9:1](#); [Galatians 1:12, 16](#)). Paul thought this appearance was just as important as the times Jesus appeared to others after he rose from the dead ([1 Corinthians 15:3–8](#)).

Paul argued his experience outside Damascus (compare [Acts 9:1–19a](#); [22:6–16](#); [26:12–18](#); [Galatians 1:17](#)) was a lifelong commission to preach the resurrected Christ ([1 Corinthians 1:17](#); [2:1–2](#)). He was called to preach mostly to gentiles ([Acts 9:15](#); [22:15](#); [26:17, 23](#); [Galatians 1:15–16](#)). Through his preaching, Christ continued to work, creating the new people of God ([1 Corinthians 9:1–2](#); [Galatians 2:8](#)).

See also Acts of the Apostles, Book of the; Paul, The Apostle.

Apostolic History of Abdias

This collection includes content from both canonical and apocryphal writings about the lives of the apostles, including Paul. Some claimed that Abdias, who may have been bishop of Babylon during the first or second century AD, wrote this history. However, it was probably compiled from various sources in sixth-century France. This

apocryphal work is divided into ten books. At first, the stories circulated in Greek as separate writings. Later, when they were translated into Latin, they were combined into a single book. Although most of the stories are considered folk tales or legends, some parts mention details that do not appear anywhere else and may have historical value.

According to later tradition, Abdias lived during the time of the apostles and might have seen Christ. He was said to have traveled often with the apostles Simon and Jude. The preface to the Latin version claims he originally wrote the work in Hebrew. His disciple Eutropius then translated it into Greek, and the historian Africanus translated the Greek text into Latin. However, there is no historical evidence to support any of these claims.

See also Apocrypha.

Apothecary

The King James Version translation of "perfumer" in [Exodus 30:25, 35](#); [37:29](#); [2 Chronicles 16:14](#); [Nehemiah 3:8](#); and [Ecclesiastes 10:1](#).

Apothegm

An *apothegm* is a short and meaningful saying. Some Bible scholars use the term *apothegm* to describe brief stories in the Gospels that end with a saying of Jesus. These are also known as "pronouncement stories." Examples are found in [Matthew 8:18–22](#); [9:10–13](#); [16:1–4](#); [Mark 2:18–22](#); [10:13–15](#); [Luke 6:1–5](#); [11:37–44](#). The stories do not have a larger historical setting. They contain only enough detail to make the saying of Jesus understandable. These stories were very important to the early church. They used them in worship, in teaching new Christians, and in correcting false teachings.

Appaim

Nadab's son, and the father of Ishi in Judah's tribe ([1 Chronicles 2:30–31](#)).

Appeal

A legal term for requesting a higher court to review a decision by a lower court. Old Testament law

made no provision for appeals. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul appealed to Caesar for a hearing after his arrest in Jerusalem ([Acts 25:11](#)). Because Paul was a Roman citizen, he could have his case removed from the Jewish courts. Paul feared an unfair trial in the Jewish courts.

See also Civil Law and Justice.

Appearances of Christ

Events where Jesus Christ was seen by human witnesses after his resurrection. *See* Resurrection.

Apphia

A Christian woman in Colosse, possibly the wife or sister of Philemon. The apostle Paul greeted her in his letter to Philemon ([Philemon 1:2](#)). According to tradition, she was martyred during Nero's persecution. On the saints' calendar of the Greek Orthodox Church, she is honored on November 22.

Apphus

The nickname of Jonathan, one of Judas Maccabeus's four brothers ([1 Maccabees 9:28-13:30](#)). As with the other Maccabean nicknames, the meaning of the word *apphus* is uncertain ([1 Maccabees 2:2-6](#)). "Favorite," "beloved," or "desired" have been suggested as translations. *See* Jonathan #16.

Appian Way

The main highway from Rome southward to the heel of the Italian peninsula. Originally, the Appian Way terminated at Capua. It was later extended to Brundisium about 560 kilometers (350 miles) from Rome. It received its name from Appius Claudius Caecus, the Roman censor. He began its construction in 312 BC.

The Appian Way is referred to by the ancient writers Livy, Strabo, Horace, and others in a variety of contexts. Portions of the road still exist today south of Rome. The original Roman paving is intact in many places. Ruins of some structures built along the original road can also be seen.

The apostle Paul traveled on the Appian Way on his journey to Rome after getting off a ship at Puteoli ([Acts 28:13-15](#)). Christians from Rome came out to meet him in the area near the Three Taverns and the Appii Forum ("marketplace of Appius"). These were two of eight major stations known to have existed along the Appian Way. The Appii Forum was located 70 kilometers (43 miles) from Rome in the middle of the Pontine Marshes. Horace, writing in 65-68 BC, complained of the noise and stench that assaulted those who stayed there. Three Taverns was located 16 kilometers (10 miles) closer to Rome.

As Paul traveled on, he would have passed Bovillae. This was a village located about 18 kilometers (11 miles) from Rome. This village was the ancestral home and cult center of the family of Caesar Augustus. Much of the Appian Way from Bovillae to Rome was lined with tombs. Roman law forbade burials within the city of Rome. It became common practice to bury the dead beside the major roads leading into the city.

Apple, Apple Tree

A tree that grows to a height of about 4.5-7.6 meters (15-25 feet) and produces round, firm, sweet fruits. The tree has oval leaves with slightly toothed edges and produces white or pink blossoms in spring before bearing fruit.

The apple tree was not native to the Near East. Some Bible versions translate certain fruit references in the Old Testament as "apple." The Hebrew word *tappuach* is often translated as "apple" ([Proverbs 25:11](#); [Song of Solomon 2:3, 5; 7:8; 8:5](#)). This translation comes from its similarity to the Arabic word for apple, *tuffah*.

Some scholars think the fruit referred to in these passages might actually be an apricot, because apples may not have been common in ancient Palestine. However, researchers found carbonized apples (probably crab apples, *Malus sylvestris*) during excavations at Kadesh-barnea from the 9th century BC. This discovery suggests that apples could have been grown in King Solomon's gardens.

See also Apricot.

Apricot

An apricot is a small, round fruit with yellow-orange skin and flesh, similar to a peach but smaller. Some Bible scholars think the Hebrew word *tappuach* refers to apricots instead of apples.

Apricot trees have been common in Israel and the surrounding regions since biblical times. These trees grow to about 9.1 meters (30 feet) tall and have reddish bark. Its scientific name is *Prunus armeniaca*.

While many Bible translations use the word "apple," the apricot better matches the descriptions found in the Bible. The Bible mentions this fruit in several places ([Proverbs 25:11](#); [Song of Solomon 2:3, 5](#); [7:8](#); [8:5](#); [Joel 1:12](#)).

See also Apple.

Aqueduct

A conduit or artificial channel for conducting water from a distance. This occurs usually by gravity. It also refers to a structure carrying a channel of water or canal across a valley or over a river.

In Palestine, most cities were situated near an abundant water supply. In times of siege, water would be available. Ancient tunnels for the conveyance of water have been found at Gezer. The Jebusites inhabited the area that later became Jerusalem. They seem to have constructed some sort of aqueduct to bring rainwater into the city ([2 Samuel 5:8](#)). By the time of King Hezekiah, there existed an "aqueduct of the upper pool" ([2 Kings 18:17](#)). In preparing to revolt against the Assyrians, Hezekiah made a 541.4-meter (1,777-foot) tunnel through the hill of Ophel to carry water from the Gihon spring to the pool of Siloam ([Isaiah 22:9-11](#)). The famous "Siloam inscription" describes how it was done.

It is also known that two aqueducts, 21 and 66 kilometers (13 and 41 miles) in length, brought water into Jerusalem. They merged at the Roman reservoirs near Bethlehem. On reaching the city, the water was carried to the temple area using underground pipes ([Ezekiel 47:1](#); [Joel 3:18](#)). In the time of the New Testament, Josephus (a Jewish historian) wrote about an event involving Pontius Pilate. Pilate took some "Corban" money (special money set aside for God) from the temple treasury. He used this money to build an aqueduct (a system for moving water). The Romans planned three

"pools of Solomon" (large water storage areas). They probably built these pools using some of the money Pilate took.

Other cities of Bible times served by ancient aqueducts were Tyre, Samaria, Caesarea, Jericho, and Ephesus in Asia Minor. Caesarea was the Roman capital of the province. The Romans brought the science of aqueduct engineering to a fine art. The Appia, built in 312 BC, was 16.6 kilometers (10.3 miles) long. The Anio Vetus, built in 272 BC, was over 51.5 kilometers (32 miles) long. Both were underground channels that brought water into the city of Rome.

Aquila

The husband of Priscilla ([Acts 18:2, 18, 26](#); [Romans 16:3](#); [1 Corinthians 16:19](#); [2 Timothy 4:19](#)). *See* Priscilla and Aquila.

Ar

The capital city of Moab located on the northern border ([Deuteronomy 2:18, 29](#)). It was near the Arnon River ([Numbers 21:28](#)). Ar was sometimes used figuratively to refer to all of Moab ([Deuteronomy 2:9](#)). The prophet Isaiah predicted the destruction of the Moabite cities Ar and Kir ([Isaiah 15:1](#)).

Ara

The son of Jether who was a chief among the tribe of Asher ([1 Chronicles 7:38](#)).

Arab

A city in the hill country southwest of Hebron. It was given to Judah's tribe after the conquest of Canaan also called the promised land ([Joshua 15:52](#)).

Arabah

The Arabah is a large valley in the Middle East. It divides the land into eastern and western parts.

Where Is the Arabah Valley?

The valley starts at the Sea of Galilee in the north and runs south through the Jordan River valley. It continues past the Dead Sea and ends at the Gulf of Aqaba. People often call it the Rift Valley.

The valley is about 10 kilometers wide (about 6 miles). It stretches for about 322 kilometers (200 miles) from north to south. The Dead Sea lies within this valley. This sea is the lowest place on Earth that is not covered by ocean water. It sits 388 meters (1,275 feet) below sea level.

What Does "Arabah" Mean?

The word "arabah" comes from the Hebrew language. It means a dry, empty area where few plants can grow. The valley has different names in different places. Arabic-speaking people call the northern part of the valley "the Ghor," which means "depression" (a low place). This northern section runs from the Dead Sea up to the Sea of Galilee. The southern part of the valley, which extends below the Dead Sea, is called "the Arabah."

In the Old Testament, the Bible uses Arabah in different ways:

- Arabah sometimes refers to the entire length of the valley.
- In [Deuteronomy 1:1](#); [2:8](#), Arabah refers to the southern part of the valley.
- In [Deuteronomy 3:17](#), [4:49](#), and [Joshua 11:2](#), Arabah refers to the northeast section of the valley.
- Arabah could also refer to the part of the valley east of the Jordan River ([Deuteronomy 4:49](#)).
- In [Joshua 11:16](#), Arabah refers to the part west of the river.
- In [2 Samuel 4:7](#), Arabah refers to the Jordan River valley.

The plural form of Arabah (Arboth) is used 17 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. Its meaning "plains" refers to the section of the Arabah near Jericho or Moab. The Dead Sea is sometimes referred to as the Sea of the Arabah or Sea of the Plain ([2 Kings 14:25](#)). For the most part, the section of the Arabah north of the Dead Sea was fertile and productive. It is today as well.

What Important Events Happened in the Arabah?

It was from the Arabah that Joshua led the campaign to conquer Jericho. Abner fled to the northern Arabah after being defeated at Gibeon ([2 Samuel 2:29](#)). The murderers of Ishbosheth crossed the area to bring his head to David at Hebron ([2 Samuel 4:7](#)). Zedekiah fled to the area when he was captured by the Babylonians ([2 Kings 25:4](#); [Jeremiah 39:4](#)).

The southern Arabah was the location of Israel's wanderings before entering the promised land. Farther north, the Arabah was the site of the final acts of Moses ([Numbers 32-36](#)). Moses died and was buried in the Arabah ([Deuteronomy 1:1](#)). He was buried in the plains of Moab east of the Dead Sea ([Deuteronomy 34:1-6](#)).

What Is Special About the Land and Its Future?

South of the Dead Sea there were deposits of iron and copper. [Deuteronomy 8:9](#) may allude to this general area when it speaks of "a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper." The land here is generally barren. In ancient times, careful use of irrigation made agriculture possible to a limited extent. Several important trade routes have passed through this area. The Arabah around the Dead Sea was once an especially fertile area "like the garden of the Lord" ([Genesis 13:10](#)). This changed after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Bible contains promises about the future of this area. The prophet Ezekiel wrote about a special river that would one day flow from God's temple. According to his writing, this river will flow down into the Arabah valley. When this happens, it will make the salty sea water fresh and clean. This will create a good place for fish and other living things to thrive ([Ezekiel 47:1-12](#); [Joel 3:18](#); [Zechariah 14:8](#)). See Palestine.

Arabia, Arabs

Arabia is a large peninsula (a piece of land almost surrounded by water) in southwestern Asia. Water surrounds it on three sides: the Red Sea on the west, the Indian Ocean on the south, and the Persian Gulf on the east. On the north, it is bordered by a fertile region of river valleys and farmland called the Fertile Crescent. Today, the countries of

Jordan and Iraq form Arabia's northern border. Arabia is very large—about 1.6 million square kilometers (or just over 1 million square miles).

Around AD 150, a geographer named Ptolemy created a way to describe different parts of Arabia. He divided the land into three regions. Other ancient geographers, like Strabo, used these same divisions:

1. *Arabia Petraea* (meaning "Rocky Arabia") in the northwest. This region included the Sinai Peninsula (the land bridge between Africa and Asia), the lands of Edom and Moab (areas east of the Dead Sea), and the region east of the Jordan River (called Transjordan).
2. *Arabia Deserta* (meaning "Desert Arabia"). This was mainly the Syrian Desert.
3. *Arabia Felix* (meaning "Happy Arabia"). This covered the southern part of Arabia. It was called "happy" because it had more rainfall and was better for farming than the other regions

What Does the Bible Say About Arabia?

"Arabia" is used as a geographical term in the Bible. It sometimes includes both northern and southern sections. For example, [2 Chronicles 9:14](#) says that the kings of Arabia brought gold to Solomon as tribute, a payment made by one nation or ruler to another as a sign of submission or respect. At other times, the name Arabia refers only to the northwestern *Arabia Petraea*. For example, Paul said that after his conversion he went away to the deserts of Arabia ([Galatians 1:17](#)) and referred to Mt Sinai ([4:25](#)), which is in that northwestern area.

Many places named in the Bible called Arabia are more specifically in *Arabia Petraea*. Such sites include Buz, Dedan, Dumah, Ephah, the Hazor of [Jeremiah 49:28-33](#), Massa, Mesha, and Midian. Hazarmaveth, Ophir, Sabtah, Sephar, Sheba, and Uzal are in the south. Havilah and Parvaim are perhaps in the northeast. Authorities debate the location of Seba. The land of Uz is mentioned in the book of Job. Many scholars think it is located in the area between Edom and northern Arabia.

Many think Arabia is one of the hottest countries. In some areas, that is correct. The peninsula has

seas on its east and west, but those bodies of water are too small to break the dry African-Asian landscape. There are, however, some regions that enjoy mild weather. In the south, much of the land is sufficiently elevated to avoid the intensity of tropical heat. The lowlands along the coast have a semitropical environment. Fogs and dews are common in the humid regions. Over inner Arabia, the sun shines year-round. It is occasionally obscured by a sandstorm or an even rarer rain shower.

People desire Arabia for its natural resources. Pharaohs of the first dynasty operated turquoise mines in Sinai. The gold of Ophir and the frankincense and myrrh of South Arabia were known around the world. The queen of Sheba brought such precious spices to Solomon ([1 Kings 10:2, 10](#)). The trade between Israel and Arabia flourished. Solomon had a seaport at Ezion-geber on the Red Sea. Solomon used the seaport for trading with Ophir ([1 Kings 9:26-28](#)). King Jehoshaphat of Judah also received tribute from Arabs ([2 Chronicles 17:11](#)). Jehoshaphat tried to revive trade with Ophir but failed ([1 Kings 22:48](#)).

Who Were the People and Tribes of Arabia?

Tribes associated with Arabia played a significant role in biblical history. The Ishmaelites or Midianites took Joseph to Egypt ([Genesis 37:25-36](#)). They were Arabians. The Amalekites were Arabians also. They waged war with Moses in the wilderness of *Arabia Petraea* ([Exodus 17:8-16](#)). Moses's father-in-law was a Midianite ([Exodus 18:1](#)). His name is Jethro. King Uzziah of Judah fought against Arabs ([2 Chronicles 26:7](#)). The Meunites mentioned in the same verse were probably also from Arabia. Geshem the Arab resisted the rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall ([Nehemiah 2:19; 6:1, 6](#)). He is also known from non-religious inscriptions.

Kedar was an important North Arab tribe. They were condemned in Isaiah's message about Arabia ([Isaiah 21:13-17](#)). Jeremiah also spoke against it. He prophesied its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. He conquered Arabia ([Jeremiah 49:28-33](#)). The Nabatean Arabs were close allies of the tribe of Kedar ([Isaiah 60:7](#)). The Nabatean Arabs became very important in later history. They captured Petra. They fulfilled the prophecy of Obadiah about Edom. References to Arabia and the Arabs in the Apocrypha and New Testament concern mostly the Nabatean Arabs ([1 Maccabees 11:16; Galatians 1:17](#)).

What Kingdoms Developed in Southern Arabia?

In southern Arabia, four kingdoms developed:

1. The kingdom of Saba (also called Sabeen)
2. The kingdom of Ma'in (also called Minean)
3. The kingdom of Qataban
4. The kingdom of Hadramaut

Around 115 BC the Himyarite kingdom gained control of southern Arabia. The Himyarite kingdom controlled Arabia until about AD 300. Three centuries later the Arabian peninsula witnessed the beginning of Islam.

Arabic Gospel of the Infancy

This is one of several "gospels of the infancy" found among the New Testament Apocrypha. This text describes the birth of Jesus. It was written around the fifth century AD. It includes the visits of the shepherds and the magi, the flight to Egypt, and the miracles Jesus performed as a boy. It describes details about his early life, which are not in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In this gospel, Mary often takes an active role in the miracles, which differs from the miracle stories in the four Gospels of the New Testament.

This writing may have first been written in the Syriac language and later translated into Arabic. Some of its stories also appear in the *Qur'an* and in other Islamic writings. Comparing this gospel with the four Gospels in the New Testament shows how different it is from them. It also shows how this and similar writings helped increase the honor and veneration (deep respect and devotion) given to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

See also Apocrypha.

Arabic History of Joseph the Carpenter

This fourth-century AD writing tells the story of Joseph's life and death. It claims to include information that came from Jesus himself.

According to this account, Joseph the carpenter was a widower who had four sons and two

daughters (chapter 2). When Joseph was 90 years old, he was chosen to care for Mary (chapter 14). This means that, in this story, the brothers and sisters of Jesus were actually Joseph's children from his earlier marriage.

The text says that Joseph lived to be 111 years old. It also says that Mary "must face the same end of life as other mortals" (chapter 18). The work survives in both Arabic and Coptic versions.

Some scholars believe it was written earlier than the fifth century, when the idea of the "assumption of Mary into heaven" became popular. Others believe it may have been written much later.

See also Apocrypha; History of Joseph the Carpenter; Joseph.

Arad (Person)

One of Beriah's sons. He is of the tribe of Benjamin. His name appears in [1 Chronicles 8:15](#).

Arad (Place)

The name of a Canaanite settlement or region in the Negev Desert at the time of the Israelite conquest of Canaan.

The king of Arad fought against the Israelites, but the Israelites defeated him ([Numbers 21:1-3; 33:40](#)). After their victory, they named the place "Hormah," which means "destruction" in Hebrew. Later, Joshua and his army conquered Arad ([Joshua 12:14](#)).

Where Was Ancient Arad?

For many years, archaeologists thought the Arad mentioned in the Bible was the same as a place we now call Tell Arad. (A tell is an ancient mound where people once lived.) However, when researchers studied Tell Arad by digging up its remains, they found something surprising. No one had been living there when the Israelites first came into the land. Some scholars have suggested that the Arad mentioned in Numbers and Joshua was a region and not a specific place.

Others say there were two Arads. One Aarad is the Canaanite city located possibly at Tell Malhata about 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) southwest of Tell Arad. The second Arad is the Israelite city located at modern Tell Arad. This second suggestion is

supported by an inscription of Shishak, an Egyptian pharaoh who ruled from around 940 to 915 BC. This indicates that two cities named Arad existed during the early first millennium BC.

What Was the Role of Tell Arad in Ancient Israel?

The only possible mention of modern Tell Arad is in [Judges 1:16](#). In this verse, Arad is used as a reference point for the land settled by the Kenites. Tell Arad had been a large important city during the early Bronze Age. After being destroyed around 2600 BC, it was not reoccupied until shortly before 1000 BC. Tell Arad served as a strong fortress on Judah's southern border from the time of King Solomon (970 to 930 BC) until the Jews were taken into exile.

What Did Researchers Find at Tell Arad?

Researchers found many interesting things when they studied Tell Arad. One of their most important discoveries was a special place of worship that the Israelites had built there. This building was very similar to two other important places of worship:

- The tabernacle (the holy tent that the Israelites carried with them in the desert)
- The temple (the main place of worship later built in Jerusalem)

The building had an altar (a special table for offerings to God) that was the same size as the one described in [Exodus 27:1](#). Some scholars think this place of worship might have been used by a group called the Kenites.

The researchers also found pieces of broken pottery with writing on them. (Scholars call these pieces "ostraca.") One of these pieces mentions the "house of Yahweh" (another name for God). This might be talking about the temple in Jerusalem.

Aradus

A Greek name for the Phoenician city of Arvad. Aradus was one of the cities receiving a "letter of recommendation" for the Jews written by the Roman consul (government official) Lucius ([1 Maccabees 15:16-23](#)).

See also Arvad, Arvadite.

Arah

1. Ulla's son from Asher's tribe ([1 Chronicles 7:39](#)).
2. The ancestor of a group of people that returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile to Babylon ([Ezra 2:5](#); [Nehemiah 7:10](#)).

Aram (Person)

1. Shem's son and Noah's grandson ([Genesis 10:22-23](#); [1 Chronicles 1:17](#)). The ancestor of the Arameans. *See* Syria, Syrians.
2. Kemuel's son, the grandson of Abraham's brother Nahor ([Genesis 22:21](#)).
3. Shemer's son from Asher's tribe ([1 Chronicles 7:34](#)).
4. The Aram used in the list of the ancestors of Jesus Christ ([Matthew 1:3-4](#), King James Version) is a mistranslation of the Greek word *Aram* which means "Ram." It is an entirely different name ([Ruth 4:19](#)). *See* Ram (Person) #1.

Aram (Place)

The designation for the territory which is now called Syria. *See* Syria, Syrians.

Aram of Damascus

One of the several city-kingdoms in the land of Aram (also known as Syria). This kingdom's main city was Damascus. Aram of Damascus was conquered by King David ([1 Chronicles 18:3-6](#)). *See* Damascus.

Aram-Geshur

A small kingdom between Mount Hermon and Bashan. Basha is the region east and northeast of

the Sea of Galilee. It borders Argob which is located east of the Sea of Galilee. *See* Geshur, Geshurites.

Aram-maacah (Maachah)

Another name for Maacah in [1 Chronicles 19:6](#).

See Maacah, Maachah (Place).

Aram-Naharaim

A Hebrew word meaning “Aram of the two rivers.” It refers to the area bounded by the upper Euphrates and the Habur Rivers. It is sometimes translated “Mesopotamia” ([Deuteronomy 23:4](#), Revised Standard Version).

The major city of that area was Haran, where Terah and Abram stopped. It was also where Terah died ([Genesis 11:31–32](#)). A servant of Abram (later called Abraham) returned to the same region to seek a wife for Abraham’s son Isaac ([Genesis 24:1–10](#)). Isaac’s son Jacob also returned to Haran to seek a wife ([Genesis 28:1–5](#)). Paddan-aram is another name for Aram-naharaim. Aram-naharaim was the home of Balaam, who was a pagan prophet ([Deuteronomy 23:4](#)).

One oppressor of Israel during the period of the judges was Cushan-rishathaim, king of Aram-naharaim ([Judges 3:8–11](#)). Later, in King David’s wars with Ammon, he had to confront mercenary charioteers hired from the Aramean centers of Aram-naharaim, Aram-maacah, and Zobah ([1 Chronicles 19:6](#); compare [Psalm 60](#) title). *See* Syria, Syrians.

Aram-Zobah

A Syrian territory ruled in David’s time by King Hadadezer. David defeated him in [2 Samuel 8:3](#). This form of the name occurs in the title of [Psalm 60](#). *See* Zobah.

Aramaic

One of the three original languages of the Bible. Aramaic is found in parts of Daniel ([2:4b–7:28](#)) and Ezra ([4:8–6:18](#); [7:12–26](#)). Aramaic phrases and expressions also appear in Genesis ([31:47](#)), Jeremiah ([10:11](#)), and the New Testament.

Old Testament Use

Aramaic is similar to Hebrew in structure and written in the same script. In contrast to Hebrew, Aramaic has a larger vocabulary with many loan words and a greater variety of connective words. It also contains many more tenses, using participles with pronouns or with various forms of the verb “to be.” Although Aramaic is less pleasant sounding and lyrical than Hebrew, it is most likely better to communicate effectively.

Aramaic might have the longest history of any current language. It was spoken during the Bible’s patriarchal period (during the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and is still used today. Aramaic and the related language, Syriac, developed into many dialects (words and expressions unique to a region or social group) in different times and places. It is simple, clear, and precise. It adapted easily to daily needs. It was equally useful for scholars, pupils, lawyers, and merchants. Some have described it as the Semitic equivalent of English.

The origin of Aramaic is unknown, but it seems to have been closely related to Amorite and maybe other lost dialects of Northwest Semitic (a family of languages that include Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Canaanite). Although an Aramean kingdom never existed, some Aramean “states” were influential. A few short writings in Aramean from the tenth to eighth centuries BC have been found and studied.

In the eighth century BC, King Hezekiah’s representatives asked the spokesmen of the Assyrian king Sennacherib to “Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Do not speak with us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall” ([2 Kings 18:26](#)). By the Persian period, Aramaic was the language of international trade. The Jewish people probably began using it in exile for convenience (at least in commerce) while Hebrew became mostly used by the educated elite and religious leaders.

Slowly, beginning after the exile in Babylon, Aramaic became widely spoken in the land of Palestine. Nehemiah complained that children from mixed marriages (with one parent who was not Jewish) could not speak Hebrew ([Nehemiah 13:24](#)). The Jewish people continued to use Aramaic widely during the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods. The Old Testament was eventually translated into Aramaic paraphrases. These translations are called *Targums*, and some were found with the Dead Sea Scrolls.

New Testament Use

It is believed that Aramaic was the common language of Palestine during the time of Jesus. However, this might be an oversimplification. Names used in the New Testament are written in several languages:

- Aramaic (for example, Bartholomew, Bar-Jonah, Barnabas)
- Greek (for example, Andrew, Philip)
- Latin (for example, Mark)
- Hebrew

Aramaic was widely used alongside Greek and Hebrew. Latin was probably limited to military and political groups. The everyday Hebrew dialect, Mishnaic Hebrew, was also used in Jesus's day. Mishnaic Hebrew documents have been found with the Dead Sea Scrolls.

What was the "Hebrew" mentioned in certain New Testament passages ([John 5:2](#); [19:13, 17, 20](#); [20:16](#); [Revelation 9:11](#); [16:16](#))? The languages in the inscription on Jesus's cross were written in "Hebrew, Latin, and Greek" ([John 19:19–20](#)). Later, the apostle Paul was said to speak "Hebrew" ([Acts 22:2](#); [26:14](#)). The exact dialect he spoke is unclear, but he was a Pharisee and would have been able to read the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The Greek word for *Hebrew* is sometimes translated as *Aramaic*. It may be a general term for Semitic or for a blend of Hebrew-Aramaic (as Yiddish is German mixed with Hebrew). In any case, Aramaic served as a way to connect Hebrew to Greek as the language spoken by Jewish people in Jesus's day. In that sense, Aramaic connects Old Testament Hebrew with New Testament Greek.

Arameans

The people of Aram and the predecessors of the Syrians. *See* Syria, Syrians.

Aran

Dishan's son, grandson of Seir the Horite, and a descendant of Esau ([Genesis 36:28](#); [1 Chronicles 1:42](#)).

Ararat

Ararat is a rocky mountain range in Armenia ([2 Kings 19:37](#); [Isaiah 37:38](#)).

Ararat is located just south of the Black Sea and between it and the Caspian Sea. The range extends into eastern Turkey, southern Georgia, and northern Iran. According to the Bible, Noah's ark landed on these mountains when the flood waters began to go down ([Genesis 8:4](#)). Many people have searched this remote area, hoping to find the ark.

We do not know the exact location of a single Mount Ararat. However, there is a traditional location between Lake Van and Lake Urmia, in what was once called Urartu (an ancient name similar to "Ararat"). This area was once part of Assyria. The land around it is a high plain with very few plants, very few people living there, and empty fields of hardened lava. One mountain peak in this area is called Agri Dag, which means "Mountain of Trouble" in Turkish. It is 5,180 meters (17,000 feet) high. Local people call it Kohl Nu, which means "Mount of Noah." Because of this name, most people looking for Noah's ark search in this area. *See* Noah #1; Flood, The.

Aratus

Greek poet (315?–245? BC). Aratus was born at Soli in Cilicia (region in Asia Minor). He studied in Athens where he was influenced by Zeno, the founder of Stoicism. Stoicism is a philosophy that teaches people to stay calm and control their emotions by focusing on what they can control and accepting what they cannot. Later, Aratus lived in the palace of Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia and Antiochus I, king of Syria. Aratus's only existing work is a poem on astronomy, "Phaenomena," dedicated to Zeus. The apostle Paul quoted from that poem in his speech on the Aeropagus in Athens: "We are His offspring" ([Acts 17:28](#)).

Araunah

Araunah was a Jebusite whose threshing floor (where grain was separated from chaff) was the scene of some significant events in biblical history. (Jebus was the name of an ancient Canaanite city that later became Jerusalem.)

The Lord stopped an angel from further inflicting Israel with a pestilence (disease or plague) after

the death of 70,000 Israelites ([2 Samuel 24:15–16](#)). This plague from the Lord was the result of King David's prideful census. Araunah's threshing floor marked the site of this event.

At the instruction of the prophet Gad, the repentant David purchased the floor to build an altar ([2 Samuel 24:17–25](#)). Araunah offered oxen and everything needed for the altar as a gift. David insisted on paying him, saying, "I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." ([2 Samuel 24:24](#)).

A parallel account uses the Hebrew form *Ornan* for the Jebusite's foreign name ([1 Chronicles 21:15–16](#)). The tabernacle and altar were too far away on the hill of Gibeon ([1 Chronicles 21:27–30](#)). This account says David was in too much of a hurry to go to the tabernacle to make his sacrifice.

David chose the threshing floor as the site for the temple ([1 Chronicles 22:1](#)). Solomon later built the temple there on Mount Moriah ([2 Chronicles 3:1](#)). The threshing floor marked the same area where God had commanded Abraham to go for the sacrifice of Isaac ([Genesis 22:2](#)).

Today, an important Muslim shrine called the Dome of the Rock stands where many believe Araunah's threshing floor once was.

Arba

An ancestor of the giant Anakim and a great hero among his people ([Joshua 15:13](#); [21:11](#)). Arba was the founder of Kiriath-arba (city of Arba), later known as Hebron ([Joshua 14:15](#)).

Arbathite

A resident of the city of Beth-arabah. Beth-arabah was the hometown of Abi-albon (Abiel), one of David's thirty "mighty men" ([2 Samuel 23:31](#); [1 Chronicles 11:32](#)).

Arbatta

A region south of the Esdraelon Valley in the southwest corner of Galilee. The residents were threatened by non-Jewish forces of Ptolemais, Tyre, and Sidon ([1 Maccabees 5:15](#)). They sent for help by letter from Judas Maccabeus, and Judas sent his brother Simon with 3,000 men. They

rescued the Galileans and "led them into Judea with great rejoicing" ([1 Maccabees 5:23](#)).

Arbela

The site of a major battle when General Bacchides invaded Judea from Syria ([1 Maccabees 9:1–2](#)). The historian Josephus called it a city of Galilee and noted that the caves of Arbela in lower Galilee were made strong for defense against robbers who would attack suddenly. Today, we are not sure exactly where Arbela was located. Possible identifications include Beth-arbel in Gilead and the Galilean Khirbet Irbid overlooking the wadi el-Hamam, west of the Sea of Galilee.

Arbite

This was a title given to Paarai, a warrior among David's 30 "mighty men" ([2 Samuel 23:35](#)). The title may indicate that he was a native of Arab, a village in southern Judah ([Joshua 15:52](#)).

Arch

A curved structure, usually made of stone or brick. Arches support weight over a doorway or other open space. The capstone or keystone is the most important part of an arch and is the last stone put in place. This stone connects the two curving sides together and distributes the weight evenly through them to the foundation.

Arches were not used in ancient Israel and appear in the Bible only through mistranslation. A Hebrew word was translated "arches" throughout Ezekiel's vision of the temple ([Ezekiel 40](#)), but this word refers to porches rather than arches.

See also Architecture.

Archaeology and the Bible

The study of ancient human history through the recovery and examination of physical remains. Biblical archaeology focuses on objects and structures found in the Near East (Middle East) which relate to the Bible. These remains include buried artifacts (ancient objects), ruins, and monuments. Some of these artifacts have inscriptions (writings) in ancient languages.

Scholars need to carefully study these inscriptions to understand them. Other items include everyday objects like broken pottery, burnt wood, toys, and tools. All these pieces must be understood within the historical period from which they came.

Discoveries in Archaeology

Many significant archaeological finds have happened by accident. For example, a farmer in Syria uncovered the ancient city of Ugarit while plowing. A Bedouin searching for a lost goat discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls in a cave. In 1887, an Egyptian woman found the Amarna tablets while looking for bricks to use as fertilizer. In 1945, Egyptians hunting for bird manure near Nag Hammadi found important Gnostic manuscripts. However, accidental discoveries are no replacement for careful, systematic archaeological surveys.

Today, archaeologists carefully survey potential sites using aerial photography and electronic equipment. These methods are used to detect underground objects. Artifacts are dated based on the layer of earth they were found in and other methods, like radiocarbon dating. The goal is to create a timeline that accurately reflects the history of the artifacts and the site itself.

The Role of Archaeology in Understanding the Bible

Archaeologists and scholars treat these artifacts as real, factual evidence of past human life. Although there can be different opinions on how to interpret them, these objects are still direct witnesses to history. It is important to understand these objects from an earlier time as evidence and not manipulate them to fit personal theories about history, culture, or religion. Near Eastern archaeology helps us understand the Bible by providing objective background information.

For example, if an artifact with writing is dated to around 3000 BC, it shows that writing existed at that time. This means early authors of the Old Testament could have written down the stories credited to them. Archaeological discoveries have shown that Moses, the traditional author of the first five books of the Bible, could have written in:

- Egyptian hieroglyphics,
- Babylonian cuneiform, and
- Canaanite dialects, including Hebrew.

Any theory about the Bible that ignores such evidence is likely to be incorrect.

Preview

- **Archaeology and Daily Life**
- **Archaeology and Religion**
- **Archaeology and Warfare**
- **Archaeology and Literature**
- **Archaeology and Language**

Archaeology and Daily Life

Archaeology has revealed much about the daily life of ancient people. Excavations (digging sites) show that during the Neolithic period (late Stone Age), people lived in simple huts made of interwoven sticks. Some of these huts were decorated inside. Middle-class homes in Ur during Abram's time were elegant, even by modern standards. The ruins of palaces in places like Knossos, Persepolis, Mari, and Qantir reveal their former magnificence. Weaving is one of the oldest human crafts and was practiced even in ancient times. The techniques used to weave oriental rugs originated in Mesopotamia. Pottery, both plain and decorated, was another ancient craft.

Social Customs

Archaeology has also clarified social customs mentioned in the Bible. For example, Abram having a child with Hagar, his wife's servant, followed local customs at Nuzi and was not considered immoral. Adoption practices, like Abram's adoption of Eliezer ([Genesis 15:2-4](#)), are better understood through texts from Nuzi. These texts describe childless couples adopting a servant who would inherit their estate. These adoptees would become the firstborn, though the birth of a natural child could remove those rights. Texts from Nuzi, Ugarit, and Alalakh also explain the rights of firstborn sons and how those rights could be traded, as seen in [Genesis 25:31-34](#).

Trade

Work and trades in the biblical period have been illustrated through various archaeological finds.

For example, a type of picture called a "tableau" from Beni Hasan (made around 1900 BC) shows Semites bringing goods to Egypt, possibly as metalworkers. Other sources depict activities like:

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Brick making
- Agriculture
- Pottery making

These sources also provide information about how people dressed, with examples from Egyptian paintings from 500 years later with Semites giving gifts to the Pharaoh, showing clothing styles that remained unchanged for centuries. The Israelites, however, were forbidden from making representations of human beings or God.

Potsherds

The most common daily artifacts are potsherds (broken pieces of pottery), which were often used as writing materials. For example, the "Lachish letters," a series of military letters written from a northern outpost from 587 BC, were written on potsherds. Even in New Testament times, potsherds were still used for writing. This was because they were more durable than papyrus and more convenient than wax tablets. Pens, palettes, and ink have all been found in Egypt. The ink that was used to write the Dead Sea Scrolls has been recovered from Qumran.

Games

Archaeological finds also include games and toys from ancient times. For instance, a painting from a tomb at Beni Hasan (around 2000 BC) shows Egyptian girls playing a ball game. A relief from a temple at Thebes shows Ramses III playing checkers. Egyptian children of a later period played a game using pebbles that was perhaps an early version of backgammon. In Megiddo, an ivory gaming board with holes, presumably for pegs, was found from around 1200 BC. Children's toys from the Near East were not so different than modern ones. Toys have been found like:

- Whistles
- Balls
- Model chariots
- Animals on wheels

Adult sports like wrestling, archery, and running were also depicted in Egyptian tomb paintings.

Embalming

Embalming is a process that preserves dead bodies. The embalming of Jacob and Joseph, as described in [Genesis 50:2-3, 26](#), was a long-standing Egyptian custom. Jacob was buried in the cave of Machpelah with his ancestors. Although the site is known, it cannot be excavated because it is a sacred place for Arabs. An inscription associated with an ancient Hebrew burial site was found in 1931 on the Mount of Olives. It reads, "Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah king of Judah—do not open." This inscription dates from the time of Christ. It suggests that the tomb of King Uzziah was found during excavations in Jerusalem and that his remains were moved to another site.

Archaeologists have also shown that the stone door covering the entrance to Christ's tomb was common from around 100 BC to AD 100, which matches the Gospel accounts.

Archaeology and Religion

Archaeology has provided insights into the nature of biblical religion and worship. Long before Abram left Ur to follow the one true God, non-Jewish Mesopotamians worshiped various gods. They recognized these gods as sky gods. This background makes the Hebrew patriarchs' relationship with their God more understandable. The worship of pagan gods in portable shrines is illustrated in a relief of Ramses II, showing a divine tent in the Egyptian camp. Phoenician writings from the seventh century BC also mention a portable shrine pulled by oxen. This background supports the idea that the Israelite wilderness tabernacle was not a later invention.

Archaeology has confirmed the tradition of singers participating in worship before the Babylonian exile. For centuries, Palestinians were known for their musical abilities. Tablets from Ras Shamra in Ugarit contain religious poetry similar to the Hebrew psalms. Solomon's temple, built by Phoenician workmen, followed a plan (see [1 Kings 6](#)) similar to an eighth-century BC chapel found at

Tel Tainat in Syria. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is thought to include stones from Nehemiah's time. But, no traces of Solomon's foundations have been found in the city. Pieces of masonry from Herod's temple, destroyed in AD 70, have been found. These pieces provide valuable information about the temple's structure. Although many synagogues existed in Palestine during Christ's time, few remains have been found.

Archaeology and Warfare

Archaeology has greatly enhanced our understanding of ancient warfare, a significant biblical theme. Ancient Near Eastern people viewed war as a conflict between the gods of opposing nations. Military service was considered sacred, and soldiers were highly respected. God, as the Lord of hosts, was seen as the commander of the Hebrew army. He could command the complete destruction of a city, called "the ban," as in the case of Jericho ([Joshua 6:17, 24](#)). War followed understood rules. If a city was threatened, its inhabitants could surrender and have their lives spared, though their property would be taken. If they resisted, they risked total destruction. Warfare tactics included:

- Frontal assaults (direct attacks)
- Spies
- Ambushes
- Patrols

Sometimes battles were decided by single combat, as in the story of David and Goliath ([1 Samuel 17:38-54](#)).

Ancient armor and weapons are widely depicted in reliefs and monuments.

- A golden helmet from Ur is an outstanding example of Sumerian military gear. In contrast, smaller Hittite helmets are depicted on a tomb wall at Karnak. At first, only leaders in Israelite armies wore metal helmets (see [1 Samuel 17:38](#)). But, by the time of the Seleucid Empire, all Hebrew soldiers had bronze helmets ([1 Maccabees 6:35](#)). Roman soldiers commonly wore either leather or bronze helmets.
- The Hebrews used two types of shields: a large one for infantry and a smaller one for archers ([2 Chronicles 14:8](#)). These shields were generally made of wood and leather, though some were made of bronze.
- Coats of scale armor, such as in [Jeremiah 46:4](#), were used in the Near East from at least the fifteenth century BC, as shown by discoveries at Alalakh and Ugarit.
- Swords and spears, essential parts of Hebrew weaponry, came in various shapes and sizes. Furnaces for making swords were found at Gerar, and Bronze Age daggers have been recovered from Lachish and Megiddo.
- The compound Asiatic bow was an improvement on the simpler bows depicted in earlier times. Arrowheads dating between 1300 and 900 BC, inscribed with names, suggest the existence of companies of archers (see [Isaiah 21:17](#)).

Very little is said in the New Testament about military equipment.

Archaeology and Literature

Archaeological discoveries have provided parallels to many types of biblical literature. For example, excavators at Ras Shamra found poetic and prose tablets. These tablets had grammatical and literary forms similar to those in the Hebrew psalms. It is now clear that detailed law codes, like those in the Pentateuch, existed before Moses's time.

Fragmentary Sumerian codes from around the nineteenth century BC, such as the Law Code of Hammurabi, are similar in form and style to the Mosaic Law. The Law Code of Hammurabi explained the principles of justice in 300 sections. The code was an attempt to control society through law and order. Its style is interesting; it begins with a prologue in the poem, followed by the legal section, and ends with an epilogue in non-poetic language. This three-part pattern also appears in the book of Job, as well as in more modern writings.

The covenant structure of [Exodus 20:1-17](#) and its fuller form in Deuteronomy is similar to the structure of second-millennium BC Hittite vassal treaties from Boghazköy. The treaties were written in a standard pattern, which can also be seen in various Old Testament passages like

- [Exodus 20:1-17](#)
- [Leviticus 18:1-30](#)
- [Deuteronomy 1:1-31:30](#)
- [Jeremiah 31:31-37](#)

Genesis contains elements that are similar to Mesopotamian literary traditions. For example, the repeated phrase "these are the generations of." This phrase and the surrounding text are used as "colophons" (publication information in modern books) on Mesopotamian tablets. This phrase, along with family lists from sites like Nuzi, suggests that the short style of early Genesis is similar to Sumerian historical writing.

Hebrew wisdom literature, like Proverbs, also finds parallels in other ancient texts. For instance, the "Instruction of Amenemope," an Egyptian text, shares similarities with [Proverbs 22:17-24:22](#), though scholars debate whether one text influenced the other or if they both derive from an earlier, lost source.

The form of letters from the ancient world is used often in the Bible (for example, [2 Samuel 11](#); [1 Kings 21](#); [2 Kings 5:10, 20](#); [Ezra 4:6-7](#); [Nehemiah 2:7](#)). This form was used in Egyptian papyri, like the Zenon documents, and in Greek writings, such as Plato's letters. Plato's *Seventh Letter* from around 354 BC is similar to the letters of the apostle Paul. Plato's *Seventh Letter* also attempts to correct misunderstandings about his teaching. Paul's letters are also sometimes similar to the personal nature of some Egyptian letters, particularly Philemon.

Archaeology and Language

The recovery of ancient languages through archaeology has helped us understand the Old Testament. Many expressions in the Old Testament have been found to be originally Sumerian or Akkadian. For example, the phrase "the heavens and the earth" in [Genesis 1:1](#). In Sumerian, the expression is *an-ki*, meaning "universe." This phrase uses two opposite terms to express totality, a literary device also seen in [Revelation 22:13](#).

Ugaritic and Eblaic are both West Semitic dialects closely related to Hebrew. These dialects have provided insights into obscure Hebrew poetic language, revealing that it preserves ancient Canaanite expressions. Aramaic is another Northwest Semitic language. The study of Aramaic has also clarified the language used in certain parts of the Old Testament, such as the books of Ezra and Daniel. These were written in imperial Aramaic. The Elephantine papyri from the fifth and fourth centuries BC support the early dating of these texts.

The New Testament was written in koine, or "common" Greek, the common language of the Near East and the Roman Empire. New Testament Greek often contains underlying Semitic expressions, which, if unrecognized, can lead to mistranslations.

Significance for Biblical Studies

Archaeological discoveries have significantly expanded our knowledge of the ancient world. They have allowed us to see the people of the Bible as real historical figures. These individuals lived in times of both stress and cultural achievement. They were not legendary figures. They struggled with life's problems. They sometimes received visions of God as all-powerful and all-holy, guiding them and their nations and helping them to accomplish his purpose in history.

Archaeology demonstrates that the Hebrews should be studied within the broader context of the ancient Near East as part of a large culture that included diverse peoples like the Sumerians and Aegeans. This study must be approached objectively. We must use evidence to understand biblical events and life. While there may be occasional conflicts between archaeological interpretations and biblical evidence, these are rare and tend to diminish as more information is uncovered.

Archaeology cannot prove or disprove the spiritual truths of Scripture. But, it does validate Hebrew

history. It makes clear many previously uncertain terms and traditions in both the Old and New Testaments. In doing so, archaeology provides a solid historical background for the prophecies that lead to the life of Jesus Christ.

Archangel

A chief angel. Archangel is a title given to the angel Michael ([Jude 1:9](#)). *See* Angel.

Archelaus

The son of Herod the Great. Archelaus was governor of Idumea, Samaria, and Judea after his father ([Matthew 2:22](#)). *See* Herod, Herodian Family.

Archer, Archery

Archers used bows and arrows in both peace and war. Nomads, hunters, attackers who stole from others, and warriors ([Genesis 21:20](#); [27:3](#); [48:22](#); [Joshua 24:12](#); [Isaiah 7:24](#); [Ezekiel 39:9](#); [Hosea 1:7](#)) used archery for hunting and fighting throughout the Bible.

Over centuries of use, people improved how well a bow and arrow worked. The finest bow was the “composite bow.” Makers glued strips of animal sinew to the ends of the bow, and animal horn to the inner surface. The best of these bows could fire arrows from 274 to 366 meters 9 (300 to 400 yards). An archer needed to be a strong person to string and operate it.

While archers used bows for hunting, the weapon was most useful in war. Saul and Jonathan fought with sword and bow, and David’s army included skilled bowmen (([1 Samuel 18:4](#); [1 Chronicles 12:2](#)). The kings of Israel provided troops with bows ([2 Chronicles 17:17](#)). Israel’s enemies, including Egyptians, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, all indicate archers among their armies. Excellent images of historical archers still exist in sculpture.

Job described his physical sufferings metaphorically as God’s archers surrounding him ([Job 16:13](#)). Some Psalms refer to an archer’s bow as a metaphor for violence ([Psalms 11:2](#); [57:4](#)). Others refer to an archer’s bow as a metaphor for divine judgment ([Psalms 7:13](#); [38:2](#); [64:7](#)).

See also Armor and Weapons.

Archevites

The King James Version translation for the residents of Erech (also spelled Uruk) in southern Babylonia. The Archevites were moved to Samaria by Asnappar, the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal ([Ezra 4:9–10](#)). The Archevites were local residents. They wrote to Artaxerxes of Persia, opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem by the Jews who had returned from exile in Babylon ([Ezra 4:7–16](#)).

Archi, Archite

A tribe descended from Canaan or a member of this tribe ([Joshua 16:2](#)). This is sometimes spelled “Arkite.” Hushai, David’s loyal adviser, was an Archite ([2 Samuel 15:32](#)).

Archippus

A contemporary of Paul. The apostle encouraged Archippus to fulfill his ministry ([Colossians 4:17](#)). Paul called Archippus a “fellow soldier” ([Philemon 1:2](#)).

Architecture

The science, art, or profession of designing and building structures such as buildings and bridges. It combines construction with creativity to produce “beauty with purpose.” Architects (people who study building design) use both imagination and technical skills to create buildings that are attractive, functional, and strong. When we look at a building, monument, or tomb, we are not only seeing its structure, but also the art behind it.

The Bible mentions different types of architecture, including houses, buildings in cities, and temples. These designs were often influenced by the empires ruling over Israel at the time. To understand the architecture in Israel, it is helpful to look at the styles from these empires.

Preview

- **Sumerian Architecture**
- **Egyptian Architecture**
- **Assyrian and Hittite Architecture**
- **Greek Architecture**
- **Roman Architecture**
- **Palestinian Architecture**

Sumerian Architecture

The Sumerians were the first to develop architecture. They were a non-Semitic people who might have originally lived on Bahrain island in the Persian Gulf before moving north. From the start, they considered architecture an important art form, especially in building temples. The most famous Sumerian structure was the *ziggurat*, a tower made of multiple levels. Some connect the Sumerian ziggurat to the medieval European cathedrals, because they both appear to reach up to God. However, the Sumerians built their ziggurats to symbolize a gathering of natural, life-giving forces. The Sumerians believed their god had already come down to the temple, and the people were to meet him there.

By 2000 BC, a typical temple complex in Mesopotamia included the ziggurat, storehouses, shrines, workshops, and homes for priests. The ziggurat had three levels made of mud bricks on the inside and baked bricks on the outside. Ramps or stairs led to the upper levels, and sometimes a small shrine for a local god was placed at the top. Sumerian architects also created arches, domes, and vaults to make their buildings feel grand and spacious.

In Sumerian cities, homes varied in style. Wealthy families lived in two-story houses built around a courtyard. Some of these homes had 20 rooms, including quarters for servants. Many homes had family burial vaults in the basement, and indoor bathrooms were connected to underground drains. Sumerian architecture influenced later cultures like the:

- Akkadians
- Hittites
- Egyptians
- Greeks

Egyptian Architecture

Egyptian architecture is known for its lasting impact, and many of their structures, like temples, tombs, and pyramids, have survived. The Egyptians used huge stones from distant quarries and employed slave labor to build these structures in honor of their rulers.

The most famous examples are the pyramids, built during the Old Kingdom around 2700 to 2200 BC. The Egyptians had to use Sumerian building techniques to build their large stone monuments. For example, The Great Pyramid, which weighs about six million tons, would have been impossible to build without the Sumerian methods. The Great Pyramid is almost perfectly aligned with the true North. The huge blocks of stone are fitted so closely together that you cannot slip a piece of paper between them. The pyramids were tombs for the pharaohs who commanded them to be built, but they have become monuments to human creativity.

Egyptian temples used a “post and lintel” style, where horizontal beams rest on columns. This resulted in buildings full of columns throughout. These temples often had carvings, paintings, and hieroglyphics on their walls. The layout of temples was symmetrical, and they were designed for large ceremonies to show off the power of the rulers.

Assyrian and Hittite Architecture

Assyrian architecture was heavily influenced by Sumerian designs, particularly in temple construction. The Assyrians expanded on the Sumerian concept of ziggurats, creating massive structures like the seven-story ziggurat at Borsippa. This ziggurat had a foundation of about 83 meters (272 feet) square and stood around 49 meters (160 feet) tall. Each of the stories was smaller than the lower ones and painted in different colors to represent the planets, with the top level being a shrine for the god Nebo. Some scholars suggest that ziggurats were the inspiration for the biblical Tower of Babel mentioned in [Genesis 11](#).

Assyrian palaces, built in the eighth and seventh centuries BC, were marked large and artistic. These

royal structures were decorated with reliefs showing kings doing various activities. Stone sculptures, often depicting protective animals, were placed at the entrances to public buildings, reflecting the nature of Assyrian architecture.

Hittite buildings in Anatolia were also similar to Assyrian structures. Archaeological digs at Boghazkôy have found palaces with tall columns, long halls, and expansive rooms. These show the quality of Hittite architectural design during the Bronze Age. Hittite temples were similar to Babylonian temples. Buildings were built around an open courtyard. However, Hittite sanctuaries used porches and multiple entrances, which allowed for natural light to light the temple.

Greek Architecture

Greek architecture achieved great heights. Several factors contributed to its lasting beauty, including the climate, landscape, government, and the people themselves. The most important factor may have been the Greek people's freedom to imagine and develop designs. Their creativity still amazes us today.

The Greeks aimed to create beauty in their buildings. This goal reached its peak in the fifth century BC. During the time of Pericles, who reigned from 461 to 429 BC, the Parthenon and Propylea on the Acropolis were remodeled. The Erechtheum was also built there. Later, the temple of Hephaestus, a less elegant version of the Parthenon, and the shrine of Ares were added to Athens. Phidias, a sculptor who designed the Parthenon, created much of the fifth-century BC statues with his students. Though the Sumerians were the first to make stone statues, their work was more focused on religious purposes (representing people before their gods). For the Greeks, the goal was to create the most realistic and accurate portrayal of the human body. They studied anatomy, and eventually, they became the best sculptors in the world.

Many Greek buildings were carefully designed to suit their surroundings. For example, they built theaters on hills to create seating in tiers with a beautiful backdrop. They used marble often and placed buildings in ways that made shadows enhance their appearance. The apostle Paul saw this beauty when he visited Athens, but "he was deeply disturbed in his spirit to see that the city was full of idols" ([Acts 17:16](#)). Many of these impressive buildings, such as the Parthenon, were made to honor Greek gods. In response, Paul gave

a famous speech at the Areopagus, meaning "Mars Hill," overlooking the temples of Athens.

Roman Architecture

The Romans were excellent builders, and their work greatly influenced world architecture. Earlier cultures shaped Roman architecture. While some Egyptian influence is seen, the Greeks' sense of beauty and their use of marble had a greater impact. Another key factor was the Romans' discovery of cement, made from volcanic earth and lime, which created a strong mortar. This cement allowed them to build arches without columns, giving their structures a sense of grandeur. It also enabled them to construct multi-story buildings like the Colosseum.

Roman architects designed cities around central squares called forums, which held public buildings, temples, shops, and covered walkways. These squares often featured arches and monuments celebrating victorious emperors. The Roman style of city planning was copied throughout their empire, including in Palestine.

Water shortages in many Roman-controlled regions forced them to build aqueducts to transport water. Roman architects had to maintain a steady slope so water could flow by gravity. They built cement-lined channels on stone arches to solve this problem. The design remained consistent throughout the empire, with round arches supporting the water channels.

Palestinian Architecture

For a generation, the Israelites were tent dwellers, living in temporary camps with no need for permanent buildings. When they settled, they did not have much experience in construction. Archaeologists have found Israelite attempts to rebuild on older Canaanite foundations at sites like Shiloh, Bethel, and Debir. Their buildings were noticeably less skilled than those of the Canaanites, especially in royal cities. Before the fifth century BC, Israelite buildings were small and narrow. This was partly because they had not yet developed ways to roof larger buildings. The first arched roof in Palestine was built during the Persian period, but the conservative Judeans refused to adopt it. Arches and vaulted ceilings only became common during the Roman period, influenced by Herod the Great.

Old Testament Architecture

Cities

In Old Testament times, cities were built on hills or mounds and surrounded by walls for protection. Houses were arranged randomly, with winding paths or alleys between them. People who could not afford city life lived in nearby villages. They worked the fields and sought refuge in the city during times of danger.

A reliable water source was essential for any city, so cities were often built near springs. Some cities used cisterns or rainwater catch basins to store extra water. They also built stepped tunnels to access springs when the city was under siege.

Fortifications

For most of the Old Testament period, the Israelites used techniques from the middle Bronze Age to defend their cities. City walls, made from stone or brick, stood 7.6 to 9.1 meters (25 to 30 feet) high. Sometimes, walls were built with an artificial slope and a ditch to resist battering rams.

When Israel was ruled by kings, casemate walls were constructed. These were two parallel walls connected by cross walls, forming rooms that were filled with dirt for added strength ([Ezekiel 26:9](#)). Sometimes walls were up to 6 meters (20 feet) thick and built with overhangs to defend against attackers. The apostle Paul was once lowered from the wall of Damascus in a basket to escape ([Acts 9:25](#); [2 Corinthians 11:33](#)).

Gates

Most city walls had two gates: one for large vehicles like camel caravans and chariots, and another for pedestrians and small animals. Many gates had double doors made of wood covered with bronze ([Isaiah 45:1](#); [Nehemiah 6:1](#)). The doors were secured with horizontal bars of wood, bronze ([1 Kings 4:13](#)), or iron ([Psalm 107:16](#)) that fit into openings in the gateposts ([Judges 16:3](#)).

The gates were important for the city's defense. Roads leading to the gates were designed so that attackers would expose their unprotected side to defenders. Gates were sometimes part of large towers ([2 Chronicles 26:9](#)) with steps leading to the top for guards ([2 Kings 9:17](#)). Some gates had 90-degree turns between portals to block straight shots from enemy archers.

Houses

An above-average Israelite house had several rooms arranged around an open courtyard ([2 Samuel 17:18](#)). The main room was for the family,

while other rooms housed animals or stored goods. Walls were often made of stone, with mud filling the joints. Wealthier homes had plastered or wooden interiors, and floors were made of clay or polished stone. Roofs were flat, supported by beams, and sealed with wood or brush. An outdoor staircase led to the roof, where families sometimes built rooms, making two-story homes ([1 Kings 17:19](#)). Flat roofs provided extra living space. The law required protective barriers around roofs to prevent accidents ([Deuteronomy 22:8](#)).

Solomon's

Temple

The most important structure in Israelite architecture was King Solomon's temple. It was built on the site where Abraham nearly sacrificed his son Isaac ([Genesis 22](#)). The temple took seven and a half years to build and was renowned for its beauty and purpose. Its design was similar to the tabernacle but with double the length and width and triple the height. The walls were made of stone covered in gold ([1 Kings 6:22](#)), and gold also covered the ceilings and floors. The partition between the holy of holies and the holy place was a gold-covered cedar wall, and the entrance to the Holy of Holies had a carved olive wood door, also covered in gold.

Solomon lacked skilled builders, so he hired Phoenician craftsmen to construct the temple. It closely resembled other Phoenician structures, including an eighth-century BC Canaanite chapel excavated at Tell Tainat in Syria. There were probably columns and porches in the temple but the purpose of the two pillars named Jachin and Boaz is unclear. In Solomon's time, intricate masonry appeared in northern Israel. The Samaritan masonry, in places like Megiddo, is similar in design to Canaanite buildings. When Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 586 BC, the temple was looted and destroyed. After returning from exile, the Israelites rebuilt the temple, but it was less magnificent than Solomon's original. By the time of King Herod, who ruled from 37 to 4 BC, it needed major repairs.

The Old Testament described the majesty of the temple, but it was actually a chapel to the royal palace. After the exile in Babylon, the temple became disconnected from Israel's kings. Both Temples were small and narrow, as they could not be longer than the wooden beams they had to use to build the roof. The only way the building could grow is by building additional rooms to the outside.

New Testament Architecture

Greek and Roman styles dominated the architecture of New Testament times. Greek cities had well-planned:

- Streets
- Arches
- Theaters
- Public baths
- Temples
- Marketplaces (called agoras)

Jewish homes, however, remained small with flat roofs.

Under Roman rule, Herod the Great built many impressive structures, including:

- Aqueducts
- Palaces
- Cities (like Caesarea)

His greatest project was rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Although it took 83 years to complete, it stood in its finished form for only six years before being destroyed by Titus in AD 70. Herod's temple blended new and old styles. Its large entrance and marble columns reflected Hellenistic influences, but it was rooted in Phoenician traditions. A series of courts and porches surrounded the shrine, which had an oversized entrance. In the middle of that porch was an enormous doorway that gave access to the much smaller inner door of the shrine itself. Unfortunately, nothing remains of the temple, leaving us reliant on accounts like those from Josephus.

See City; Homes and Dwellings; Temple.

Archives

Collections of important documents or records kept for historical value or future reference.

See House of the Archives.

Arcturus

The constellation Ursa Major (the Great Bear), referred to in [Job 9:9](#) and [38:32](#) (in the King James

Version). It is mentioned in connection with the constellation Orion and the Pleiades. *See Astronomy.*

[Editor's note: Arcturus is actually a star in the constellation Boötes, which is near the constellation Ursa Major.]

Ard, Ardite

Benjamin's firstborn son Bela had nine sons ([1 Chronicles 8:1](#); [Numbers 26:40](#)). Ard, one of the nine sons, is called Benjamin's son in the Hebrew sense, meaning descendant ([Genesis 46:21](#)). He was the founder of the Ardite family, a smaller group within Benjamin's larger tribe. In the book of 1 Chronicles ([8:3](#)), Ard is called Addar. This difference in spelling is probably because of a mistake made when copying the text long ago.

Ardon

Caleb's third-born son by Azubah. Through Caleb, Ardon is a descendant of Judah ([1 Chronicles 2:18](#)).

Areli, Arelite

One of Gad's seven sons ([Genesis 46:16](#)). After the plague of Baal-peor, Moses took a census to prepare for war with the Midianites ([Numbers 25:6-18](#); [26:17](#)). Areli's descendants, called the Arelites, were counted in the census.

Areopagite

A member of the council or court of the Areopagus in Athens ([Acts 17:34](#)). *See Dionysius.*

Areopagus

A hill in Athens, Greece. It is northwest of the Acropolis and overlooks the marketplace ([Acts 17:19](#)). "Areopagus" also refers to the Athenian council or court that met there. The irregular limestone outcropping was also known as Mars Hill. Mars was the Roman counterpart of the Greek god Ares.

Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers brought Paul the Apostle before the council at the Areopagus. Paul had been reasoning with Jews and God-fearing gentiles in the Athenian synagogue and marketplace (*agora*) for several days ([Acts 17:16-21](#)).

Although Paul's was not an official trial, trials were held at the Areopagus. Socrates had faced those who accused him of deprecating the Greek gods there five centuries earlier. By Paul's day, the council of the Areopagus was responsible for considering political, educational, philosophical, and religious matters, as well as some legal proceedings.

The general tone of Paul's address does not suggest trial proceedings. He spoke as an intelligent Christian believer who was able to meet the intellectual Athenians on their own ground ([Acts 17:22-31](#)). Some remained skeptical, but his address was convincing to a few who "joined him and became believers" ([Acts 17:32-34](#)).

Aretas

1. The name of several kings of an Arabian people called the Nabateans. These people are likely descendants of Nebaioth, Ishmael's oldest son ([Genesis 25:12-16](#); [1 Chronicles 1:29](#)). According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Ishmael's descendants lived in an area called Nabatene. Nabatene ranged from the Euphrates river to the Red Sea. The capital city, Sela, was called Petra in New Testament times.
2. The Aretas of [2 Maccabees 5:8](#), before whom Jason the priest was accused, ruled about 170 BC. The Nabateans were evidently friendly toward the Maccabeans ([1 Maccabees 5:24-28](#); [9:35](#)). Josephus mentioned two other kings named Aretas. Aretas III, originally named Obodas, extended Nabatean control and occupied Damascus during his reign from 87 to 62 BC.

3. The New Testament references another Aretas. The governor of Damascus under King Aretas was guarding the city to capture the apostle Paul ([2 Corinthians 11:32-33](#)). To escape, Paul's associates let him down in a basket through a window in the city wall. That Aretas has been identified as Eneas, who took the title Aretas IV and ruled from 9 BC to AD 40. He attacked and defeated Herod Antipas over a boundary dispute and also as revenge. (Antipas had divorced Aretas's daughter in order to marry Herodias.

Argob (Person)

A person who was supposedly killed with King Pekahiah of Israel in Pekah's revolt ([2 Kings 15:25](#)). The early church father Jerome thought the name Argob (along with Arieih) referred to a place. Today, some scholars think that Argob and Arieih may have been accidentally misplaced from a list of place names ([2 Kings 15:29](#)) through transcription error.

Argob (Place)

A region in Bashan won by the Israelites when they defeated King Og at Edrei ([Numbers 21:33-35](#); [Deuteronomy 3:4](#)). Argob was located east of the Sea of Chinnereth (later called Sea of Galilee), beyond the regions of Geshur and Maacah ([Deuteronomy 3:14](#)). Moses assigned all of Bashan, including Argob, to half of Manasseh's tribe ([Deuteronomy 3:13-14](#)).

Jair of Manasseh's tribe subdued the villages of Argob and named them Havvoth-jair ("the villages of Jair"). [First Kings 4:13](#) distinguishes between Argob and the villages of Jair. The villages are said to be in Gilead, south of Argob.

[Deuteronomy 3:14](#) apparently contradicts this location. The location of the villages of Jair on the border between Argob and Gilead might be responsible for the apparent discrepancy. That border could have shifted during the three centuries between the conquests of Jair and the reign of Solomon. By then, the name Havvoth-jair could even have referred to a different set of cities.

Ariarathes

Ariarathes was king of Cappadocia in Asia Minor from 163 to 130 BC. Educated in Rome, Ariarathes used Roman ideas and became a close ally of the Romans. Because of his Roman ties, he declined a proposal to marry the sister of the Syrian king, Demetrius Soter. Syria then declared war on him and drove him from his throne.

After fleeing to Rome in 158 BC, Ariarathes was restored to the throne of Cappadocia. In response to Simon Maccabeus, the Romans wrote to Ariarathes and several other rulers in 139 BC to guide these rulers' treatment of the Jews. The Roman letter entreats rulers to be kind to the Jews and "do them no harm, nor fight against them" ([1 Maccabees 15:16–19, 22](#)).

Aridai

One of Haman's ten sons, who was killed with his father when Esther exposed Haman's plot to destroy the Jews ([Esther 9:7–10](#)).

Aridatha

One of Haman's ten sons, who was killed along with his father when Esther exposed Haman's plot to destroy the Jews ([Esther 9:7–10](#)).

Arieh

A person mentioned with Argob in [2 Kings 15:25](#) (King James Version, New International Version, New Living Translation).

Ariel (Person)

1. Person or thing who was overcome in a heroic deed by Benaiah, chief of David's bodyguard ([2 Samuel 23:20](#); [1 Chronicles 11:22](#)). It is not clear that the Hebrew word ariel is a proper name in these passages. Benaiah may have killed two "lionlike men" of Moab (in the King James Version) or destroyed two Moabite altar hearths.

2. Name of one of the men Ezra sent to ask Iddo for Levitical priests to go with the Jewish exiles returning to Jerusalem from Babylon ([Ezra 8:16](#)).

Ariel (Place)

The name Ariel is a poetic name for Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah used the name in a "woe" oracle warning people to turn from their wrongdoing ([Isaiah 29:1–2, 7](#)).

In the oracle, Isaiah called Jerusalem "Ariel" (which means "hearth of God"). Naming one part of a whole thing for dramatic effect is a poetic device called a "synecdoche." Jerusalem is the location of the altar of burnt offering, but Isaiah refers to the entire city as an altar.

In a dramatic play on words, Isaiah pronounced a judgment of God on Jerusalem. The city of the hearth of God would face destruction from enemies and become an ariel, a pagan altar hearth.

Arimathea

The hometown of the Joseph who obtained Jesus's crucified body and buried it in his own tomb ([Matthew 27:57](#); [Mark 15:43](#); [John 19:38](#)). The town's location is unknown. It may be the same as the hill town of Ramathaim-zophim, the prophet Samuel's home ([1 Samuel 1:1](#)), about 8 miles (12.9 kilometers) northwest of Jerusalem. Luke described the place as a Jewish town, and Joseph was himself a Jewish official ([Luke 23:50](#)).

Arioch

1. Name of the King of Ellasar. With three other kings, Arioch captured five cities and took a number of prisoners, including Abraham's nephew Lot ([Genesis 14:1–16](#)).
2. Nebuchadnezzar's captain of the guard (in the King James Version) or chief executioner. Arioch took Daniel to the Babylonian king to interpret his dream ([Daniel 2:14–25](#)).

Arisai

One of Haman's ten sons, who was killed with his father when Esther exposed Haman's plot to destroy the Jews ([Esther 9:7-10](#)).

Aristarchus

A companion of the apostle Paul. Aristarchus was a Macedonian from Thessalonica, possibly of Jewish ancestry. He is first mentioned as one of those seized by an angry mob in Ephesus ([Acts 19:29](#)).

Later, Aristarchus went with Paul on the return from his third missionary journey ([Acts 20:4](#)). He also went to Rome with Paul to face Caesar ([Acts 27:1-2](#)).

Paul described Aristarchus as a coworker ([Philemon 1:24](#)) and fellow prisoner. Paul received great comfort from Aristarchus' friendship ([Colossians 4:10-11](#)). Tradition says that Roman Emperor Nero killed Aristarchus in Rome as a martyr.

Aristobulus

A name that comes from the Greek language. It means "best advising." In the times between the Old and New Testaments, ruling families in Palestine used this name.

1. Jewish priest in Alexandria (Egypt). Aristobulus taught the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy who ruled from 180 to 146 BC. The Jews of Judea sent a letter to Aristobulus ([2 Maccabees 1:10](#)).
2. Aristobulus I was the first king of the Maccabean (also called Hasmonean) family. *See* Hasmonean.
3. Aristobulus II was the son of Alexander Janneus (brother of Aristobulus I) and Salome Alexandra. In 67 BC, Aristobulus II defeated his older brother, Hyrcanus II, and became king. *See* Hasmonean.

4. Aristobulus III was the grandson of Hyrcanus II and brother of Mariamne, wife of Herod the Great. Herod named Aristobulus high priest at the age of 17. When his acceptance as a Hasmonean by the people threatened Herod, Herod responded by having Aristobulus III drowned in 35 BC. *See* Hasmonean.
5. The younger of the two sons of Herod the Great and Mariamne. Aristobulus and Alexander became threats to Herod after he executed their mother in 29 BC. In 12 BC, the two brothers were charged with attempting to poison their father in a trial before Caesar. The brothers were acquitted and reconciled to their father. Aristobulus' children were Herod, king of Chalcis, Herod Agrippa I of Judea, Aristobulus (see #6 below), and Herodias, wife of Herod Antipas. Later, Herod the Great ordered both Aristobulus and Alexander strangled at Sebaste in 7 BC. *See* Herod, Herodian Family.
6. The son of Aristobulus (#5 above) and Bernice. Jewish historian Josephus mentions him as part of a plot against his brother Herod Agrippa. Aristobulus opposed a plan by Petronius, the governor of Syria, to install a statue of the Roman emperor Caligula in the temple in Jerusalem in AD 40.
7. Paul greeted the family or household of a person named Aristobulus in his letter to the Romans ([Romans 16:10](#)).

Ark of the Covenant

The most important piece of furniture in the wilderness tabernacle (the tent-sanctuary) that God instructed Moses to build ([Exodus 25:10-22](#)). The Hebrew word for ark can also mean "chest" ([2 Kings 12:9-10](#)) or "coffin" ([Genesis 50:26](#)). This is not the same word used for Noah's ark.

Description of the Ark

Moses told Bezalel to make a special box called the ark. It was made of acacia wood and covered with gold inside and out ([Exodus 31:1-5](#); [37:1-9](#)). The chest measured about 45 by 27 by 27 inches (or 114 by 69 by 69 centimeters). The ark had rings on its sides. People could put poles through these rings to carry it.

The ark was designed to hold the two tablets of the covenant given to Moses ([Exodus 25:16](#)). Because the tablets were also called the "testimony," the ark was sometimes referred to as the "ark of the testimony." Inside the ark was also placed a pot of manna, the miraculous food from God ([Exodus 16:33](#)), and Aaron's rod that had budded ([Numbers 17:10](#); [Hebrews 9:4](#)).

The lid of the ark was called the "mercy seat" or "place of mercy" ([Exodus 25:17](#)). This was a gold slab that covered the top of the ark and had its own significance. Each year, the high priest would atone for the people of Israel by sprinkling the mercy seat with the blood of bulls and goats ([Leviticus 16:2-16](#)). The term "mercy seat" is related to the Hebrew word for "atone." The lid was called a "seat" because the Lord was believed to sit between two cherubim (winged creatures) positioned on opposite ends of the mercy seat ([Psalm 99:1](#)). The Lord spoke to Moses from between the cherubim ([Numbers 7:89](#)).

The ark was sometimes simply called "the ark" ([Exodus 37:1](#); [Numbers 3:31](#)). Other times, it was called the "ark of the covenant" ([Numbers 4:5](#); [Joshua 4:16](#)). The Israelites were reminded that the ark's holiness was not magical but came from the holy law of God contained within it. The name "ark of the testimony" also reminded them of their need to follow the commands given in God's covenant.

These commands were given by the God who made the covenant (or promise) with them. He was the same God who rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt and promised to be their ever-present God. ([Exodus 6:6-7](#)). So, the ark was usually called the "ark of the covenant." Sometimes that name was "the ark of the covenant of the LORD" ([1 Chronicles 28:18](#)).

At times, the ark was called "the ark of God." It was a visible sign that the invisible God was present among the Israelites. The ark had a powerful and often deadly holiness. For example, the people of Beth-shemesh were severely punished for not treating the ark well enough ([1 Samuel 6:19](#)).

Similarly, Uzzah was killed by the Lord when he touched the ark to keep it from falling off a cart ([2 Samuel 6:6-9](#)). The ark was dangerous to touch because it symbolized God's presence. Because of this, God commanded that the ark be placed in the holy of holies, separated from the rest of the tabernacle (and later the temple) by a heavy veil ([Exodus 26:31-33](#); [Hebrews 9:3-5](#)). No sinful person could look on the glory of God above the ark and live ([Leviticus 16:2](#)).

History

When the Israelites journeyed from Mount Sinai to Canaan, the ark accompanied them through the desert. It served as a constant reminder of God's holy presence. During this journey, the ark was described almost as if it had personal features ([Numbers 10:33-36](#)). The detailed instructions for wrapping and carrying the ark ([Numbers 4](#)) showed the close relationship between God and the ark, giving it a sense of being "alive."

The ark played a significant role during the desert journey. When a group of Israelites tried to invade Canaan on their own, without the ark or Moses, they were defeated by their enemies ([Numbers 14:44-45](#)). The ark had an important role in the following events:

- Crossing the Jordan River ([Joshua 3:13-17](#); [4:9-10](#))
- The conquest of Jericho ([Joshua 6:6-11](#))
- The life of the Israelites in their new land ([Joshua 8:33](#); [Judges 20:27](#))

The Israelites did not use the ark in ways that were superstitious or magical. They did not treat it like a lucky object or something with special powers.

Instead, the ark was important for two main reasons:

1. It held God's laws (called the "testimony").
2. It showed that God was with them.

In contrast, by the time of Eli and his sons, at the end of the period when judges ruled Israel, the ark's role had changed. The Israelites still respected the ark, but they misunderstood its purpose. They thought it was a magic object that would always bring them success or victory. When the Israelites lost a battle against the Philistines, they brought the ark to the battlefield hoping it

would secure victory ([1 Samuel 4:1–10](#)). However, this misuse led to the ark being captured by the Philistines ([1 Samuel 4:11](#)) and caused defeat and death among the Israelites, including the high priest Eli's family ([1 Samuel 4:13–22](#)).

Even though the Israelites misused the ark, God still protected its honor. When the Philistines put the ark in the temple of their god Dagon, funny things happened ([1 Samuel 5–6](#)). This story shows two important things:

1. God's people should not treat the ark like a magic object.
2. God's enemies cannot make fun of the ark.

Samuel, a great reformer and prophet, did not immediately try and make the ark important again after its return to Israel. He left it in Kiriath-jearim until Israel returned to obedience ([1 Samuel 6:21; 7:2](#)). Samuel first had to make Israel obey God's covenant before the ark was useful. David, who was king after Saul, worked to bring the ark back to an important place in the life of Israel ([2 Samuel 6:1–17](#)).

While the ark would have been an advantage for David's new capital, Jerusalem, [Psalm 132](#) reveals David's deep concern for the ark and God's honor. In a moment of great religious joy and enthusiasm, David prayed directly to God, saying, "Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength" ([Psalm 132:8](#)). David saw the ark as "restless" because Israel was not at rest. Canaan was not completely conquered. Although some peace was achieved during Joshua's time ([Joshua 21:43–45](#)), there was still work to be done. By conquering Jebus (Jerusalem), David nearly completed the conquest of the promised land.

With the land finally at rest, the Lord could now "dwell" in his temple, the appropriate resting place for the ark. Despite David's wish to build a temple for the ark, God did not allow him to do so ([2 Samuel 7:1–17](#)). Instead, he was told that his son Solomon would build a temple. Solomon constructed a great temple, placing the ark in the most holy part, behind the curtains ([1 Kings 8:1–11](#)).

Ark's Cover

A gold slab, also known as the mercy seat, that covered the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle and temple.

See Mercy Seat.

Arkite

Name of a clan descended from Ham's son Canaan ([Genesis 10:17](#); [1 Chronicles 1:15](#)). The Arkites were probably residents of Arqa, a Phoenician town north of Tripolis in Syria.

According to an early inscription, Arqa was captured by the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser III in 738 BC. Another branch of the tribe may have settled near Ataroth, a town on the border between Ephraim and Benjamin ([Joshua 16:2](#)).

See also Archi, Archite.

Armageddon

Hebrew word in [Revelation 16:16](#) meaning "Mount Megiddo." It is generally thought that the term refers to the town of Megiddo. Megiddo is located between the western coastal area and the broad plain of Jezreel in northern Palestine.

The area of Megiddo was important commercially and militarily. Many important battles in Israel's history took place in Megiddo:

- There the Lord routed Sisera before the armies of Deborah and Barak ([Judges 4–5](#)).
- Gideon was victorious over the Midianites and Amalekites ([Judges 6–7](#)).
- King Saul and his army were defeated by the Philistines ([1 Samuel 31](#)).
- King Josiah was slain in battle by the Egyptian army of Pharaoh Neco ([2 Kings 23:29](#)).

Because of that long history, the name Armageddon has become symbolic of a battlefield.

Armageddon in the Book of Revelation

[Revelation 15](#) and [16](#) describe seven angels who pour out seven bowls of the wrath of God upon the earth. The sixth angel pours out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates, and its waters are dried up ([Revelation 16:12-16](#)). This action prepares the way for the coming of the "kings of the East."

Three demonic spirits go forth to cause the kings of the whole world to gather for a battle on the great day of God the Almighty ([Revelation 16:13-14](#)). Their gathering takes place at Armageddon ([Revelation 16:16](#)). *See* Revelation, Book of.

Armenia

The King James Version translation of Ararat in [2 Kings 19:37](#) and [Isaiah 37:38](#). Armenia is mentioned as the place where Sennacherib's two sons fled after murdering their father.

See Ararat.

Armenian Gospel of the Infancy

The Armenian Gospel of the Infancy is a legendary account of the early years of the life of Jesus Christ. It is one of many apocryphal gospels (ancient writings about Jesus not included in the Bible) that try to fill in details missing from the four New Testament Gospels. This book was probably first written in Syriac and later translated into Armenian. Around AD 590, followers of Nestorius, a fifth-century Christian leader whose teachings spread widely in the East, reportedly brought a story about Jesus's childhood to Armenia. However, that story was not the same as the Armenian Gospel known today.

Sources for the Armenian Gospel included two books containing legendary material about Christ's infancy: the Protevangelium of James and the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. The Armenian version expands these stories greatly, adding many new details about the life of Jesus.

For example, in one story, Joseph looks for a midwife and meets Eve, who comes to see the promise fulfilled that one of her descendants would bring salvation ([Genesis 3:15](#)). Later, the magi bring a document said to be the testament Adam gave to his son Seth. In another story, someone accuses Jesus of causing a child's death, but the

child comes back to life, proving Jesus was innocent.

See also Apocrypha.

Armoni

One of King Saul's two sons by his concubine Rizpah. David handed Armoni, along with six more of Saul's sons, over to the Gibeonites. Armoni and his brothers were killed to avenge Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites ([2 Samuel 21:1, 8-9](#)).

Armor and Weapons

The location of Palestine at the crossroads of three continents made it very important in ancient times, despite its small size. It was surrounded by powerful nations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Hittites of Anatolia. This land was often the target of these nations' ambitions. The development of different weapons, defenses, and tactics influenced each other. When one side created a new tactic, the other side responded with a countertactic.

There are three main parts of warfare:

- movement
- weapons
- protection

Weapons alone rarely decided battles, especially when both sides were equal. Success in battles often depended on how well strategies and tactics were used. The leadership of the commander and the skill of the soldiers were also very important in many battles mentioned in the Bible.

Attack Weapons

A military commander's armory in ancient times included many offensive weapons for different ranges. For long-range attacks, they used bows and slings. For medium-range attacks, they used javelins and spears. For short-range attacks, they used swords, axes, and maces.

Bow

Early bows were made from one piece of seasoned wood. No single type of wood could be light, tough, and elastic enough. Over time, people started combining different materials like wood, animal

horn, tendons, sinews, and glue to make better bows. These composite bows were very important because they were light, strong, and elastic. A double-convex shape gave them more range and power.

Bowstrings were made from bindweed, natural cord, hide, or intestines of oxen or camels. Stringing a bow by hand ([2 Kings 13:16](#)) often required bending it with the foot, which needed a lot of strength (compare [2 Samuel 22:35](#); [Jeremiah 51:3](#)). This is why archers were called "bow treaders" or "those who tread a bow."

The shape of arrowheads changed based on enemy defenses. In the late Bronze Age, arrowheads were usually made of bronze. They were thick in the middle and tapered to a spine to penetrate the armor used at that time. The arrow shafts were usually made from reed, which was both strong and flexible.

Sling

The sling, originally used by shepherds to protect their flocks (see [1 Samuel 17:40](#)), became an important weapon of war. Its main advantage was its simple construction. Making a sling required little skill, and the stones used as projectiles were easy to find. A trained slinger could hurl a stone up to 600 feet or 183 meters. The sling was very useful for attacking fortified cities because it could fire at a high angle up steep slopes. However, it took a lot of training to use it accurately (see [Judges 20:16](#)).

A sling was usually made from two leather straps with a pocket for holding the stone. When the straps were pulled tight, the pocket became a bag. The slinger held the bag in one hand and the ends of the straps in the other hand. After swinging the sling around his head to build momentum, he released one end of the straps to launch the stone. Lead pellets and smooth stones were used as projectiles, carried in a bag, or placed near the slinger's feet.

The sling's importance as a long-range weapon is shown in the story of David and Goliath (see [Samuel 17:40-51](#)). The Philistines had many advanced weapons, but they did not use the bow or sling. They relied on medium-range weapons like the javelin and short-range weapons like the sword (see [1 Samuel 17:4-7, 45, 51](#)). David's use of the sling gave him a range advantage over Goliath's superior weapons and armor ([1 Samuel 17:48-49](#)).

Javelin and Spear

Two medium-distance weapons were the javelin and the spear. They looked similar but differed in length and use. The javelin was lighter and shorter, designed for throwing like a large arrow. Sumerian soldiers who drove chariots (war vehicles pulled by horses) in the third millennium BC carried several javelins. A javelin is a light spear thrown by hand. The soldiers kept these javelins in a container called a quiver on their chariots. Javelin heads were made to penetrate armor and often had sharp hooks or barbs, making them hard and painful to remove from a wound.

The spear looked like a javelin but was larger and heavier. It was mainly used for thrusting (see [Numbers 25:7-8](#)). Ancient military monuments show that the spear was well-developed. On the Egyptian hunter's slate palette and on a stele from Warka from around 3000 BC, the warrior's weapon is a long spear. Throughout the third millennium BC, the spear was common for heavy-armed infantry and effective for chariot and infantry charges. Excavations show that the spear was also widely used by seminomadic tribes who moved into Palestine during the middle Bronze Age.

In ancient times, spears often had a metal tip attached to the bottom of the shaft. This allowed the spear to be stuck upright in the ground when not in use. This feature lasted into later periods and is mentioned in the Bible. For example, Saul's spear was stuck in the ground by his head while he slept ([1 Samuel 26:7](#)). Sometimes, the metal tip was also used as a weapon. This is shown in the story of Asahel's death ([2 Samuel 2:23](#)).

Sword

One of the earliest objects made of iron was the sword. Swords were made for stabbing or striking. The stabbing sword had a long, straight blade that tapered to a point. Its edges were sharp, so it could also cut. The striking sword had one sharp edge and a thick, blunt edge. It was often curved like a sickle, with the outer edge sharpened. The earliest sickle sword appeared in the late third millennium BC. Both the handle and blade were made from a single piece of metal. In the middle Bronze Age, the curved striking sword was like an ax, with a long handle and short blade.

This type of sword disappeared in the late Bronze Age because it was not effective against helmets and armor. A new design with a curved blade as long as or longer than the handle replaced it. This

new sword was good for chariot fighting and against unarmored enemies. This explains why the Bible says Joshua struck the Canaanites with "the edge of the sword" (for example, [Joshua 8:24; 10:28-39](#)). That expression would be inappropriate to describe an attack from a short, straight, narrow sword that is thrust into the enemy. A fine curved sword was found in Gezer, dating to the 14th century BC, and another is shown in a 13th-century BC ivory carving from Megiddo.

Advances in iron forging also improved the straight sword. The Sea Peoples, including the Philistines, specialized in short-range weapons. By the 13th century BC, they made the straight blade more effective than the curved sword.

By Saul's time, the Philistines had strong cities and were the dominant military power. Their strength came from chariots and well-armed infantry. They controlled iron forging and did not let the Israelites make their own weapons (compare [1 Samuel 13:19-22](#)). Israel could not challenge the Philistines until this changed.

Mace and Ax

Before hard metal was forged, the mace and the ax were used for hand-to-hand fighting. They had a short wooden handle with a heavy head made of stone or metal. These weapons were swung like hammers. It was important to attach the head securely to the handle to prevent it from flying off or breaking. The handle was wider at the grip and tapered towards the head to prevent slipping. These weapons were either carried in the hand or attached to the wrist with a loop. The mace was used for smashing, while the ax was used for cutting.

The mace was a very old weapon. Ancient symbols which meant *to fight* show hands holding a mace and a shield. From 3500 to 2500 BC, the mace was the main weapon for personal combat. Since helmets were not yet used, the mace's striking power was very effective. Even after the mace stopped being used in combat, it remained a symbol of the king's or god's authority (compare [Psalm 2:9](#)).

Making a good ax required solving complex technical problems. The blade needed to be securely fixed to the handle. The cutting ax had a short blade and wide edge, good for fighting unarmored enemies and tearing down city walls, as seen in a 23rd century BC painting from Saqqarah.

However, it was not effective against armor. For better penetration, the piercing ax had a long, narrow blade with a sharp edge.

Defensive Protection

Without personal protection for individual soldiers on the battlefield, an army's movement and firepower could be greatly weakened.

Shield

The shield was one of the oldest forms of protection, meant to create a barrier between a soldier's body and an enemy's weapon. During the time of the judges and early Israelite kings, high-ranking individuals were often protected by a very large shield. This shield was carried by a special person called a shield bearer, who constantly stayed by the unprotected right side of the warrior he was assigned to guard (compare [Judges 9:54; 1 Samuel 14:1; 17:7; 2 Samuel 18:15](#)). The right side was vulnerable because the soldier carried his weapons in his right hand and held the shield in his left hand. So, the shield bearer stood by the warrior's right side to protect him ([1 Samuel 17:41](#); compare [Psalm 16:8](#)). In that time, shields were usually anointed as part of the process of preparing an Israelite warrior and his weapons for battle (compare [2 Samuel 1:21](#)).

Armor

Personal armor protected a combatant's body from injury while allowing his hands to be free for using weapons. The earliest type of body armor was like a long shield. It was a full-length tunic made from leather or tough fibers. This armor was easy to make, light enough to allow full movement, and protected the chest, abdomen, back, thighs, and legs. With this armor, a soldier only needed a small shield to protect his arms and face.

During the late Bronze Age, the coat of mail was developed. This armor was made from hundreds of small metal pieces that overlapped like fish scales and were sewn onto a cloth or leather tunic. Records from Nuzi show that making one coat required between 400 to 600 large scales and several hundred smaller scales. Smaller scales and narrower rows were used in areas needing more flexibility, like the throat and neck. This coat was flexible enough to move freely, and the metal scales provided much better protection than leather or fiber alone.

Helmet

Since the head was the most vulnerable part of a soldier in combat, the need for protective helmets dates back to the end of the fourth millennium BC.

Bronze helmets were worn by both Goliath and Saul ([1 Samuel 17:5, 38](#)). While helmets were common among heavily armed infantry in foreign armies for centuries, they were not widely used by soldiers in the Israelite army during the period of Israel's united kingdom. However, King Uzziah introduced helmets as part of military reforms in the southern kingdom of Judah in the ninth century BC ([2 Chronicles 26:14](#)).

See also Warfare.

Armor Bearer

A person who carried the protective gear (armor) and weapons of a warrior.

See Armor and Weapons.

Armory

A place where weapons are stored ([Jeremiah 50:25](#)).

See Armor and Weapons.

Army

An army is a large organized group of soldiers trained to fight in wars, especially on land.

See Warfare.

Arnan

Rephaiah's son and Obadiah's father, a descendant of David through Zerubbabel ([1 Chronicles 3:21](#)).

Arni

An ancestor of Jesus according to Luke's list of Jesus's ancestors ([Luke 3:33](#)). Arni is also called Ram in [Ruth 4:19](#) and [1 Chronicles 2:9-10](#).

Arnon

A river in the area east of the Jordan River. The Arnon is known today as Wadi el-Mojib. The river runs from east to west through a canyon with walls 457 meters (1,500 feet) high into the Dead Sea.

At the time of the Israelite conquest of Canaan, the gorge served as a natural border between Moab to the south and the Ammonite kingdoms to the north ([Numbers 21:13-15](#)).

After the division of the land under Joshua, the river Arnon became the southern boundary of Reuben's territory ([Deuteronomy 3:12, 16](#); [Joshua 13:16](#)).

Arod, Arodi, Arodite

Arod was Gad's sixth son and the founder of the Arodite family ([Numbers 26:17](#)). He is called Arodi in the list of those who went to Egypt with Jacob ([Genesis 46:16](#)).

Aroer

1. A Transjordanian (east of the Jordan River) city existing from Moses's time until the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Aroer was one of the cities that Israel conquered from Sihon the Amorite and Og the Bashanite. Aroer was on the southern border of the area assigned to the tribes of Gad and Reuben and to half of Manasseh's tribe ([Joshua 13:9](#)). It was located on the northern rim of the large Arnon Canyon ([Deuteronomy 2:36](#); [3:12](#); [4:48](#); [Joshua 13:9](#)). Aroer was likely rebuilt after Israel destroyed it (compare [Joshua 12:2](#); [Numbers 32:34](#)). Aroer was the hub city for a number of villages ([Judges 11:26](#)). It was the city from which the census began under King David ([2 Samuel 24:5](#)). The Moabites gained control of it during the later monarchy and kept it until the time of Jeremiah ([Jeremiah 48:19](#)). King Hazael of Damascus captured Aroer, assuring Syrian control of Transjordan ([2 Kings 10:33](#)). Aroer has been identified with a mound beside the village 'Ara'ir. This location is about 4.8 kilometers (three miles) southeast of Dibon on the east side of the ancient north-south Transjordan highway.
2. A city assigned to Gad's tribe ([Joshua 13:25](#)), mentioned as a point of reference in Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites ([Judges 11:33](#)). This Aroer has been tentatively placed in the area northwest of Amman and east of Rabbah.

3. A city in the Negev Desert area of Judah. Aroer was one of the villages receiving spoil taken in David's victory over the Amalekites ([1 Samuel 30:28](#)). Two of David's "mighty men" were sons of Hotham the Aroerite ([1 Chronicles 11:44](#)). This Aroer has been identified with Khirbet 'Ar'areh, located about 12 miles (19 kilometers) southeast of Beersheba.
4. A city near Damascus ([Isaiah 17:2](#)). The Hebrew text reads "the cities of Aroer," but the Septuagint (ancient Greek Old Testament) has "her cities forever" (a reading adopted by the Revised Standard Version).

Aroerite

A resident of Aroer. The Aroerite Hotham, father of two of David's "mighty men," was a native of Aroer ([1 Chronicles 11:44](#)). *See* Aroer #3.

Aromatic Cane

AROMATIC CANE

A sweet-smelling plant used by the Israelites as a perfume ([Song of Solomon 4:14](#)). It was also used as one of the ingredients in the holy anointing oil ([Exodus 30:23](#)). It may have come from a type of reed that grows in wet, tropical areas, possibly imported from distant lands. The exact plant is uncertain, but some scholars think it may refer to calamus or lemongrass.

See Calamus, Cane.

Arpachshad

Another spelling for Arphaxad.

See Arphaxad.

Arpad

A city in northern Syria. Arpad was overrun twice by the Assyrians:

- In 740 BC by Tiglath-pileser III
- In 720 BC by Sargon II

The Assyrians used Arpad and Hamath as examples of the inability of any gods, including Israel's, to protect cities against Assyria's attacks ([2 Kings 18:34](#); [19:13](#); [Isaiah 10:9](#); [36:19](#); [37:13](#)). Arpad and Hamath are also mentioned in a later prophecy against the Syrian city of Damascus ([Jeremiah 49:23](#)).

Arpad has been identified as modern Tell Erfad, north of Aleppo.

Arphaxad

Shem's son and Noah's grandson. Arphaxad's descendants were probably the Chaldeans ([Genesis 10:22-24](#); [11:10-13](#); [1 Chronicles 1:17-18, 24](#); [Luke 3:36](#)).

Arphaxad was born two years after the flood when his father was one hundred years old ([Genesis 11:10](#)). He was the grandfather of Eber, whom some believe was ancestor of the Hebrews ([1 Chronicles 1:17-25](#); [Luke 3:35-36](#)).

Arrow

A thin, straight stick with a sharp tip, designed to be shot from a bow. Arrows are often used for hunting or warfare.

See Armor and Weapons.

Arsaces

A title shared by Parthian rulers beginning with Arsaces I, founder of the kingdom (possibly in 250 BC). The Parthian kingdom under Arsaces VI (Mithridates I) grew to include Media and Persia among other nations.

This growth brought the Parthians close to Seleucid territory. Syrian king Demetrius Nicator retaliated in 141 BC by invading the kingdom of Arsaces VI, an event recorded in the Apocrypha ([1 Maccabees 14:1-3](#)). Arsaces was one of the kings advised by the Roman consul not to harm the Jews ([1 Maccabees 15:15-22](#)).

Artaxerxes

Name of three kings of the Persian Empire.

1. Artaxerxes I was king from 465 to 424 BC. He was known as Macrocheir or Longimanus, son and successor of Xerxes I, who was king from 486 to 465 BC. Xerxes I was the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther and [Ezra 4:6](#).

A few years after the succession of Artaxerxes I, the Greeks urged Egypt to revolt against Persia. Only in 454 BC was that movement crushed along with other dissension in the Persian Empire. By 449 BC, the treaty of Callias brought peace between the Greeks and Persians. Artaxerxes had gained full control over his empire, and a period of peace resulted.

Artaxerxes I stopped the rebuilding of Jerusalem for a short time ([Ezra 4:7-23](#)). He also commissioned Ezra to visit the city as secretary of state of Jewish affairs in 458 BC ([Ezra 7:8, 11-26](#)). In 445 BC, Nehemiah went to Jerusalem as civil governor in the 20th year of Artaxerxes I ([Nehemiah 1:1](#); [2:1](#)).

Reading [Ezra 7:7](#) as "thirty-seventh" instead of "seventh," made some scholars question if Artaxerxes II was the Persian King who interacted with Nehemiah. But the Elephantine papyri show that Sanballat, governor of Samaria, was quite advanced in years in 408 BC. This was shortly before the death of Darius II, who ruled from 423 to 405 BC. Sanballat's opposition to Nehemiah must have occurred much earlier. The dates of Ezra and Nehemiah thus fall within the lifetime of Artaxerxes I.

Artaxerxes I was notable for his kindness toward the Jews in Persia, after establishing clear procedures. His support for the work of Ezra and Nehemiah is evident from their writings.

See also Ahasuerus; Ezra, Book of; Nehemiah, Book of; Esther, Book of.

2. Artaxerxes II Mnemon was the grandson of Artaxerxes I and the son of Darius II. He was king from 404 to 359 BC. His reign was a time of unrest in the Persian Empire, one result of which was the loss of Egypt about 401 BC. He built several impressive buildings and enlarged the palace at Susa.
3. Artaxerxes III Ochus was the son and successor of Artaxerxes II. He was king from 358 to 338 BC). He brought peace to the empire by smart diplomacy, but he was assassinated. Neither he nor his father is mentioned in the Old Testament.

See also Persia, Persians.

Artemas

Christian coworker with the apostle Paul. Paul considered Artemas as a replacement for Titus on the island of Crete ([Titus 3:12](#)). Later tradition describes Artemas as bishop of Lystra.

Artemis

The Greek goddess of the moon, wild animals, and hunting. The cult of Artemis at Ephesus, where she is known as Diana by the Romans ([Acts 19:23-41](#)), regarded her especially as a fertility goddess.

See also Diana.

Artificer

An artificer is a skilled craftsman or someone who makes things with their hands. The King James Version uses "artificer" in [Genesis 4:22](#); [1 Chronicles 29:5](#); [2 Chronicles 34:11](#); and [Isaiah 3:3](#).

See Work.

Artisan

Skilled craftsman working in the major mediums of wood, stone, metals, gems, and clay. The artisan guild was significant in the middle class of Hebrew

society during the period of the monarchy. *See* Work.

Arubboth

A town that served as headquarters for one of King Solomon's 12 administrative districts ([1 Kings 4:10](#)). Arubboth was probably in Manasseh's tribal territory, about 14.5 kilometers (nine miles) north of Samaria, at the site of modern 'Aarabeh.

Arumah

The city where Gideon's son Abimelech lived after he was driven out of Shechem by those who lived there ([Judges 9:1, 22-25, 31, 41](#)). It may have been called Rumah in [2 Kings 23:36](#).

Arvad, Arvadite

A small, fortified island about 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) off the coast of Syria (ancient Phoenicia). It is about 48 kilometers (30 miles) north of Tripolis. Arvad developed a large trading and fighting fleet (a group of ships). A description of the naval power of Tyre refers to the fame of Arvadite sailors ([Ezra 27:8, 11](#)).

Egyptian records document Arvad's fall to Thutmose III about 1472 BC. Assyrian records point to the importance of Arvad and its recurrent conquest by foreign powers from the 11th to the 7th centuries BC.

Arvad was later known as Aradus or Arados, and is referred to by that name in [1 Maccabees 15:23](#). During the Persian and Hellenistic periods it was an important Mediterranean seaport, only to decline again. The Canaanite tribe of Arvadites possibly had an ethnic connection with the island Arvad ([Genesis 10:18](#); [1 Chronicles 1:16](#)). Arwad is the modern-day name for the island.

Arza

Arza was in charge of the palace in Tirzah, a city in the northern kingdom of Israel. He worked for King Elah, who ruled over the northern part of Israel. One day, King Elah was drinking alcohol and became drunk in Arza's house. While the king was

there, a man named Zimri killed him. Zimri then declared himself king ([1 Kings 16:9-10](#)).

Asa

1. The third king of the southern kingdom of Judah from 910 to 869 BC, after Solomon's Empire split into independent kingdoms. Solomon's son Rehoboam, Asa's grandfather, had neither Solomon's wisdom nor his insight. Rehoboam did not use diplomacy to avoid rising popular resentment against Solomon's policies. In fact, Rehoboam actively anticipated the resentment. Asa came to the throne just after his father, Abijam (or Abijah), who reigned briefly from 913 to 910 BC. Asa inherited a weakened kingdom. He entered into an unstable political arena shaken by the collapse of the great world empires of old Babylonia to the north. Mesopotamia in the east and Egypt in the southwest had also collapsed. The emerging power of Assyria wasn't firmly established until the mid-ninth century BC. Smaller Palestinian states (Israel, Judah, Syria, the Arameans, and Phoenicians, and the peoples of Moab and Edom) were free to push among themselves until then. Rival states had similarities, especially Judah and Israel. At the same time, these areas were divided by deep differences and intense self-interest. Borders were constantly disputed. Boundaries were never fully settled but seldom contested in all-out bloody conflict. Shifting alliances used threats, taking advantages, bribes, payment of tribute, marriages purchased for power, and other cunning political arts. Since all were playing the same game, an uncertain balance resulted. At the beginning of King Asa's reign, there was an initial decade of peace and prosperity. Then he was called upon to face enemy threats and invasion. In those crises, he trusted God and forced out or defeated all who attempted to conquer, divide, or destroy Judah ([2 Chronicles 14:1-8](#)).

Further, he cleared the land of idolatrous places of worship. He even took away the royal privilege and standing of Maacah, his mother. She had erected an image of the fertility goddess Asherah ([1 Kings 15:10](#); [2 Chronicles 15:16](#)).

Later in his reign Asa abandoned his trust in God. With a huge gift that stripped the temple treasures, he entered an alliance with Ben-hadad, king of Damascus (Syria). He did this to force Baasha, ruler of the northern kingdom of Israel, to withdraw from newly conquered territory in Judah. Israel, Judah's mortal enemy, stood ready to strike, only 8 kilometers (five miles) from Jerusalem. Asa disregarded God's faithful protection and made the deal. Asa's power play worked. Israel had to retire from the field in the south to meet Ben-hadad's threat from the north. When Hanani spoke plainly to Asa about his disbelief in God, Asa became angry and had Hanani imprisoned ([2 Chronicles 16:7-10](#)).

For the last years of his long 41-year reign, Asa was ill. "Yet even in his illness he did not seek the LORD, but only the physicians" ([2 Chronicles 16:12](#)). He died and was buried with honor in the royal tombs ([1 Kings 15:24](#); [2 Chronicles 16:14](#)).

See also Israel, History of; Chronicles, Books of First and Second; Timeline of the Bible (Old Testament); King.

2. A Levite who was the father of Berechiah. Berechiah lived in one of the villages of the Netophathites after the exile to Babylon ([1 Chronicles 9:16](#)).

Asahel

1. A warrior among David's mighty men known as "the thirty" ([2 Samuel 23:24](#); [1 Chronicles 11:26](#)). Asahel was the son of David's half-sister Zeruiah and the brother of Joab and Abishai ([2 Samuel 2:18](#); [1 Chronicles 2:16](#)). In the battle of Gibeon, David's general Joab engaged the forces of Abner, leader of Ishbosheth's army. Asahel, who "could run like a deer," pursued Abner. In the encounter that happened after that, Abner killed Asahel ([2 Samuel 2:18-23, 32](#)).
2. One of the Levites sent out by King Jehoshaphat of Judah to teach the people the law of the Lord ([2 Chronicles 17:8](#)).
3. A temple aide appointed by King Hezekiah to take care of the tithed offerings given to support the Levites ([2 Chronicles 31:13](#)).
4. The father of Jonathan. Jonathan (not Saul's son) opposed appointing a commission to take action about the foreign (pagan) wives of some of the Jews after the Babylonian exile ([Ezra 10:15](#)).

Asahiah

The King James Version form of Asaiah in [2 Kings 22:12, 14](#). Asaiah was the servant of King Josiah.

See Asaiah #1.

Asaiah

1. A royal servant King Josiah of Judah sent to ask the prophetess Huldah about the meaning of the book of the law found in the renovation of the temple ([2 Kings 22:12, 14](#); [2 Chronicles 34:20](#)).

2. The clan leader of Simeon's tribe who settled in Gedor (possibly also known as Gerar) during Hezekiah's reign ([1 Chronicles 4:36](#)).
3. A Levitical leader in the time of King David. Asaiah helped bring the ark to Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 6:30](#); [15:6, 11](#)).
4. Shiloni's oldest son. Asaiah's family was among the first to resettle in Jerusalem after the exile ([1 Chronicles 9:5](#)). Perhaps the same as Maaseiah of [Nehemiah 11:5](#). See Maaseiah #14.

Asaph

1. Berechiah's son, who was an important tabernacle musician during King David's reign ([1 Chronicles 6:31–32, 39](#)). David appointed a lead singer, Heman, and Ethan. With them, he appointed Asaph to sound bronze cymbals during the ceremony when the ark was brought to the new tabernacle ([1 Chronicles 15:1–19](#)). David appointed Asaph to serve "by giving constant praise and thanks to the Lord God of Israel" ([1 Chronicles 16:4–5](#), The Living Bible). Asaph was to lead Israel in a special psalm of praise ([1 Chronicles 16:7–36](#)). Along with his relatives, Asaph ministered daily before the ark ([1 Chronicles 16:37](#); [25:6, 9](#); [1 Esdras 1:15](#); [5:27, 59](#)). He was also described as David's private prophet ([1 Chronicles 25:1–2](#)). Asaph's name appears in the superscriptions of [Psalms 50](#) and [73–83](#) and in the guild he established, called "the sons of Asaph" ([1 Chronicles 25:1](#); [2 Chronicles 35:15](#); [Ezra 2:41](#); [Nehemiah 7:44](#); [11:22](#)).
2. Joah's father. Joah was the recorder (court historian or royal scribe) in King Hezekiah's administration ([2 Kings 18:18, 27](#); [Isaiah 36:22](#)).

3. Temple guard or gatekeeper, seemingly the same person as Ebiasaph ([1 Chronicles 9:18](#)).
4. A keeper of the king's forest in Palestine under Artaxerxes I Longimanus ([Nehemiah 2:8](#)). Nehemiah asked this Asaph for timber to rebuild the wall, gates, and structures of Jerusalem.

Asaramel

A mysterious Hebrew word found in the inscription dedicated to Simon, the ruling high priest of Israel and brother of Judas Maccabeus ([1 Maccabees 14:28](#)).

Possible meanings of *asaramel* include "prince of the people of God" or "court of the people of God." The Syriac version of the Apocrypha drops the "m" to give "Israel"—making the sentence read "in the third year of Simon the great high priest in Israel."

Asareel, Asarel

Jehallelel's son from Judah's tribe ([1 Chronicles 4:16](#)).

Asarelah

One of Asaph's four sons. King David appointed him to help with prophecy and music in the sanctuary ([1 Chronicles 25:2](#)). He is also called Jesharelah in [1 Chronicles 25:14](#).

See Asharelah.

Ascalon

Another form of Ashkelon in [Judith 2:28](#).

See Ashkelon.

Ascension of Christ

The ascension is the event when Jesus ascended (went up to) heaven after his resurrection from the dead.

What Does the Bible Say About the Ascension of Christ?

Among the New Testament writers, only Luke described Jesus's ascension. [Acts 1:9-11](#) describes a scene in which Jesus was "taken up" and disappeared into a cloud. [Luke 24:50-51](#) and [Acts 1:12](#) locate that final event near Bethany. Bethany is east of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives.

Matthew ended his history before the day of Pentecost. John did not describe the ascension directly, but he included Jesus's own words about it. Jesus said he would leave but return later ([John 21:22](#)). He cannot be touched, for he must ascend ([20:17](#)). Many will believe without having seen him ([20:29](#)).

The Gospels tell us three main things:

1. After rising from death, Jesus appeared to his disciples.
2. At some point in time, those appearances stopped.
3. Though Jesus is not physically present, he is spiritually present with his church.

Other New Testament writings agree with this. The apostle Paul wrote that God raised Christ from the dead "and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms" ([Ephesians 1:20](#)). The writer of Hebrews said, "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" ([Hebrews 1:3](#)).

Why Does the Ascension Matter?

The ascension is important for two reasons: what it means for Christ and what it means for Christians.

What Does the Ascension Mean for Christ?

For Christ, the ascension is the necessary entrance into his heavenly "glorification." In his glorification, he sits on the right hand of the Father until his enemies are completely defeated. [Psalm 110:1](#) uses symbolic language to describe this: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." (This Psalm is the most quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament.) The ascension is proof of his glorification and his superiority over such Old Testament heroes as David ([Acts 2:33-36](#)).

By his ascension, Christ rises over all and fills all ([Ephesians 4:10](#)). In his ascension, he receives "the name that is over every name" ([Philemon 2:9-11](#)).

For the author of the book of Hebrews, the ascension is also proof of Christ's superiority to angels. He sits enthroned while they are constantly being sent out to serve ([Hebrews 1:13-14](#)). Angels, authorities, and powers are all subject to the ascended Christ ([1 Timothy 3:16](#); [1 Peter 3:22](#)).

What Does the Ascension Mean For Christians?

For the Christian, the ascension of Christ is meaningful in four ways:

1. Without it there would be no gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit could not come until Jesus had ascended and sent him ([John 16:7](#)). Without the ascension, the church would have Jesus locally in one place, not spiritually present "where two or three gather together" ([Matthew 18:20](#); compare [28:20](#)).
2. Since a truly human Jesus has ascended to heaven, human beings can also ascend there. Jesus went "to prepare a place" for his followers ([John 14:2](#)). The hope of those who are "in Christ" is that they will eventually ascend to be with him ([2 Corinthians 5:1-10](#)).
3. The ascension proves that the sacrifice of Christ is finished and accepted by God. Jesus has passed through the heavens ([Hebrews 4:14](#)). He entered the presence of God ([6:20](#)). This presence is described as the most holy place of the heavenly temple. It is the real temple of which the one on earth was a copy ([9:24](#)). Christ brought a single, final sacrifice to God that never needs to be repeated ([9:12](#)). Then Christ sat down, showing that no repetition of his sacrifice is necessary ([1:3](#); [10:12](#); [12:2](#)).

4. The ascension means that there is a human being in heaven who sympathizes with humanity and can therefore speak on behalf of humanity ([1 John 2:1](#)). Jesus has experienced everything humans experience. He experienced birth, growth, temptation, suffering, and death. Jesus can serve effectively as a mediator before God in heaven ([Hebrews 2:17; 5:7-10](#)). Christ's ascension assures the church that God understands what it is like to be human, and that Christians can approach him boldly in their prayers ([4:14-16](#)).

The ascension of Christ is a vital part of New Testament teaching. It shows Christ's high position and gives Christians confidence and hope.

See also Christology; Jesus Christ, Life and Teachings of.

1. The Martyrdom of Isaiah. This material includes prophetic statements, such as the prophet predicting his own execution by King Manasseh of Judah. The document addresses the king's severe departure from the faith. Possessed by Satan and following Beliar, the king leads his people into many sins. The city is compared to "Sodom," and its leaders are called "Gomorrah," symbolizing wickedness. Written in the style of a Jewish midrash (a devotional sermon that explains Scripture), this section focuses on Isaiah's strong faith and his refusal to deny God. It ends with his martyrdom, when he is killed by being "sawn in two," a story known to many of the church fathers (see [Hebrews 11:37](#)).

Ascension of Isaiah

The Ascension of Isaiah is an ancient apocalyptic work that early Christians knew well. It was written under a false name and claimed to be by the prophet Isaiah. It is also known as the Martyrdom of Isaiah, the Testament of Hezekiah, or the Vision of Isaiah. The work was rediscovered in 1819 with the publication of an Ethiopic version of part of the text. The complete Ethiopic version is the only complete version in existence. The partial Latin text published in 1832 had actually been published over 300 years earlier. Slavonic and Coptic versions also exist. All of these versions come from two Greek originals that date to about the third through sixth centuries AD.

Scholars are unsure if the original work was written as one book or as several separate writings that were later joined together. It is also uncertain whether the first author was Jewish or Christian. The final form of the text could be from the late second century AD. Early church writers such as Ambrose, Jerome, Origen, Tertullian, and possibly Justin Martyr knew about it.

The book is made up of three main parts:

2. The Testament of Hezekiah. Here Isaiah tells King Hezekiah a vision about the coming of "the Beloved," a title for the Messiah (God's chosen one). The vision includes the Messiah's birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. After this, it speaks about the early history of the church and the departure from faith that takes place before the Lord's second coming. The antichrist is revealed to be Beliar or Satan, who has taken human form and kills his mother. Many scholars think this description points to the Roman emperor Nero, who murdered his mother, Agrippina. This section draws ideas from the biblical books of *Daniel* and *Revelation*. It also shows influence from Gnosticism, a religious movement that combined Christian belief with Greek philosophy. Gnostics claimed that people could be saved through secret spiritual knowledge rather than through faith in Christ. The vision ends with the Beloved's victory, two resurrections, and the final judgment, similar to the ending of the New Testament book of *Revelation*.
3. The Vision of Isaiah. This part is closely related to the previous vision but shows even stronger Gnostic influence. Isaiah travels through the seven heavens and reaches the home of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). There he sees the mysteries of Christ and the heavenly world. Because of this vision, King Manasseh orders his death. Some of the ideas in this version of the story are similar to what Gnostic teachers, such as Cerinthus, taught. They said Jesus and the Christ were two different beings and that Christ entered Jesus at baptism and left before his death. This false teaching appears in parts of the text.

The Ascension of Isaiah shows how many different religious ideas were competing for authority in the early centuries of the Christian faith.

See also Apocrypha; Isaiah (Person).

Ascent of Heres

A place mentioned in [Judges 8:13](#). *See* Heres #2.

Ascents of James

The Ascents of James is a lost book once mentioned by Epiphanius, a fourth-century bishop from the Greek island of Salamis. He referred to it in his work *Refutation of All the Heresies*. According to him, a strict group of Jewish Christians known as the Ebionites used the Ascents of James.

In the story, James, the brother of Jesus, speaks against the Jewish temple and the sacrifices. The book also claimed the apostle Paul was a Greek who went to Jerusalem to marry the high priest's daughter. To achieve this, he converted to Judaism and was circumcised. When he failed to win her, he spoke against the Sabbath day, the Law, and circumcision.

In 1865, J. B. Lightfoot, a scholar writing a commentary on Galatians, suggested that the title Ascents of James referred to James walking up the temple steps to speak to the people. Lightfoot also suggested James's death was the climax of the story. According to the early Christian writer Hegesippus, whose work was quoted by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, opponents of the Christian faith threw James down from the top of the temple, killing him.

See also Apocrypha; James (Person).

Asenath

Joseph's Egyptian wife who became the mother of Manasseh and Ephraim. Asenath was the daughter of the priest Potiphera ([Genesis 41:45, 50–52; 46:20](#)).

Aser

The King James Version form of Asher in [Luke 2:36](#) and [Revelation 7:6](#).

See Asher (Tribe).

Ash

Ash trees (genus *Fraxinus*) grow in many parts of the world, including some regions of the Middle East. The flowering or manna ash (*Fraxinus ornus*) is one such tree. It grows from 4.6 to 15.2 meters (15 to 50 feet) tall and produces a sweet sap known as "manna."

Some Bible scholars believe that the "ash" tree mentioned in [Isaiah 44:14](#) in the King James Version refers to the Aleppo pine. Although not true ash trees, some other desert plants like the prickly alhagi (*Alhagi maurorum*) and the manna tamarisk (*Tamarix mannifera*) produce sweet substances that may have been associated with biblical "manna."

See also Prickly Alhagi, Tamarisk.

Ashan

A town in the southwestern Judean foothills slightly northwest of Beersheba.

Ashan was originally in the tribe of Judah ([Joshua 15:42](#)). Then it became Simeon's ([Joshua 19:7](#)). Finally, it was given to the Levites as a city of refuge ([1 Chronicles 6:59](#)). David traveled in that area with his group of men who were not following the law ([1 Samuel 30:30](#)). The city of Ain mentioned in [Joshua 21:16](#) probably refers to Ashan (this is different than the Ain in the northeast of Canaan, [Numbers 34:11](#)).

See Cities of Refuge.

Asharelah

Another name for Asarelah, Asaph's son, in [1 Chronicles 25:2](#).

See Asarelah.

Ashbea

The name of a family in [1 Chronicles 4:21](#). The name is probably the family's place of residence.

See Beth-ashbea.

Ashbel, Ashbelite

Benjamin's son who moved to Egypt with his grandfather Jacob ([Genesis 46:21](#); [1 Chronicles 8:1](#)). The Ashbelites, his descendants, were included in Moses's census in the wilderness ([Numbers 26:38](#)). Ashbel is also called Jedaiel ([1 Chronicles 7:6](#)).

Ashchenaz

The King James Version spelling of Ashkenaz, Gomer's son, in [1 Chronicles 1:6](#) and [Jeremiah 51:27](#).

See Ashkenaz.

Ashdod, Ashdodite, Ashdothite

One of the five main Philistine cities, also called the "pentapolis." The other four cities are Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron ([Joshua 13:3](#)).

It was in an important location about three miles (4.8 kilometers) inland, between Joppa and Gaza, and close to the coast. Its ancient port, Ashdod Yam, was an important sea port, later outgrowing the inland city itself. Excavations at Ashdod have revealed its early Canaanite occupation dating back to the 17th century BC. When the Israelites entered Canaan, Ashdod was occupied by the Anakim, a giant (tall) race, ([Joshua 11:21–22](#)). Though it was assigned to the tribe of Judah, it was not initially conquered ([Joshua 15:46–47](#)). The people of Ashdod were called Ashdodites ([Joshua 13:4](#); [Nehemiah 4:7](#)).

The 12th century BC saw the invasion of the Sea Peoples, including the Philistines, who destroyed Ashdod. It was later reoccupied and developed into a major Philistine city. Archaeologists have found three layers of Philistine living areas at Ashdod. These findings tell us about how the Philistines lived.

During the period of Eli the priest, the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant and placed it in the temple of their god Dagon in Ashdod, and later in Gath and Ekron ([1 Samuel 5](#)). A plague struck wherever the ark was taken, so the Philistine rulers returned it with a gold offering ([1 Samuel 6:1–18](#)). Despite being under the control of David and Solomon, Ashdod was not fully conquered until

King Uzziah of Judah started a war against it around 792–740 BC ([2 Chronicles 26:6](#)).

Following Uzziah's reign, the city regained independence as Judah's influence became less strong. Ashdod resisted Assyrian invasions until it was finally destroyed by Sargon II in 711 BC. This destruction is supported by things found by archaeologists (people who study old objects). One of these things is a stone pillar with writing on it. The pillar is made of basalt (a dark, hard rock). It talks about Sargon and was found in the city of Ashdod in 1963. The prophet Isaiah had earlier warned Judah against depending on Ashdod, Egypt, or Ethiopia as allies against the Assyrians ([Isaiah 20](#)). Archaeologists have found proof at Ashdod that both Uzziah and Sargon II destroyed parts of the city.

Ashdod remained under Assyrian control until it was captured by the Egyptian Pharaoh Psamtik I. He ruled from 664 to 609 BC. Ashdod was captured after a lengthy siege lasting 29 years, which might be the longest siege recorded in history. Following this, around the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II conquered Ashdod and took its king to Babylon. Prophets such as Jeremiah and Zephaniah had foretold the fate of Ashdod and its people ([Jeremiah 25:20](#); [Zephaniah 2:4](#)). The remaining inhabitants of Ashdod later resisted Nehemiah's efforts to rebuild Jerusalem, and some of their women intermarried with Jewish men ([Nehemiah 4:7](#); [13:23–24](#)). The prophet Zechariah predicted further destruction for Ashdod ([Zechariah 9:6](#)).

During the Maccabean period (when the Maccabees ruled), the city, then known as Azotus, was attacked, robbed, and destroyed by Judas and Jonathan Maccabeus due to its idolatry ([1 Maccabees 4:12–15](#); [5:68](#); [10:77–85](#); [11:4](#)). The city was later freed by Pompey in 63 BC and became part of the Roman province of Syria. Herod the Great subsequently gave the city to his sister Salome as a gift after his death.

The New Testament notes that Philip the Evangelist preached about Christ in Azotus ([Acts 8:40](#)). By the fourth century AD, early Christian historian Eusebius recognized it as a significant town, with Christian bishops residing there from the fourth to the sixth centuries. However, during the Middle Ages, Ashdod, or Azotus, declined and is now a small village named Esdud.

Ashdod was situated about three miles (4.8 kilometers) inland, but it had a separate port

known as Ashdod Yam, or Ashdod-on-the-Sea. Over time, this coastal town grew larger than the inland city. Archaeological excavations at the seaport have revealed layers of occupation from the Canaanite, Israelite, and Hellenistic periods. A notable discovery includes a Hellenistic dyeing facility where a purple dye was produced from the murex shell, a luxury dye used for clothing by royalty and the wealthy. The port remained in use through the Arabic period. Today, a modern port has been established near the site of ancient Ashdod Yam.

Ashdoth-Pisgah

The King James Version form of "slopes of Pisgah" ([Deuteronomy 3:17](#); [Joshua 12:3](#); [13:20](#)). It refers to the slopes of Mount Pisgah.

See Mount Pisgah.

Asher (Person)

Jacob's son born to Leah's maid Zilpah ([Genesis 30:12–13](#)). The name Asher likely means "happy." It was chosen by Leah to express her joy at his birth. Asher had four sons—Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah—and a daughter named Serah ([Genesis 46:17](#); [1 Chronicles 7:30](#)).

Some believe the tribe of Asher may have been named after a location mentioned in Egyptian texts from the 13th century BC. However, it is more probable that the tribe was named after its ancestor. Asher and his brothers received special blessings and prophecies from Jacob as he was dying ([Genesis 49:20](#); compare [Deuteronomy 33:24–25](#), where Moses also blessed Asher and the other tribes).

See also Asher (Tribe).

Asher (Place)

A place mentioned in [Tobit 1:2](#). It is also identified as Hazor.

See Hazor #1.

Asher (Tribe)

The tribe of Asher lived in the fertile coastal area when the Promised Land was divided. Asher's

territory stretched from north of Mount Carmel to slightly above Sidon, with its eastern boundary running along the western slopes of the Galilean hills ([Joshua 19:24–34](#)). To the east, Asher was bordered by the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. To the south, the Carmel mountain range separated Asher from the tribe of Manasseh. The land of Asher was rich in agriculture and known for its olive groves. Economically, the Asherites traded with the Phoenicians of Tyre through ships.

The size of the tribe varied over time. From the few who entered Egypt with Jacob, Asher grew to 41,500 adult warriors at Mount Sinai ([Numbers 1:40–41](#)). By the second census in the wilderness, the tribe had 53,400 soldiers ([Numbers 26:47](#)). During King David's reign, the number of warriors ranged from 26,000 to 40,000 ([1 Chronicles 7:40; 12:36](#)). Asher was never more than the fifth largest tribe among the Israelites.

Asher, like the other tribes, rejected Caleb and Joshua's positive reports about Canaan ([Numbers 13:30–14:10](#)). Consequently, that generation perished in the wilderness after 40 years ([Numbers 14:22–25](#)).

At the end of the northern campaign in the promised land, Joshua assigned territories to the remaining seven tribes, including Asher ([Joshua 18:2](#)). Earlier, God had appointed Ahihud to distribute land within Asher's territory ([Numbers 34:16, 27](#)). Certain Levites from the tribe of Gershon were given cities within Asher's borders ([Joshua 21:6, 30; 1 Chronicles 6:62, 74](#)).

Like the rest of the tribes of Israel, Asher never fully owned all the land it was given. The tribe failed to drive out the inhabitants of cities like Acco, Sidon, and others, leading them to be influenced by pagan cultures ([Judges 1:31](#)). The "unpossessed" territory of the Sidonians and the Phoenicians stretched along the coastal region for 200 miles or 322 kilometers. Thus, "the Asherites lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land, because they did not drive them out" ([Judges 1:32](#)). It is possible that their involvement in Phoenician trade diminished their desire to expel the Phoenicians from their cities.

After the death of the judge Ehud, Israel was oppressed by Jabin, king of Canaan. When Judge Deborah urged Barak to lead Israel's forces, they won a great victory and were freed from oppression ([Jgs 4](#)). After the victory, Deborah complained that "Asher stayed at the coast and remained in his harbors" ([Judges 5:17](#)). Over time,

the tribe was influenced by Phoenician religion and culture, leading to its decline.

The Bible provides little information about Asher's leadership. At the time of the exodus from Egypt, Pagiel, the son of Ochran, was the tribal chief ([Numbers 1:13; 2:27; 7:72; 10:26](#)). After this, there is no further mention of Asher's leaders. No judges of Israel came from Asher, and during King David's reign, Asher and Gad were not included among the nation's chief officers ([1 Chronicles 27:16–22](#)).

Despite these challenges, Asher had notable moments:

- They supported Gideon in defeating the Midianites ([Judges 6:1–8, 35; 7:23](#)).
- They defended Saul, their first king ([1 Samuel 11:7](#)).
- Forty thousand Asherites supported David in taking Saul's kingdom ([1 Chronicles 12:23–36](#)).

After the fall of Samaria in 722 BC, a small remnant from Asher came to Jerusalem for the first Passover feast in many years ([2 Chronicles 30:5](#)) when King Hezekiah (715–686 BC) invited all the tribes to join in the celebration. ([2 Chronicles 30:10–11](#)).

The New Testament mentions an 84-year-old widow named Anna, who was a descendant of Asher. She was a prophetess who recognized Jesus as "the redemption of Jerusalem" during His dedication in the temple ([Luke 2:36–38](#)).

See also Israel, History of.

Asherah, Asherim, Asheroth

The singular and plural form of the name of a Canaanite goddess who was connected to the Canaanite god Baal ([Judges 3:7; 1 Kings 18:19](#)). The words also refer to the wooden poles erected to worship this goddess.

See Canaanite Deities and Religion; Grove.

Ashes

A fine powder that is left after something has been completely burned. The burning of sacrificial offerings on the tabernacle or temple altar produced ashes that had to be thrown out in a

ceremony ([Leviticus 1:16; 4:12; 6:10–11](#); compare [Hebrews 9:13](#)). The ashes on pagan altars are mentioned in several Old Testament stories ([1 Kings 13:1–5](#); [2 Kings 23:4](#)). When Moses threw ashes into the air during the contest with the Egyptian pharaoh, the ashes spread like fine dust across all of Egypt. This caused a plague of boils to appear on both people and animals. ([Exodus 9:8–10](#)).

In the Bible, ashes are often mentioned as a sign of deep grief, repentance, humiliation, or feeling worthless. People would put ashes on themselves to show these intense emotions. The Bible sometimes uses ashes and dust in similar ways. For example:

- Tamar put ashes on herself to show how upset she was after being sexually assaulted by her half-brother ([2 Samuel 13:19](#)).
- Mordecai covered himself with ashes because he was very worried after the king had ordered all the Jewish people in his kingdom to be killed ([Esther 4:1–3](#)).
- Daniel put ashes on himself when he prayed to God for his people who were forced to live in a foreign country ([Daniel 9:3](#)).
- The king of Nineveh put ashes on himself to show he was sorry for his wrong actions after he heard Jonah's message from God ([Jonah 3:6](#); compare [Luke 10:13](#)).

People in the Bible also used ashes as a symbol to represent different ideas:

- Feeling humble or small ([Genesis 18:27](#)).
- Feeling worthless or like something has no use ([Job 13:12](#); [30:19](#); [Isaiah 44:20](#)).
- Destruction ([Ezra 28:18](#); [2 Peter 2:6](#)).

See also Mourning.

Ashhur

Asshur was the son of Caleb. He was the father of Tekoa ([1 Chronicles 2:24; 4:5](#)), or maybe the founder of a village named Tekoa ([2 Samuel 14:1–3](#); [Amos 1:1](#)).

Ashima

A god who the people of Hamanah worshiped. We do not know where they came from. They were moved to Samaria after the fall of Israel in 722 BC ([2 Kings 17:30](#)).

Ashkelon

A very old city. It can also be spelled Askelon.

In the Bible, Ashkelon was one of the five main Philistine cities, also known as the "pentapolis," along with Gaza, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron ([Joshua 13:3](#)). It was located on the Mediterranean coast, about 30 miles or 48 kilometers south of modern Tel Aviv. Ashkelon was always an important port. It often conflicted with Egypt and was captured by Ramses II around 1286 BC and by Merneptah around 1220 BC.

Ashkelon is mentioned as one of the cities conquered by Judah ([Judges 1:18](#)). After the Philistines invaded Canaan in the 12th century BC, it became one of their major centers. When Samson's riddle was solved through the deceit of his Philistine wife, he vented his anger in Ashkelon by killing 30 men ([Judges 14:19](#)). The city was partly responsible for driving the tribe of Dan from their land, so Samson, who was from that tribe, probably held a grudge against it.

Ashkelon also appears in the story of the Philistine control of the ark ([1 Samuel 4–6](#)). When Saul and Jonathan died, David mourned their loss and said that their deaths should not be announced in Ashkelon ([2 Samuel 1:20](#)). Various Old Testament prophets also refer to Ashkelon ([Jeremiah 25:20](#); [47:5–6](#); [Amos 1:8](#); [Zephaniah 2:4–7](#); [Zechariah 9:5](#)).

During Israel's decline, King Pekah of Israel, King Rezin of Damascus, and the king of Ashkelon rebelled against Assyria. Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria, responded with three successive campaigns from 734 to 732 BC, the first of which conquered Ashkelon.

Later, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and deported many of its inhabitants to Egypt during his conquest of Palestine in 604 BC. Over time, various groups took control of the city, including the Scythians, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, and Maccabees.

Ashkelon was Herod the Great's birthplace, and ruins of his building projects can still be found there. Although Ashkelon is not mentioned in the New Testament, it was a battleground during the Jewish rebellion against Rome in AD 66.

Ashkenaz

Ashkenaz was the son of Gomer. He was Noah's great-grandson through Japheth ([Genesis 10:1-3](#); [1 Chronicles 1:6](#)).

Ashkenaz is mentioned in [Jeremiah 51:27](#) with Ararat and Minni. This shows that Ashkenaz was likely the ancestor of a group called the Scythians. The Scythians lived in the Ararat region during Jeremiah's time. They were known for being strong fighters and caused trouble for the Assyrian Empire. They helped bring about its fall.

Today, the name *Ashkenazim* (the plural form of Ashkenaz) means something different. It refers to Jewish people who settled in central and eastern Europe after being forced to leave their homeland. This is different from the *Sephardim*, who are Jewish people who lived in Spain and Portugal.

Ashnah

The name of the two towns that the tribe of Judah received after Israel conquered Canaan ([Joshua 15:33, 43](#)). The location of both towns is unknown, but both were in the lowlands separating Judah and Philistia. Although the Philistines were often active in this area, they never got beyond its eastern border.

Ashpenaz

An official under Nebuchadnezzar who was in charge of palace personnel ([Daniel 1:3](#)). Ashpenaz wanted to force Daniel and his friends to eat the king's food. Eating the gentile's food would have violated the law of God. Eventually, he allowed them to follow their own diet ([Daniel 1:8-16](#)).

Three years later, Ashpenaz showed the young men to the king. Nebuchadnezzar thought they were very wise and had good judgment even though they did not eat meat and did not indulge in royal food ([Daniel 1:18-20](#)).

Ashriel

The King James Version spelling of Asriel, Manasseh's son, in [1 Chronicles 7:14](#).

See Asriel, Asrielite.

Ashtaroth, Ashterathite

A town of Bashan, which was the home of King Og, as well as Edrei ([Deuteronomy 1:4](#); [Joshua 9:10; 12:4](#); [13:12, 31](#)).

Ashtaroth is the plural form of Ashtoreth, the name of a Canaanite fertility goddess who was worshiped there. After Og was defeated by the Israelites ([Deuteronomy 3:1-11](#)), Moses gave Ashtaroth to the half-tribe of Manasseh ([Joshua 13:12, 31](#); [Deuteronomy 3:13](#)). Later, it became a Levitical city inhabited by the Gershonites ([1 Chronicles 6:71](#)).

Ashteroth-karnaim ([Genesis 14:5](#)) is probably the same town as Ashtaroth. Its location is usually identified as modern-day Tell Ashtarrah, 21 miles or 34 kilometers east of the Sea of Galilee. In [1 Chronicles 11:44](#), one of David's mighty men, Uzziah, is called an Ashterathite.

Ashteroth-Karnaim

A city where an alliance of four kings led by Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, defeated the giants of Rephaim ([Genesis 14:5](#); compare [Deuteronomy 3:11](#)). The area was given to Abraham and his descendants by the Lord ([Genesis 15:18-20](#)). It is probably the same as Ashtaroth.

See Ashtaroth, Ashterathite.

Ashtoreth

A pagan mother-goddess who was widely worshiped throughout the ancient Near East ([1 Kings 11:5, 33](#); [2 Kings 23:13](#)). She was also called Astarte.

See Canaanite Deities and Religion.

Ashur

The King James Version spelling of Ashhur, Caleb's son, in [1 Chronicles 2:24](#) and [4:5](#).

See Ashhur (Person).

Ashurbanipal

Esarhaddon's son, Ashurbanipal was the Assyrian king from 669 to 633 BC. His name can also be spelled Assurbanipal. He ruled when the kings Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah governed the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel, with its capital in Samaria, had fallen to another powerful Assyrian king, Sargon II, in 722 BC.

Throughout his life, Ashurbanipal had to constantly fight to keep and defend his empire, which included Babylonia, Persia, Syria, and Egypt. Even though he was mostly interested in culture, he spent most of his time and resources making sure conquered peoples stayed under control, dealing with a civil war led by his brother, and handling constant border fights.

Much of what we know about ancient Mesopotamian culture—like their history, religion, legends, and stories—comes from the cuneiform texts collected by Ashurbanipal. He gathered these texts in a large library he built in Nineveh, his capital. This library was discovered about a century ago and is now in the British Museum. It remains an important source for biblical studies. Ashurbanipal's library is probably his most significant legacy.

Ashurbanipal is believed to be the Assyrian king who sent foreigners to live in Samaria ([Ezra 4:10](#)). It was common practice for the Assyrians to relocate conquered people, which is why the ten tribes of Israel disappeared after Sargon II's conquest. In [Ezra 4:10](#), the Assyrian king is called Osnappar, a transliteration of the Hebrew spelling. The similarity between the Hebrew and Assyrian names, plus the list of conquered peoples, suggests that Ashurbanipal is the most likely candidate.

By 630 BC, the Assyrian Empire was struggling to stay united. After Ashurbanipal died, the Assyrian Empire fell apart. Many Assyrian soldiers had died far from home, and mercenaries and captives did

not fight well. Meanwhile, barbarian groups from Asia attacked Assyria, and Babylon successfully rebelled. Egypt also broke free from Assyrian control. Ashurbanipal's sons were unable to handle the situation, and in less than 20 years, a weak coalition of enemies surrounded Nineveh and destroyed it in 612 BC. There was some resistance at nearby Haran, but Median troops quickly crushed it. Assyria fell just as ruthlessly as it had ruled.

With Assyria's fall, the small kingdom of Judah got a new chance. Some scholars believe Ashurbanipal died during King Josiah's eighth year of rule ([2 Chronicles 34:3–7](#)). As Assyria lost its power, Judah regained independence by default. Young King Josiah was able to start and complete the most significant spiritual revival and political reforms in Judah's history.

See Assyria, Assyrians; Kings, Books of First and Second.

Ashurite

This is probably a different way to spell Asherite, a member of the tribe of Asher. The Ashurites supported Ishbosheth, Saul's son, instead of David as king over Israel after Saul's death ([2 Samuel 2:8–9](#)). In [Ezekiel 27:6](#), the Hebrew word refers to a kind of wood rather than a group of people.

Ashurnasirpal

1. Ashurnasirpal I was king of Assyria from about 1049 to 1031 BC. He is noted in the historical Assyrian chronicle as the rightful successor to Shamshi-Adad IV. Shamshi-Adad IV was king from about 1053 to 1050 BC. Ashurnasirpal I was king of Assyria during a time when the country was not strong. This happened after the rule of Tiglath-pileser I, who had been a powerful king. Tiglath-pileser I was king from about 1115–1077 BC.

2. Ashurnasirpal II was king of Assyria from 885 to 860 BC. He was the son of Tukulti-Ninurta II who was king of Assyria from 890 to 885 BC. His grandfather, Adad-nirari II, was king from 911 to 891 BC. He laid the foundations of the Neo-Assyrian period, which lasted from 900–612 BC.

Ashurnasirpal II, the first great monarch of this era, strengthened his position by crushing rebellious tribes along the middle Euphrates. He then led campaigns against Syria in 877 BC and against Philistia. In his annals, he recorded the loot he received from the coastal towns of Philistia, including "gold, silver, tin, copper...large and small monkeys, ebony, boxwood, and ivory." Ashurnasirpal's westward expedition was the first of several Assyrian attacks on Syria, which eventually threatened the Israelite forces. This expedition also established his reputation as a cruel and merciless leader, a theme often mentioned in his annals. A statue of Ashurnasirpal II found in Calah showed him as a stern, egotistical despot. He transformed the Assyrian army into a fearsome military force. Ashurnasirpal II was known for his brutal treatment of enemies. In his annals, he boasted: "The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I formed them into a pillar over against their city. . . . I flayed all the chief men . . . and I covered the pillar with their skins; some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes." Other cruel and violent acts included:

- Burning captives alive
- Cutting off the hands, noses, and ears of prisoners
- Cutting out eyes
- Cutting open pregnant women
- Leaving prisoners in the desert to die of thirst

Ashurnasirpal II made Calah (Nimrud) his capital city, reconstructing it using over 50,000 prisoners. A.H. Layard, excavating Nimrud in 1845, uncovered the royal palace alongside several large statues. Ashurnasirpal II was succeeded in 859 BC by his son, Shalmaneser III, who reigned for 35 years.

See Assyria, Assyrians.

Ashvath

Japhlet's son who was a great warrior and head of a clan in the tribe of Asher ([1 Chronicles 7:33](#)).

Asia

In New Testament times, Asia was a Roman province. It was located just east of the Aegean Sea. The Romans created this province in 133. They did this after Attalus III, the king of Pergamum, left his kingdom to them in his will.

Greek map-makers usually used the name "Asia" to mean the whole eastern continent. But from the second century onward, Romans often called the kings of Pergamum "kings of Asia." Because of this, people slowly began using "Asia" to mean only the peninsula (Asia Minor).

The extent of the province of Asia varied throughout its history. Before the Roman occupation, the term referred to the kingdom of the Seleucid dynasty, which Seleucus I founded in 305–281 BC. This usage is seen in the Apocrypha ([1 Maccabees 8:6](#); [11:13](#); [12:39](#); [13:32](#); [2 Maccabees 3:3](#)) and the works of the early Jewish historian Josephus in his "Antiquities." The Romans took the territory from the Seleucids after the war against Antiochus the Great. As a reward, they gave it to their allies, the Attalids. Attalus III eventually willed it to the Romans.

The boundaries of Roman control were stable only after a big revolt was stopped. The province then

included regions like Mysia, Lydia, Caria, and Phrygia. It also included areas near the Aegean Sea, like Aeolis, Ionia, and Troas. The coastal islands, such as Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Rhodes, and Patmos, were part of the province too. This mainland area is now part of modern Turkey.

In 116 BC, the province got bigger and included Greater Phrygia. Its borders were Bithynia to the north, Galatia to the east, Lycia to the south, and the Aegean Sea to the west. But these borders changed over time. In 25 BC, Augustus Caesar expanded Rome's control by adding other parts of Phrygia, Lycaonia, Pisidia, and maybe Pamphylia into a province called Galatia. These borders stayed the same until AD 285. Then, the province became much smaller, and "Asia" referred only to the coastal areas and lower valleys of the Maeander, Cayster, Hermus, and Caicus Rivers.

During Roman rule, Pergamum was the capital of the province. By Augustus's time, the Roman governor had moved to Ephesus.

In the New Testament, "Asia" usually meant the Roman province of that name. Sometimes, it meant the area, and other times, it meant the political region. For example, at the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem, there were Jews from "Asia." This included other Roman provinces like Cappadocia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia. ([Acts 2:9-10](#)). This suggests that Luke, the writer of Acts, used the term to describe the province originally left to the Romans by Attalus III. Luke used the word again in [Acts 6:9](#), indicating the strength of Jewish communities in Asia Minor and confirming the use of "Asia" in the more narrow sense of the Roman province.

On Paul's second missionary journey, the Holy Spirit stopped him and Timothy from preaching in Asia ([Acts 16:6-8](#)). Here, Luke was probably speaking about the original borders of the province. When Paul returned from Greece, he stopped in Ephesus ([Acts 18:19-21](#)). On his third missionary journey, he stayed in Ephesus for more than two years so that from this capital city, "everyone who lived in the province of Asia, Jews and Greeks alike" ([Acts 19:10](#)).

Luke talked about Asia again in [Acts 19:26-27](#); [20:4, 16, 18](#); and [27:2](#). Paul refers to it several times ([Romans 16:5](#); [1 Corinthians 16:19](#); [2 Corinthians 1:8](#); [2 Timothy 1:15](#)). The apostle Peter also used the term ([1 Peter 1:1](#)). In the New Testament, the risen Christ was the last to refer to Asia. He instructed the apostle John, who was living in exile

on the island of Patmos, to write letters to seven specific churches in Asia ([Revelation 1:1-4](#)).

Other cities in this Roman province mentioned in the New Testament include:

- Laodicea and Hierapolis ([Colossians 4:13](#))
- Adramyttium ([Acts 27:2](#))
- Assos ([Acts 20:13-14](#))

Asia Minor

A peninsula that corresponds to the Asia mentioned in the New Testament. Today, it is part of modern Turkey.

See Asia.

Asiarch

The title of an important official in the Roman province of Asia. We do not know exactly what their job was. Several Asiarchs were worried about Paul's safety during a silversmith's riot in Ephesus ([Acts 19:31](#)).

We do not know much else about Asiarchs. We do not know: what skills they needed for the job, how long they worked as Asiarchs, or what their exact duties were.

It is not clear why there were many Asiarchs in Ephesus during the riot or why they cared about Paul's safety. They might have been leaders of the "Commune of Asia." If so, their job was to support and protect the imperial cult (the worship of Rome and the emperor).

The Asiarchs mentioned in Acts did not seem to dislike Christianity. Christianity was challenging the popular pagan worship of Artemis (a Greek goddess).

The long story in [Acts 19](#) shows one of Luke's main ideas: Christianity wasn't trying to cause trouble, and Paul was not a political threat. If he had been, the Asiarchs probably would not have helped him.

Asibias

An Israelite who obeyed Ezra's command to divorce his non-Jewish wife after the exile in

Babylon ([1 Esdras 9:26](#)). He may be the same person as Hashabiah ([Ezra 10:25](#), also called “Malchijah”).

Asiel

Jehu’s great-grandfather. Jehu was a prince in the tribe of Simeon ([1 Chronicles 4:35, 38](#)).

Askelon

A King James Version alternate form of Ashkelon, a Philistine city ([Judges 1:18](#); [1 Samuel 6:17](#); and [2 Samuel 1:20](#)).

See Ashkelon.

Asmodeus

Asmodeus was an evil spirit in the story of Tobit ([Tobit 3:8](#)). He was a jealous lover. In the story, Asmodeus killed the first seven husbands of Sarah, the only daughter of Raguel from Ecbatana, on their wedding nights. Sarah was very sad until Tobit’s son Tobias married her.

The angel Raphael told Tobias how to defeat Asmodeus. Tobias burned the heart and liver of a fish in a ritual. This defeated Asmodeus.

In Hebrew stories about spirits, people often thought of Asmodeus as the king or leader of evil spirits. He might be connected to a Persian spirit called “Aeshma-daeva.” This spirit was known for causing storms, anger, and strong sexual desire.

See also Tobit, Book of.

Asnapper

The King James Version spelling of Osnappar, another name for the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in [Ezra 4:10](#).

See Ashurbanipal.

Asp

A poisonous snake mentioned in the Bible. Most biblical references to the asp seem to be to the Egyptian cobra (*Naja haje*), as in [Deuteronomy](#)

[32:33](#). It hides in holes, walls, and rocks. It can expand its neck by raising its front ribs, making its breast flat and disc-shaped. Its potent poison can cause death in 30 minutes. It grows to about two meters (80 inches) long. The fangs are always raised, unlike vipers, which are common in North America. Only the coral snake in America has fangs that are always raised. Cobra poison attacks the nervous system, causing the muscles to become paralyzed.

The Egyptians considered the asp sacred. They viewed it as a protector since it fed on the rodents that ate their crops. The “venomous snakes” in [Numbers 21:6](#) and [Deuteronomy 8:15](#) may have been cobras. The flying serpent in [Isaiah 14:29](#) and [30:6](#) may refer to the hood of the cobra.

See also Snake.

Aspatha

One of Haman’s ten sons. He was killed with his father when Haman’s plot to destroy the Jews was ended ([Esther 9:7](#)).

Aspen

The aspen is a type of tree from the genus *Populus*. These trees are known for their leaves that shake or tremble in even the lightest breeze. This trembling happens because the leaves have flat stems, which allows them to move easily when wind blows through them.

European aspen (*Populus tremula*) and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) are the most well-known aspens. A related species, Euphrates poplar (*Populus euphratica*), grows in the Middle East and may have been familiar to people in Bible times, particularly in regions near water sources.

See also Plants; Willow.

Asphalt

A brown or black, tar-like substance, a type of bitumen, used in ancient times. It came from natural oil that seeped from the ground and was used for making mortar and sealing things. In Hebrew, the related words can be translated as mortar, pitch, slime, or tar.

See Minerals and Metals; Bitumen.

Asphar

A watering hole in the Tekoa wilderness. It might be modern-day Bir Selhub south of Engedi.

Jonathan and Simon Maccabeus camped at Asphar when fleeing from the Syrians under General Bacchides ([1 Maccabees 9:33](#)).

Asriel, Asrielite

Asriel was the son of Manasseh ([1 Chronicles 7:14](#)). His descendants, the Asrielites, were included in Moses's census in the wilderness ([Numbers 26:31](#)). They were later given a portion of the land from the tribe of Manasseh ([Joshua 17:2](#)).

Ass

An animal that people use to carry heavy things. It looks like a small horse with long ears. People in Bible times often used asses to help them with work, especially in the Near East.

See Animals.

Assarion

A coin of small value ([Matthew 10:29](#)).

See Coins.

Asshur

A Hebrew word that is difficult to translate. In English Bibles, it is translated as Assyria, Assyrian, Assyrians, or merely "Asshur." These translations all come from the Assyrian word *asshur*.

1. The word for Assyria in [Genesis 10:11](#) in the King James Version. It is not a person and should be translated: "From that land he [Nimrod] went forth into Assyria." In that country, east of the Tigris River, Nimrod built four cities: Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and Resen.

2. Shem's son ([Genesis 10:22](#); [1 Chronicles 1:17](#)). This might mean the whole Assyrian people, or it could be an actual person. However, other names like Arpachshad seem to refer to individual persons, so Asshur should be taken in the same way ([Genesis 10:24](#); [11:12](#)). If this is true, he might have started the city of Asshur, which was named after him. The god and nation of Asshur might have then been named after the city. See Asshur (Place).
3. The main god of the city of Asshur.

Asshur (Place)

An ancient city on the Tigris River. People lived there as far back as 2500 BC. Asshur was a smaller city (less than one-tenth the size of Babylon or Nineveh), but it was the homeland and first capital of the Assyrian kingdom.

By 2000 BC, Asshur was a busy city. It traded with an Assyrian colony at Kanish (in modern Turkey). Asshur was strongest during the old Assyrian Empire under King Shamshi-adad I, who ruled from 1813–1781 BC. He controlled much of northern Mesopotamia (the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers), including the city of Mari.

Later, Hammurabi of Babylon took control and ruled from 1792–1750 BC. After he defeated Shamshi-adad, Asshur became less important. We know little about that time.

In the late second millennium, the Assyrians once again became a major power in the Near East. They moved their capital to a different city but Asshur remained their holy city and the home of their main god, also called Asshur.

For hundreds of years, people did not know where Asshur was. In the 1800s, they found out it was at a place called Qalat Shergat in Iraq. German researchers dug there for many years before World War I. They found:

- a temple to Anu-adad with a double ziggurat (a large stepped pyramid);
- a palace and other buildings;
- important old writings, including an Assyrian account of the Babylonian creation epic (an ancient story about how the world began); and
- part of the Assyrian law code (rules for their society)

See also Assyria, Assyrians.

Asshurim, Asshurites

The descendants of Abraham and his second wife, Keturah, through their grandson Dedan ([Genesis 25:3](#)). The Asshurim probably lived in Arabia.

Assir

1. Korah's son and a descendant of Levi through Kohath ([Exodus 6:24](#); [1 Chronicles 6:22](#)).
2. Ebiasaph's son and a descendant of the previous Assir ([1 Chronicles 6:23, 37](#)).
3. The son of Jeconiah (also called Jehoiachin), king of Judah ([1 Chronicles 3:17](#)). The Hebrew word *assir* might be an adjective describing Jeconiah. This would mean "while captive" (compare [2 Kings 24:15](#)). If so, his children were born while he was a captive.

Assos

Assos was a seaport in Mysia, part of the Roman province of Asia (Minor). The apostle Paul and Luke reunited in Assos after Paul traveled overland from Troas, as described in [Acts 20:13-14](#). The Roman writer Pliny noted that the kings of Pergamum founded the town, which was originally named Apollonia. Assos was located on top and along the terraced sides of an extinct volcanic cone that rises 770 feet or 234.6 meters. The Greek philosopher Aristotle lived there for several years.

It was also where Cleanthes was born. Cleanthes was a Stoic poet mentioned by Paul in [Acts 17:28](#). Today Assos is known as Behram Kevi.

Assumption of Moses

The Assumption of Moses is a Jewish legend that tells how Moses was taken up into heaven, either in body or in spirit. The word *assumption* comes from a Latin word meaning "to take up" or "to take to oneself." In ancient writings, it refers to a person being taken up by God into heaven.

The author probably wrote the Assumption of Moses between AD 7 and 30. The writing may combine two earlier works and borrows heavily from the book of Deuteronomy. The work was probably intended to give Moses a miraculous end of life similar to that of the prophet Elijah. However, this legend contradicts the Old Testament account of the death of Moses ([Deuteronomy 32:48-50](#); [34:5-7](#)).

The Lost Assumption of Moses

Many scholars believe there was once another apocryphal book (a book not included in the Bible) about the assumption of Moses that has since been lost. Three facts support this idea:

1. Early lists of apocryphal writings mention a book with this title.
2. Several early church fathers refer to it.
3. A few Greek fragments have survived.

The Story of Moses's Burial

The following events appeared in the work. God sent the archangel Michael to bury Moses's body. Satan opposed the burial because he claimed authority over all physical matter and because Moses was a murderer. Michael opposed Satan's claims and accused him of tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Joshua and Caleb witnessed Moses's unusual assumption or ascension. They saw Moses's dead body buried in the mountain, and at the same time, they also saw Moses himself in the company of the angels. So, Moses's body died, but his spirit did not.

Connection to the Letter of Jude

Many have stated that the Letter of Jude quotes the Assumption of Moses in verse 9, but this cannot be proven. The parts of the book that are needed to verify this are lost. Church fathers like Clement of Alexandria (died AD 215) and Origen (lived around 185–254) thought the Assumption of Moses was the source for [Jude 1:9](#). They had both works, but we only have Jude, so we cannot verify their conclusions. This question has become more complicated because there is now another work that is also called the Assumption of Moses. People often suppose [Jude 1:9](#) is a quotation from that book, but it is not.

The Existing Assumption of Moses

This work may have been written during the life of Jesus. It claims to describe Moses's predictions to Joshua about the future of Israel. Like other apocryphal non-historical writings that claim to have been written by great Jewish leaders, it is pseudonymous (written under a false name).

In 1861, someone accidentally discovered it in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, Italy. The manuscript, from the fifth century AD, is a poor copy of a Latin translation. This Latin version might come from a Greek translation of a Hebrew original. The beginning and end are missing. There are many spelling mistakes, and there are no spaces between words. As a result, scholars have long debated the reading, interpretation, and translation of entire verses.

The first three lines of the manuscript are missing, so the original title is unknown. When it was discovered, many assumed it was the Assumption of Moses, a book that had been lost for a long time. Today, most scholars doubt this identification. Although the work is still called by this title, it is more likely the Testament of Moses, which appears in early lists of apocryphal writings. It is also possible that this work combines both the Testament and the Assumption of Moses traditions.

The book may mention Moses's assumption only once, in relation to his death (Assumption of Moses 10:12), but there is debate as to whether this is even the correct reading of the word in question. Since the book's ending is missing, we cannot know the content of the conclusion. We also cannot tell if this reference to Moses's assumption is original or added later by mistake or by an editor merging two different works. However, it is clear in the surviving text that Moses expected to die (1:15;

10:12–14) and Joshua was also sure that he would (11:4–8).

Moses Foretells Israel's History

The surviving text starts in the middle of a sentence and dates Moses's speech to 2,500 years after creation (Assumption of Moses 1:2–5). Moses is expecting to die and calls Joshua. He encourages him and tells him that God created the world for the Israelites. They will repent before the fulfillment of God's plan at the end of days (1:6–18).

Moses prophesies about the future of Israel. The people will receive the land of Canaan as their inheritance. Local leaders, chiefs (possibly judges), and kings will rule over them (Assumption of Moses 2:1–3). Later, the kingdom will be divided, and the people will worship idols (2:4–9). A king from the east (Nebuchadnezzar) will take two tribes into captivity for about 77 years. During this time, they will remember the warnings that Moses gave them (3:1–14; see [Jeremiah 25:11–12](#); [Deuteronomy 28:15–68](#); [30:15–20](#)).

Someone (Daniel) will pray for their deliverance (see [Daniel 9:4–19](#)). God will convince a king (Cyrus) to let the Israelite exiles return home (Assumption of Moses 4:1–6; see [Isaiah 45:1–6](#); [Ezra 1:1–4](#)). Some exiles will return to their appointed place (Jerusalem) and rebuild the walls. However, they will not be able to offer proper sacrifices (Assumption of Moses 4:7–8; contrast with [Ezra 3:1–7](#)). Others will stay in exile but will increase in number (4:9). This part of the book concludes the predictions about the Old Testament period and begins predictions about the intertestamental period, around 400 to 1 BC.

The book describes a time of widespread apostasy (a falling away from faith) during the Seleucid period, around 201–167 BC. It focuses especially on the priests and judges who became corrupt (Assumption of Moses 5:1–6). The book does not mention the Maccabees, who won political independence from Syria in 164 BC. Instead, it highlights the Hasmonean kings who made themselves both kings and high priests (Assumption of Moses 6:1).

Next, an arrogant king named Herod the Great (who ruled from 37 to 4 BC) will govern the people harshly (Assumption of Moses 6:2–7). After him, a powerful king from the west will conquer the land. He will take some people captive, crucify others, and burn part of the temple (6:8–9).

Persecution, Faithfulness, and Final Judgment

At this point, the predictions have reached the author's own time. He can no longer describe past events as if Moses had predicted them, so he begins to imagine what might happen next. As a result, the words he places in Moses's mouth become more general and uncertain, and some of them never come true.

The next rulers (possibly the Sadducees) are described as ungodly and unfaithful. They are gluttonous, deceitful, and concerned about ceremonial purity while living in luxury at the expense of the poor (Assumption of Moses 7:1–10). An unprecedented time of wrath would follow, when a great king would persecute the Jews, torturing, imprisoning, and even crucifying them for practicing circumcision (8:1–5). During this persecution, a man named Taxo, a Levite with seven sons, would remain true to God. He would choose to die rather than adopt Greek customs (8:1–7).

The next section is an apocalyptic poem made up of ten stanzas, each with three lines (Assumption of Moses 10:1–10). This is the only apocalyptic part of the book. In it, the Lord's kingdom will appear, Satan will be destroyed, and the chief angel, Michael, will bring justice to Israel (10:1–2). The poem declares, "The Heavenly One will rise from His royal throne." There will be miracles and signs on earth and in the sky. Even the ocean will retreat all the way to the deep abyss (10:3–6).

The Most High, the eternal God, will appear and punish the gentiles, destroying their idols (Assumption of Moses 10:7). However, Israel will be happy and exalted, rejoicing to see her enemies in Gehenna (hell) and gratefully praising her creator (10:8–10). The composition ends with Moses mentioning his death and offering words of comfort to Joshua, but the end is incomplete.

When Was the Assumption of Moses Written?

The book was probably written after Herod died and after the Roman general Varus stopped a rebellion in Judea in 4 BC. It must also have been written before the Romans destroyed the temple in AD 70. The book predicts Herod's sons would not rule as long as their father had, who ruled for 34 years. This prediction may be based on the fact that one of Herod's sons, Archelaus, was removed from power after ruling for only 10 years (4 BC–AD 6). If this is correct, the author must have written the book after AD 6.

However, two other sons, Philip and Antipas, ruled longer than their father. Since it seems the author did not know this yet, the book must have been written within 34 years of Herod's death. This would mean the author wrote it before AD 30. So, the book was likely written between AD 6 and 30. This would also mean it reflects the way some Jews were thinking during the lifetime of Jesus.

Who Wrote the Assumption of Moses?

The author was evidently a Jew from Palestine. He probably did not belong to any of the major Jewish religious groups of his time. He disliked Roman rule (Assumption of Moses 8:1–10:10), but he did not support rebellion like the Zealots and those who came before them. His interest in the temple was not typical of the Essenes (2:8–9; 5:3; 6:9; 8:5). He condemned the lifestyle of the Sadducees (7:3–10), and his use of apocalyptic writing was probably unusual for a Pharisee (10:1–10).

See also Apocrypha; Moses.

Assumption of the Virgin

The Assumption of the Virgin is a well-known legend about the death and being taken up to heaven (sometimes called the "translation") of Mary, the mother of Jesus. None of the existing versions of this story were written before the fourth century AD. Most of them come from Egypt.

In the Coptic (Egyptian Christian) versions, Jesus himself appears to Mary before the apostles leave for their missionary journeys. Jesus announces her coming death and translation. In the other version, it is an angel who makes the announcement.

Mary asks to see all the apostles before she dies. The apostles are miraculously brought to her on the clouds. When Mary dies, her body is changed (transfigured), and many people are healed when they touch her body. Soon after her death, Jesus carries her body to heaven.

There was renewed interest in this legend when the Roman Catholic Church made "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin" part of its official doctrine in 1950.

See also Apocrypha; Mary.

Assur

The King James Version spelling of a Hebrew word usually translated as Assyria by most English versions ([Ezra 4:2](#); [Psalm 83:8](#)).

See Assyria, Assyrians.

Assurance

Being sure or confident about what you believe or do.

The "assurance of hope" ("make your hope sure" in the Berean Standard Bible; [Hebrews 6:11](#)) and the "assurance of faith" ([Hebrews 10:22](#); [11:1](#)) are mentioned as qualities of wholeness that help believers live responsibly.

Paul spoke of an "assured understanding" of the gospel of Christ, which resulted in love in the community ("complete understanding"; [Colossians 2:2](#)). He also spoke of the "assured blessing" which was his in Christ ("fullness of the blessing" in the Berean Standard Bible; [Romans 15:29](#)).

Assurbanipal

Another way of spelling the name Ashurbanipal. Ashurbanipal was an Assyrian king.

See Ashurbanipal.

Assyria, Assyrians

Ancient empire considered the symbol of terror and tyranny in the Near East for more than three centuries. Assyria received its name from the tiny city-state Asshur, on the western bank of the Tigris River in northern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). The city was the seat of worship of the sun god Asshur (also spelled Ashur). The Hebrew name occurs frequently in the Bible and is translated Assyria ([Gn 2:14](#)), Assur ([Ezr 4:2](#); [Ps 83:8](#)), or left as Asshur ([Gn 10:11](#), kjv). The form of the name comes originally from the Akkadian language.

Originally, Assyria was a small district in northern Mesopotamia, lying in a rough triangle between the Tigris River and the Upper Zab, a tributary of the Tigris. Eventually Assyria gained control of northern Syria, securing an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea, and took possession of the

fertile Mesopotamian plain, extending Assyrian domain over all of Babylonia to the Persian Gulf.

History

Before the Eighth Century BC

By the end of the third millennium BC, the Sumerians were trading with Assyria and influencing its people culturally. Periodically Sumerian kings would claim political control over Assyria. Sargon of Agade (c. 2350 BC) brought Assyria within the sphere of his political and commercial activities, and when the Amorites overthrew the third dynasty of Ur and established their own states, one of them incorporated Assyria into its territory. During the period of Hammurabi, one of the last great kings of the first Babylonian dynasty (c. 2360–1600 BC), the Assyrians supplied building materials and other goods for the Babylonian kingdom.

Trade between Asshur and the Assyrian colony of Kanish in Anatolia began at a very early time in Assyrian history. Goods were transported by caravans of up to 200 donkeys at a time. The wealth pouring in from such a trade put Assyria in a very strong position economically.

The early phase of Assyrian commercial development was followed by a long period of decline, culminating in the 15th century BC. At that time Assyria was reduced to a state of vassalage by a non-Semitic people, the Hurrians (biblical Horites) of the state of Mitanni. In the 14th century another non-Semitic people, the Hittites, overthrew the power of Mitanni. Assyria was gradually able to rise again and assume the role of a great power in the ancient Near East, largely through the policies of a shrewd prince, Asshur-uballit. His reign marked the beginning of a long process by which Assyria ultimately rose to supremacy.

Enlil-nirari (1329–1320 BC), son and successor of Asshur-uballit, attacked Babylon and defeated Kurigalzu II, the Kassite king of Babylon (1345–1324 BC). Adad-nirari I (1307–1275 BC) extended Assyria's influence by winning victories over the Kassites in Babylonia. He also added territory to the northwest.

The period of consolidation and expansion in the first Assyrian Empire culminated in the capture of Babylon by Tukulti-ninurta I (1244–1208 BC), which for the first time placed Babylon under

Assyrian rule. After that climax, however, Assyrian power declined.

The three centuries from about 1200 to 900 BC were marked by movements of different peoples such as the Greeks, Philistines, Arameans, and Hebrews. Under pressure of people migrating from Europe, the Hittite Empire, which formerly had given political stability to Asia Minor and protected the trade routes, crumbled rapidly. By 1200 BC it fell to attacks by the Sea Peoples from the Greek mainland.

During the tenth century BC, Assyria began to make a slow recovery. In the reign of Adad-nirari II (911–891 BC), Assyria again launched upon a period of conspicuous economic and military expansion. For the next 60 years Assyrian kings followed a consistent policy of consolidating the work of Adad-nirari II. Ashurnasirpal II (885–860 BC) is considered the first great monarch of that new era in Assyrian history. He possessed all the qualities and defects of his successors to the extreme. He had the ambition, energy, courage, vanity, and magnificence of a ruthless, indefatigable empire builder. Ashurnasirpal's first activities were directed to the mountain area to the east, where he extended Assyria's control among the mountain people. In the west he subdued the Arameans with characteristic cruelty and did likewise in Asia Minor.

Shalmaneser III is well known to historians of the biblical world for the battle of Qarqar (853 BC), considered the most fully documented event from the ancient world. He launched an invasion of Syria that was met by a coalition led by Ben-hadad of Damascus and supported by King Ahab of Israel and several other states. Since Shalmaneser was unable to rout the 60,000 troops opposing him, it was many years before the Assyrians were able to conquer Damascus and Samaria. King Jehu of Israel (841–814 BC), who later chose to pay tribute rather than fight, is represented, perhaps by an envoy, on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, excavated at Shalmaneser's capital city, Calah (now called Nimrud). Jehu is depicted as kissing the ground at the Assyrian monarch's feet and offering a tribute of silver, gold, and lead vessels.

Toward the end of his reign Shalmaneser had to put down a rebellion by some of the principal Assyrian cities. He was succeeded by his heir, Shamshi-adad V (823–811 BC). Shamshi-adad's son Adad-nirari III (810–782 BC) built a new palace at Calah and attacked King Hazael of Damascus (Syria) in 804 BC. Assyrian pressure on the Syrians undoubtedly

was a relief to Israel, which had been oppressed by Hazael ([2 Kgs 13:22–25](#)).

From the Eighth Century to the Battle of Carchemish (605 BC)

Beginning about 800 BC the influence of Urartu (Ararat) began to expand, especially in north Syria, at the expense of Assyria. The next half century saw a drastic decline in Assyria's fortunes. In 746 BC, during a revolt in the city of Calah, the entire royal family was murdered.

The final phase of Assyrian power was instituted by the usurper Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC), known also by his adopted Babylonian throne-name Pul ([2 Kgs 15:19](#); [1 Chr 5:26](#)). His reign began the process by which Assyria recovered and consolidated control of all its territories and established itself firmly as the dominant military and economic power in the Near East. Tiglath-pileser first secured control of the mountain passes in the north in order to eliminate the threat of invasion from that direction. Next he subjected Syria and Palestine in the west and took control of the road to Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea. Finally, through diplomacy, he gained the throne of Babylonia also. Under the name of Pul he governed Babylonia, creating the remarkable situation of two crowns united in one ruler bearing two different names. His political prudence was not usually found in the ruthless Assyrian monarchs.

From the year 743 BC Tiglath-pileser III waged a number of campaigns in Syria and Palestine. King Menahem of Israel (752–742 BC) paid him tribute ([2 Kgs 15:19–20](#)), as did Tyre, Byblos, and Damascus. In 738 he subjugated the north central state of Hamath. Responding to an appeal from King Ahaz of Judah (735–715 BC) to help resist the pressures of a proposed anti-Assyrian coalition, Tiglath-pileser conquered Damascus in 732 and Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, a decade later. On both occasions deportations of people to Assyria took place. The fall of Samaria in 722 BC marked the end of the kingdom of Israel.

Sargon II (722–705 BC) claimed to be the Assyrian ruler who captured Samaria, but the biblical record attributed the capture to Shalmaneser ([2 Kgs 17:2–6](#)). To the policy of deportation, Sargon and his successors added that of colonization. To replace the peoples carried into captivity, these Assyrian kings brought tribes from Babylonia, Elam, Syria, and Arabia and settled them in Samaria and surrounding territory. The new arrivals intermingled with the indigenous people

remaining in the land after the deportation and became the Samaritans.

After 10 years of warfare against his enemies to the west in Syria and Asia Minor, and to the north in Urartu, Sargon concentrated his efforts on Babylonia. He chased Merodach-baladan II (721–710 BC; cf. [2 Kgs 20:12–19](#); [Is 39:1](#)) to Elam and made himself king of Babylon in 709. He started building a new capital city for himself, Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad) near Nineveh but was killed in battle before it was finished.

Sargon was succeeded by his son Sennacherib (705–681 BC), who was occupied throughout his reign in a series of bitter wars. He is especially known in biblical studies for his campaign against Judah and siege of Jerusalem during the reign of King Hezekiah (715–686 BC) and the ministry of the prophet Isaiah ([2 Kgs 18:13–19:37](#); [Is 36–37](#)). It was during that crisis that the celebrated Siloam Tunnel was constructed to bring water into the beleaguered capital from the spring of Gihon, outside the city wall, to the pool of Siloam ([2 Kgs 20:20](#)).

Sennacherib was murdered in 681 BC and was succeeded by Esarhaddon, who tried unsuccessfully to establish Assyrian control over Egypt. Esarhaddon was succeeded by Ashurbanipal (669–626? BC), who managed to capture No-amon (Thebes), thereby realizing the greatest victory in Assyrian history (cf. [Na 3:3–10](#)). Ashurbanipal established a great library in Nineveh, which was excavated in 1860. Many tablets made of the finest clay and ranging in size from 1 to 15 inches (2.5 to 38 centimeters) were found, containing a vast selection of Akkadian material. Some of the tablets contain historical records; others, astronomical reports, mathematical calculations, and private or public letters. A considerable part of the collection deals with astrology and medicine. Many of the tablets contain prayers, incantations, psalms, and religious texts in general. A copy of the Babylonian account of creation was also found. This library is now one of the principal treasures of the British Museum in London.

Very little is known about Ashurbanipal's reign after 639 BC since his annals do not extend beyond that year. However, some information on events of his last 13 years can be gleaned from allusions in state correspondence, commercial documents, and prayers addressed to the gods. Evidently the situation in Assyria was becoming increasingly serious, and when Ashurbanipal died in 626 his empire declined quickly.

The Medes had entered the Assyrian annals during the reign of Esarhaddon, when they still consisted of a large number of associated but separate tribes. Later those tribes began to be welded into a single kingdom. Herodotus states that Phraortes, their king, attacked Assyria but lost his life on the battlefield and was succeeded by his son Cyaxeres.

The year 626 BC marked several important events in the ancient world. Nabopolassar, a Chaldean prince, became king of Babylon (626–605 BC) toward the end of that year. An alliance between the Medes and Nabopolassar was concluded, and from that time on, the success of Nabopolassar against Assyria was almost inevitable. By the year 617 BC he had cleared Babylonia of all Assyrian garrisons. He then marched up the Euphrates to the Aramean districts that had been part of the Assyrian Empire for two and a half centuries. The plan was for Nabopolassar to attack Nineveh from the west and the Medes to attack it at the same time from the east; however, the combined forces of the Assyrians and Egyptians, now allies, compelled Nabopolassar to withdraw to Babylon.

In 614 BC the Medes carried out a massive attack on Assyria. Although Nineveh was too strong to yield to the attack, the Medes captured some of the neighboring cities, including Asshur, the ancient capital. At that point Nabopolassar arrived with the Babylonian forces. He met Cyaxeres at Asshur, and they established mutual friendship and peace. Their alliance was later confirmed by the marriage of Nebuchadnezzar, Nabopolassar's son, to Amytis, daughter of Cyaxeres. In 612 BC their combined forces launched a final assault against Nineveh, and after three months of siege the mighty city fell ([Na 1:8](#)).

Despite the loss of their capital, a weakened Assyrian kingdom survived for three more years. The Assyrian troops who could escape from Nineveh fled westward to Haran, where an Assyrian prince, Asshur-uballit, was made king and sought Egypt's help to restore the kingship of Assyria. Necho II (609–593 BC), known in the Bible as Neco, responded and set off with his Egyptian troops to Haran to fight against the Babylonians, who by now had annihilated Assyria. King Josiah of Judah (640–609 BC), who evidently considered himself a vassal of Assyria's heir, Neo-Babylonia, marched to oppose the Egyptian advance and was mortally wounded by an arrow on the battlefield of Megiddo ([2 Kgs 23:29–30](#); [2 Chr 35:20–24](#)).

When Nabopolassar and his allies attacked Haran in 610 BC, Asshur-uballit did not attempt to defend

it but fled southwest to await Necho and his troops. The joint forces of the Egyptians and the Assyrians returned to mount an assault upon Haran with some initial success. But Nabopolassar's army compelled the Assyrian-Egyptian forces to abandon the siege and withdraw to Carchemish (present-day Jarablus). There, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians made a direct attack on the powerful army. The resultant carnage on both sides was graphically depicted by the prophet Jeremiah ([46:1-12](#)). Nebuchadnezzar emerged victorious in the battle of Carchemish (605 BC). However, because of the death of his father, he did not pursue his victory but returned to Babylon to assume the throne.

There is a tradition in the Assyrian Christian church that after the collapse of the Assyrian Empire under the onslaught of the Medes and Neo-Babylonians, a remnant of the Assyrian people—chiefly princes, noblemen, and warriors—took refuge in the mountains of Kurdistan. There they built a number of armed fortresses. Alexander the Great (336–323 BC), his successors, and the Roman legions made no attempt to conquer these tribes. Trajan (AD 98–117) marched at the head of the Roman armies through Armenia, touching the northern region of Kurdistan, on his way to Persia. It is asserted that the wise men, or magi, who visited the newly born king in Bethlehem, the baby Jesus, came from Edessa. According to this tradition, the magi, on returning from Bethlehem, proclaimed the amazing things they had heard and seen on their visit to the king. A Christian church was founded among the Assyrians that has survived throughout the centuries.

The region that was Assyria, including all of Mesopotamia, is within present-day Iraq, an Arabic-speaking country predominantly Muslim in religion.

See also Israel, History of; Kings, Books of First and Second; Mesopotamia.

Astaroth

The King James Version form of Ashtaroth. It was a town known for its pagan worship of the goddess Ashtoreth ([Deuteronomy 1:4](#)).

See Ashtaroth, Ashterathite.

Astarte

A pagan mother-goddess who was widely worshiped throughout the ancient Near East. She was also known as Ashtoreth.

See Canaanite Deities and Religion.

Astrology

A belief system about how stars and planets affect people's lives. Astrology is not a real science. It claims that the position of the sun, moon, and planets can influence a person's character and future.

Astrologers (people who practice astrology) use a map of the sky called the "zodiac." The zodiac is divided into 12 parts, each named after a group of stars called a constellation. As the sun and planets move across the sky, they pass through different parts of the zodiac. Astrologers look at these movements and try to interpret what they mean for people's lives.

The 12 segments of the zodiac are called "houses," and each house is associated with a constellation or "sign" (for example, Leo, Virgo, Sagittarius). A person's birth date determines their sign.

An astrologer makes a detailed sky map called a "horoscope" for a person. This is a complex process. The horoscope shows where the sun, moon, and planets were when the person was born. Astrologers think that the positions of planets in different signs, or how the sun and moon line up, can show good or bad things that might happen.

The oldest known record of astrology comes from ancient Sumer. Sumer was a region near the Euphrates River, which is in modern-day Iraq. The story is found on clay cylinders from Sumer. These cylinders tell about a dream that King Gudea had. In the dream, a goddess named Nidaba came to him holding a tablet that showed a map of the sky. The dream suggested it was a good time for King Gudea to build the temple called "Eninnu."

Astrology became very popular in ancient Babylon. Priests there played a big role in its growth. They studied the sky seriously, but also looked for signs or messages in it. The Babylonians were very superstitious, often looking for special meanings in everyday things. So, it makes sense that they tried to find messages in the movements of the sun, moon, planets, and stars.

As far as we know, the Babylonians created the zodiac. They also made a monthly calendar. This calendar showed days they thought were good for doing things, as well as days when they thought people should do very little. They believed doing too much on certain days might make their gods angry. Once they made this monthly pattern, they used it for the whole year.

In the fourth century BC, ideas about astronomy and astrology from Babylon spread to Greece. The Greeks became very interested in astrology for two main reasons:

1. They loved science and studying nature.
2. Their religion believed in many gods. This made it easy for them to think that stars and planets could be gods or have special powers.

As Greek culture spread, astrology reached Egypt. It became very popular there and lasted a long time. Herodotus, an early Greek writer who studied history, wrote that the Egyptians used birth dates to try to predict what that person would be like and kept careful records of unusual events. They used these records to try to predict what might happen if similar events occurred again. The Egyptians added new ideas to Greek astrology, such as dividing the sky into 36 sections, each with its own god, and dividing the day into 24 hours, which is still used today.

Greek astrology also spread to Rome and became very important there. A Roman astrologer named Nigidius was influenced by Greek ideas. He made predictions that were clever but also quite vague.

We don't know much about other Roman astrologers, but astrology was a big part of Roman life:

- They created a system of lucky and unlucky days.
- They named the days of the week after planets, which were named after gods. This practice probably started in the Hellenistic period.
- The Romans improved the calendar, which made it easier for regular people to use astrology.

For example, in 46 BC, they started using a calendar with 365 days called the Julian calendar. This made it simpler to do astrological calculations.

Some claim that the Bible contains astrological references. For example, Jacob's blessings on his 12 sons have been linked to the signs of the zodiac. Some people think that descriptions of space and stars in end-of-the-world stories (called "apocalyptic imagery") have astrological meanings. However, these ideas are just guesses. There is no solid proof that these descriptions are actually about astrology.

The Old Testament did not allow people to try and predict the future by asking false gods, mediums (people who claim to talk to spirits), or using objects. To do so ignores God as the true source of revelation (knowledge about the future). People like Daniel, who could interpret dreams, did so with God's help ([Daniel 2:17-23](#)).

[Isaiah 47:12-13](#) specifically mentions information about astrology. This part of Isaiah is talking about the fall of Babylon, a powerful empire. Isaiah describes some things that were common in Babylon:

- They used magic spells.
- They practiced sorcery (magic).
- They had astrologers (people who study the stars to predict the future).

Isaiah mentions that the Babylonians divided the sky into parts (probably the zodiac). He also says they made predictions at each new moon. Isaiah mocks the Babylonians and tells them to keep using these practices as if they might help. But what Isaiah really means is that Babylon will be destroyed, and even their famous astrologers will not be able to save it.

The prophet Jeremiah warned the Israelites not to be afraid of signs in the sky ([Jeremiah 10:1-3](#))

These "signs" were probably unusual things people saw in the sky, like:

- eclipses (when the sun or moon is blocked)
- comets (bright objects with tails that move across the sky)
- planets appearing close together

In ancient times, many people were scared of these events. They thought these signs showed what would happen in the future. But Jeremiah said God's people should not think these sky events had magical power or use them to try to predict the future ([Jeremiah 10:3](#)). Jeremiah taught that trying to tell the future from things in the sky was useless.

The book of Daniel mentions a group of people called "soothsayers" ("magicians" in the Berean Standard Bible; [Daniel 2:27](#); [5:11](#)). Many think these were astrologers. The meaning of the word, however, is not clear. The word comes from an Aramaic word that means "to cut" or "divide." These soothsayers are listed along with other people who tried to predict the future. This makes it likely that they were indeed astrologers. The important point in Daniel is that these people, who use different methods to try to tell the future, are not effective.

The magi, who visited Jesus at his birth, might have been astrologers, but the word "magi" can mean many things ([Matthew 2:1-16](#)). When Jesus was born, some planets might have looked very close together in the sky. The magi might have thought this unusual sight meant a new Jewish king had been born. The magi might have known about Jewish beliefs in two ways:

1. They could have read the book of Daniel in the Bible. Daniel was a Jewish prophet who lived in Babylon and Persia long ago.
2. They might have talked to Jewish people who worked for the Persian government. Many Jews were living in Persia at that time.

These sources could have taught the magi about the Jewish hope for a special king (called the Messiah) who would come one day.

A tradition may have developed from [Numbers 24:17](#) that a star would appear when the Messiah was born. However, it is very important to

understand that this story in the Bible does not support astrology. The Bible is not saying that reading the stars can tell us about the future.

See also Astronomy; Calendars, Ancient and Modern.

Astronomy

The study of things outside the earth's atmosphere. It focuses on the positions, movements, and features of objects in space. The word "astronomy" comes from Greek words meaning "the law of the stars."

Astronomy is not a modern science. People have been interested in space for a very long time. Early civilizations studied the sky for fortune-telling (astrology) and to help with navigation.

The Bible talks about astronomy in some interesting ways. According to [Genesis 1:14-19](#), God made the sun, moon, and stars to:

1. give light on the earth;
2. mark seasons and festivals; and
3. act as "signs" to help people find their way."

The word "season" may refer to festivals and the annual seasons. Like the Babylonian calendar, the Hebrew calendar was based on the moon's phases. It used the moon to set dates for religious festivals. The function of the stars and planets as signs seems to relate to how they outline the heavens. This allows people on Earth to find their way, navigate, and orient themselves.

The Bible does not directly mention eclipses. But some passages about the sun and moon going dark might be talking about eclipses ([Joel 2:31](#); [Amos 8:9](#); [Matthew 24:29](#)).

Some constellations are mentioned in the Old Testament. It is not always easy to determine which constellations are being discussed by particular Hebrew words. The word translated "Pleiades" (in many versions) means a "cluster" or "heap." It likely applies to the most visible cluster of stars in the constellation Taurus ([Job 9:9](#); [38:31](#); [Amos 5:8](#)). A Hebrew word possibly related to the word "fool" is frequently understood to be the constellation Orion. The connection between that constellation and the word "fool" is unknown. Other constellations are noted as "the

constellations of the South" and "the Bear" ([Job 9:9; 38:32](#)). It can be seen in the northern sky.

The Bible often mentions stars. God told Abraham his descendants would be as numerous as the stars ([Genesis 15:5](#)). Paul wrote that stars have different levels of brightness ([1 Corinthians 15:41](#)).

[Jude 1:13](#) compares false teachers to "wandering stars." Some think this metaphor is based on how stars appear to move around the polestar (the closest stationary star based on its proximity to the poles). The fixed polestar provides a reference point for navigation, while the moving stars would be unreliable guides, like false teachers.

However, it is more likely that Jude's metaphor refers to the planets. By that time, people knew the regular movements of stars and constellations around the polestar, so they would not consider all stars except the polestar to be "wandering." Planets, on the other hand, were seen as moving in erratic paths, unlike the fixed rotation of stars. Some commentators believe "wandering stars" could also refer to comets.

See also Astrology.

Astyages

The fourth and final king of the Medes, according to the early Greek historian Herodotus. He ruled for 35 years until 550 BC, when his Persian grandson, Cyrus II, overthrew him. Astyages had been warned in a dream about the future greatness of his daughter Mandane's offspring. To protect his throne, he married Mandane to Cambyses I, a Persian of royal blood, as the Persians were then weak. Astyages further ensured his safety by arranging for Cyrus, their son, to be abandoned in the wilderness. However, Cyrus was saved and raised by a cowherd until his true identity was discovered. He was then sent to live with his royal parents in Persia.

Cyrus led a revolt against his grandfather and took the throne. He had the support of Harpagus, who Astyages had wronged. According to Herodotus, Cyrus later allowed Astyages to live in the royal court without harming him further.

[Bel and the Dragon 1:1](#) suggests that Cyrus inherited the kingdom when Astyages died, which could be a popular legend rather than a historical fact (Bel and the Dragon is an apocryphal book and is not considered Scripture by some churches).

Some cuneiform inscriptions support Herodotus's account.

See also Cyrus the Great.

Asuppim

The King James Version spelling of a Hebrew word meaning "storehouses," a part of the temple complex ([1 Chronicles 26:15, 17](#)).

See Temple.

Asur

One of the temple servants whose descendants were among those who returned with Zerubbabel from exile in Babylon ([1 Esdras 5:31](#)). The name Harhur is also listed in [Ezra 2:51](#) and [Nehemiah 7:53](#).

Aswan

A city in southern Egypt, known for its ancient stone quarries and the nearby Aswan Dam on the Nile River. In ancient times, the city was called Syene.

See Syene.

Asylum

A safe place where someone who is accused of a crime can go to avoid being arrested or punished. It can also refer to the protection such a place offers. This concept is similar to the term "sanctuary." In ancient times, people would often run to altars or temples for protection. For example, Adonijah and Joab sought sanctuary from King Solomon at the altar of the tabernacle ([1 Kings 1:50–53; 2:28–31](#)). In the law of Moses, asylum was given through cities of refuge.

See Cities of Refuge.

Asyncritus

One of the Christians in Rome to whom Paul sent greetings ([Romans 16:14](#)).

Atad

The site where Jacob's sons stopped during his funeral on the way to Hebron. It was probably in Canaan. There, at the threshing floor (where wheat was separated from chaff), Joseph's family and many Egyptians from the pharaoh's house spent seven days mourning the death of Jacob ([Genesis 50:10–11](#)). The Canaanites were impressed by their mourning and named the place "Abel-mizraim." The name is a play on words, combining "meadow" and "mourning," while the second is the Hebrew word for Egypt.

Atarah

Onam's mother and the second wife of Jerahmeel ([1 Chronicles 2:26](#)).

Ataroth

1. A town in the mountainous region east of the Jordan River. Ataroth was rebuilt by the tribe of Gad ([Numbers 32:3, 33–36](#)). It was mentioned in the famous Moabite Stone by King Mesha, who said he brought back the "altar of David" from Ataroth. This Ataroth is probably modern-day Khirbet Attarus.
2. A town on the southern border of Ephraim's tribal land ([Joshua 16:2](#)), possibly the same as Ataroth-addar ([Joshua 16:5; 18:13](#)).
3. A town in the Jordan Valley on the northeast border of Ephraim's tribal land ([Joshua 16:7](#)).
4. A town in Judah near Bethlehem belonging to the family of Joab, the son of Salma ([1 Chronicles 2:54](#)).

Ataroth-Addar

A town on the boundary between Ephraim's and Benjamin's tribal land ([Joshua 16:5; 18:13](#)). It was about seven miles (or 11 kilometers) north of Jerusalem.

Ater

1. The ancestor of a group of people who returned to Judah with Zerubbabel after the exile ([Ezra 2:16; Nehemiah 7:21](#)).
2. The ancestor of a family of gatekeepers who also returned to Judah with Zerubbabel ([Ezra 2:42; Nehemiah 7:45](#)).
3. A political leader who signed Ezra's promise to be faithful to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:17](#)).

Athach

A city to which David sent part of his loot after a victory over the Amalekites ([1 Samuel 30:30](#)). It was probably near Ziklag in southern Judah.

Athaiah

Uzziah's son from the tribe of Judah. He lived in Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 11:4](#)).

Athaliah

1. The wife of King Jehoram of Judah, and daughter of King Ahab of Israel and his wife, Jezebel. Athaliah was Judah's only queen. She ruled 841–835 BC ([2 Kings 11](#); [2 Chronicles 22–23](#)).

Like her mother Jezebel, Athaliah worshiped Baal, a Canaanite god. She encouraged her husband to do the same. Athaliah had a strong influence on Jehoram. After he died, their son Ahaziah became king ([2 Kings 8:25–27](#); [2 Chronicles 22:1](#)). Like his father, Ahaziah was influenced by Athaliah and did “evil in the sight of the LORD” ([2 Kings 8:27](#)).

Because the kings of Israel and Judah disobeyed God, He chose Jehu to be the true king of Israel ([2 Kings 9:2–3](#)). Jehu killed Joram, king of Israel ([2 Kings 9:24](#)), and Ahaziah, king of Judah ([2 Kings 9:27](#); [2 Chr 22:9](#)).

After her son died, Athaliah took the throne of Judah. She tried to kill all the males in the royal family ([2 Kings 11:1](#); [2 Chronicles 22:10](#)). But Jehoshabeath, Jehoram's daughter and the wife of Jehoiada, the priest, rescued Ahaziah's son Joash. She hid him away from Athaliah ([2 Kings 11:2–3](#); [2 Chronicles 22:11–12](#)).

After six years, Jehoiada “strengthened himself” and decided to reveal young prince Joash to the people. He made a deal with some mercenaries brought to Jerusalem: “the Levites...and the heads of the families of Israel” ([2 Chronicles 23:1–3](#)). In a secret ceremony in the temple, Joash was crowned king.

Athaliah heard people celebrating and blowing trumpets and tried to stop what was happening by tearing her clothes and yelling, “Treason!” She was immediately taken from the temple area and executed ([2 Kings 11:13–16](#); [2 Chronicles 23:12–15](#)). See Israel, History of; Kings, Books of First and Second.

2. One of the sons of Jehoram from the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 8:26](#)).
3. The father of Jeshaiiah, who led the sons of Elam who were returning from Babylon with Ezra ([Ezra 8:7](#)).

Atharim

The place where the Israelites tried to enter Canaan and were attacked by the king of Arad in Atharim ([Numbers 21:1](#)). The name means “tracks” and is believed to be located near Tamar, or Hazazon-tamar, several miles south of the Dead Sea. One possible reading of the text makes it the same as Tamar. The King James Version follows the Targum (an Aramaic translation of the Old Testament) and Vulgate (a Latin translation of the Bible) and translates it as “spies.”

Athbash

A Hebrew cryptograph, a secret writing system used to hide messages.

- The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is replaced by the last letter.
- The second letter is replaced by the next-to-last letter.
- This pattern continues for all letters.

This secret writing system was used in [Jeremiah 51:1](#) for the word “Chaldea.” It was also used in [Jeremiah 25:26](#) and [51:41](#) for the word “Babylon” (written as “Sheshach.”)

The Septuagint, the early Greek translation of the Old Testament, correctly translated these codes as “Chaldea” and “Babylon” respectively.

Athenobius

A friend of King Antiochus VII of Syria ([1 Maccabees 15:28–36](#)). When Antiochus attacked the city of Dor, the high priest Simon Maccabeus tried to help Antiochus by sending him 2,000 soldiers, gold and silver, and military equipment. But Antiochus refused these gifts and broke all agreements with Simon. He then sent a man named Athenobius to Jerusalem. Athenobius told Simon to either give Antiochus control of several strong

places or pay a lot of money. If Simon did not do either, Antiochus threatened to attack. Simon offered to pay only one-tenth of what Antiochus asked for. Athenobius went back to Antiochus very angry about this. As a result, Antiochus sent his general, Cendebeus, to attack Judea ([1 Maccabees 15:38-41](#)).

Athens

Athens is the capital city of modern Greece. For many centuries, it was the main city of a region called Attica. The most famous landmark in Athens is the Acropolis. The Acropolis is a flat rock that rises about 200 feet (61 meters) above the surrounding area. It still has several famous old buildings on it. Stone walls from 1100 BC show that an advanced community lived there long ago.

Athens began to become a great city in the 500s BC. First, a leader named Solon (who died in 559 BC) created systems for democratic government. Later, another leader named Pericles (who died in 429 BC) built the beautiful buildings on the Acropolis. During this time, called the golden age, Athens became an important center for philosophy, art, building design, and drama.

When Paul brought the Christian message to Athens ([Acts 17:15-34](#)), the city was not as great as it had been before. However, Roman emperors still supported Athens. They built new structures and fixed up the Agora (the marketplace). Athens still had the best university in the Greek world. Two groups of thinkers, called Epicureans and Stoics, were still active in the city.

The apostle Paul first brought Christianity to Athens during his second missionary journey around AD 50. He mentions Athens only once in [1 Thessalonians 3:1](#), where he says that he and Timothy arrived in the city together, but he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica while he stayed in Athens.

Luke provides a detailed account of Paul's work in Athens ([Acts 17:16-34](#)). Paul was upset by the many statues of gods he saw in the city. As a Jewish monotheist, he saw Athens as a sinful place despite its cultural achievements.

Like other cities at that time, Athens had a Jewish community. Paul started preaching to his fellow Jews, as was his custom. He then began speaking in the marketplace about Jesus to anyone who would listen, including some philosophers who mocked

him as a "babbler." They thought Paul was introducing a new god, so they brought him before the Areopagus, a council responsible for religious and moral matters in Athens. This council got its name from a small hill near the Acropolis where it used to meet. By Paul's time, the council met in a portico at one end of the marketplace.

Most of Luke's story is about Paul's speech to the Areopagus. Paul mentioned their many gods, even an "unknown god," and said he was making known to them the true God. He called for repentance and warned of judgment. Some people mocked the idea of resurrection, but others wanted to hear more.

Luke says that only a few people followed Paul, including Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris. It seems that Paul did not establish a church in Athens, so the city did not play a major role in early Christian history.

Athlai

Bebai's descendant. He obeyed Ezra's command to divorce his non-Jewish wife after the exile to Babylon ([Ezra 10:28](#)).

Atonement

In Christian thought, "atonement" refers to the process by which God and humanity are reconnected and brought into a personal relationship. The term implies a removal of separation or alienation between God and humans. The word comes from Anglo-Saxon words meaning "making at one" or "at-one-ment." It is closely associated with reconnecting and forgiveness.

In the King James Version, "atonement" appears frequently in the Old Testament but only once in the New Testament ([Romans 5:11](#)). Modern translations correctly use "reconciliation" instead. Despite the change in words, the concept of atonement is central to the New Testament and to Christian theology as a whole. It emphasizes that God takes the initiative in human salvation, offering pardoning grace through atonement. For humans, who cannot connect themselves to God, atonement provides a "new and living way" to connect with God.

The need for atonement is due to human sinfulness, as depicted throughout Scripture:

- The prophet Isaiah said, "We all like sheep have gone astray" ([Isaiah 53:6](#)).
- Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)).
- David the psalmist cried, "there is no one who does good, not even one" ([Psalm 14:3](#)).

Paul described the sinfulness of man caused by his disobedience and idolatry ([Romans 1:18-32](#)). He summed it up: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" ([Romans 3:23](#)).

Elsewhere Paul described humans as:

- enemies of God ([Romans 5:10](#))
- "hostile to God" ([Romans 8:7](#))
- "alienated from God and...hostile in your minds, engaging in evil deeds" ([Colossians 1:21](#))
- just like Adam: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death was passed on to all men, because all sinned" ([Romans 5:12](#)).

The problem of human sin is made worse by God's holiness. God cannot look at sin. Isaiah saw the holy God in the temple and felt afraid because of his own sins ([Isaiah 6:1-5](#)). People are very sinful, and God is completely holy. Because of this, people are scared of God and cannot change this situation on their own. They are lost and helpless, facing God's judgment. They cannot make themselves right with God or earn God's care.

Only God can make it possible for people to be made right with him. The way God does this in the Bible shows us about both God's nature and human nature.

In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, the word often translated as "atone" means "to wipe out," "to erase," "to cover," or more generally "to remove." This word is translated in different ways, such as:

- "to make atonement"
- "forgive"
- "appease"
- "pacify"
- "pardon"
- "purge"
- "put off"
- "reconcile"

In the Old Testament, the most common way to make atonement was through animal sacrifice. The most important part of a sacrifice was the shedding of blood. The Bible says that life is in the blood ([Leviticus 17:11](#)). When the blood was poured out, it meant that life was given up and death happened. In sacrifices, blood stood for death, not life. Some people think that pouring out the blood made life available to the people. But it was the life of the flesh that was in the blood, and the flesh was sacrificed. In the New Testament, it is because Jesus rose from the dead that his life is available to believers.

Not every mention of atonement in the Old Testament was about shedding blood. On the Day of Atonement, two goats were used:

- One goat was killed.
- The other goat was "presented alive before the LORD to make atonement" ([Leviticus 16:10](#)).

This second goat, called the "scapegoat," was sent into the desert carrying the people's sins. Sending the goat away took the place of shedding blood. The goat suffered instead of the people. It was a substitute for them.

There were also other ways to make atonement:

- The Israelites gave money for the temple ([Exodus 30:16](#)).
- Aaron and Moses used incense to stop a disease from spreading: "He offered the incense and made atonement for the people" ([Numbers 16:47](#)).

These few special cases do not change the main Old Testament idea of atonement through animal sacrifice. The New Testament sums this up by

saying, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" ([Hebrews 9:22](#)).

In the Old Testament, the idea of atonement for sin led to words like:

- "expiation" (removing guilt)
- "forgiveness"

The idea of atonement for God's anger or judgment led to words like:

- "propitiation" (putting God's anger somewhere else)
- "reconciliation" (restoring a friendly relationship)

Modern English Bible translations use different words to explain the idea of atonement that God provides.

The New Testament clearly shows that Christ's work, especially his death on the cross, provides atonement. The New Testament still uses Old Testament language, especially the word "blood." For example, the New Testament talks about:

- the "blood of the covenant" ([Matthew 26:28](#))
- the "new covenant in My blood" ([Luke 22:20](#))
- the "blood of Christ" ([Ephesians 2:13](#))
- the "blood of His cross" ([Colossians 1:20](#))

The New Testament also often mentions "the cross" and "the death of Christ," which mean almost the same thing as "blood" in these cases. The New Testament is called the "new covenant" of Jesus Christ, made official by his blood.

See also Propitiation; Expiation; Offerings and Sacrifices; Atonement, Day of; Redeemer, Redemption; Ransom.

Atroth-Beth-Joab

A town in Judah near Bethlehem ([1 Chronicles 2:54](#)).

The Hebrew word *'ataroth* means "crowns." So, some scholars think that the phrase may refer to Salma's descendants as chiefs of Joab's clan.

Atroth-Shophan

A city in the Transjordan in the tribal land of Gad ([Numbers 32:35](#)). Some translations mistakenly list Atroth-Shophan as two cities.

Attai

1. The son of Sheshan's daughter and of Jarha, Sheshan's Egyptian slave. Attai was from the tribe of Judah ([1 Chronicles 2:35-36](#)).
2. A warrior from the tribe of Gad who joined David at Ziklag in his struggle against King Saul ([1 Chronicles 12:11](#)).
3. The son of King Rehoboam of Judah by Maachah. He was Solomon's grandson ([2 Chronicles 11:20](#)).

Attalia

A Mediterranean seaport in Asia Minor.

The apostle Paul and Barnabas sailed back to Antioch from Attalia at the end of Paul's first missionary journey ([Acts 14:25](#)). The town was founded by Attalus II Philadelphus, the king of the province of Pergamum from 159 to 138 BC. Pergamum was taken by the Romans in 79 BC and became a province in AD 43. In Paul's time, Attalia was part of the province of Pamphylia.

Today, though its harbor is shallow, it is still an important Turkish seaport (Antalya).

Attalus

The name or title of several kings of Pergamum. Attalus II Philadelphus, the king from 159 to 138 BC, probably received a "letter of recommendation" for the Jews from the Roman consul Lucius ([1 Maccabees 15:22](#)). This Attalus was succeeded by his nephew Philometor Evergetes, who reigned from 138 to 133 BC. Philometor gave his kingdom to Rome, ending the history of Pergamum as a political entity. Rome organized the kingdom into the province of Asia.

Attendant

A high-ranking officer who worked for the king.

See Chamberlain.

Attharates

A Persian word meaning “governor” ([Nehemiah 8:9](#)). “Attharates” is a different spelling of the title Tirshatha. In the Apocrypha, it is written as a proper name ([1 Esdras 9:49](#)). (The Apocrypha is a set of ancient texts not included in the Hebrew Bible but accepted by some Christian groups.)

See Tirshatha.

Attharias

A Greek spelling of the Persian title, Tirshatha, meaning “governor” ([1 Esdras 5:40](#); compare [Ezra 2:63](#)).

Attributes of God

The attributes of God are the qualities or characteristics that show who God is.

These include God’s virtues (good moral qualities), excellencies (greatness), and perfections (things that are complete and without fault). These attributes help people understand what God is like.

See God, Being and Attributes of.

Augustus Caesar

Augustus was the first emperor of the Roman Empire. He ruled from 31 BC to AD 14. He was emperor when Jesus was born.

Early Life and Rise to Power

Augustus was born in 63 BC. His full name was Gaius Octavianus (also called Octavian). He was the grandson of Julia, the sister of Julius Caesar. He was 18 years old and studying in Greece when Julius Caesar was killed by Cassius and Brutus. In his will, Caesar adopted Octavian as his son and made him his heir. This led Octavian into the struggle for power in Rome.

About a year and a half later, three men shared power in Rome: Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus. The next year, Octavian and Antony fought a battle at Philippi and defeated Cassius and Brutus. These two men had helped plan the killing of Julius Caesar. Philippi was in Macedonia, which is now part of Greece.

After the battle, Antony ruled the eastern part of the empire, including Greece and Egypt. Octavian returned to Italy. Lepidus took control of Gaul and western North Africa. Later, Lepidus was forced to give up power, and Octavian took his lands.

Octavian and Antony had already fought in the past. Now they became enemies again. In 31 BC, Octavian won a major battle against Antony at Actium. After this, Octavian became the only ruler of the Roman world. He was Rome’s first emperor.

Leadership and Legacy

Octavian was not a strong military leader like Julius Caesar. But he was good at keeping peace and solving problems. Because of this, many people supported him.

During his rule, Roman culture grew. There were many new buildings and important writings.

Augustus also created the Praetorian Guard. This was a special group of 9,000 soldiers who protected the emperor. Later, the Praetorian Guard became very powerful. They could even remove an emperor or choose a new one without asking the Senate. The Senate was Rome’s group of older men who helped make laws.

In 27 BC, Octavian received the title *Augustus* (from the Greek word *Augoustos*). This word means “honored one” or “respected one.” The title showed the growing idea that emperors should be worshiped. Julius Caesar had started this practice. He called himself “the unconquered god” and “the father of the fatherland.”

Augustus followed this idea. At first, he said people should worship him only with the goddess Roma. Later, people began to think of Augustus as the savior of the world. The people built a temple for him in Athens. Even Herod the Great built temples to honor him.

When Augustus became emperor, he worked to bring order to the empire. The provinces (the areas outside Italy) were in trouble. So Augustus made changes to the empire’s economy and money system.

Augustus and the New Testament

The name Caesar Augustus appears only once in the New Testament. But many people know him because of the census he ordered before Jesus was born ([Luke 2:1](#)). This census caused Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem.

We do not know much about this first census. Luke says it happened when Jesus was born. A second census happened later, in AD 6. That census caused a protest led by Judas of Galilee ([Acts 5:37](#)).

Augustus and Herod's Family

During the rule of Augustus, Herod the Great became one of the emperor's trusted leaders. Augustus allowed Herod to rule the Jewish people with little interference from Rome. To show his thanks, Herod rebuilt the city of Samaria and renamed it *Sebaste* to honor Augustus. He also built a new port city called *Caesarea*, on the coast of Palestine, and named it after the emperor.

In 12 BC, Augustus helped settle a conflict between Herod and his sons. When another argument happened later, Augustus told a Roman court to decide the case. In 7 BC, the court ruled that two of Herod's sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, should be killed. In 4 BC, Augustus gave permission for Herod to kill another son, Antipater.

In Herod's final will, he chose three sons to rule his kingdom: Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip. But they needed the emperor's approval. After Herod died, Archelaus traveled to Rome to ask Augustus for more power. Antipas also went to Rome to ask for royal status.

While they were in Rome, a group of Jewish leaders also spoke to Augustus. They asked him to end Herod's family rule. Many people did not like the Herods. At the same time, there were riots in Judea. Roman soldiers from Syria had to stop the violence.

Augustus made a compromise. He turned Herod's kingdom into a Roman province and did not make any of the sons kings. But he still followed Herod's wishes:

- Archelaus became the ruler of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. This was half of the province.
- Antipas ruled one-fourth of the province. His area included Galilee and Perea.
- Philip ruled Iturea and Trachonitis ([Luke 3:1](#)). This last quarter of the province was an area east of Galilee.

Later, Archelaus ruled poorly. In AD 6, Augustus removed him from power and sent him to Vienne in southern France.

Death and Succession

Augustus died in AD 14 after a short illness. He left the empire to his chosen successor, Tiberius.

See also Caesars, The.

Augustus's Band

A Roman military unit mentioned in [Acts 27:1 \(King James Version\)](#). The Berean Standard Bible and other English versions use "Imperial Regiment" instead of "Augustus's Band."

A centurion (an officer in charge of about 100 soldiers) named Julius was a member of Augustus's Band. He was a commander who had custody of the apostle Paul on the way to Rome. The Greek word translated as "band" normally meant a Roman cohort (500 men) or force of two cohorts.

Some scholars assume that Julius was in command of that unit. It is unusual that an officer who normally commanded a century (100 men) would be in charge of 500 to 1,000 men. It is possible Julius was not in command of the whole unit. Or, it might not have been a regular cohort. It may have been a special group meant to send messages or act as guards.

See also Warfare.

Aul

The King James Version spelling of awl in [Exodus 21:6](#) and [Deuteronomy 15:17](#).

Auranus

A leader chosen by Lysimachus, the brother of the high priest. Lysimachus chose Auranus to stop the Jews who were very angry ([2 Maccabees 4:40](#)). The text says Auranus was not in his right mind (he was mentally unwell). The Syriac version of the Apocrypha (books that some churches include in the Bible, but others do not) says he was the leader of a group of violent criminals.

Autograph

One of the original handwritten documents of a book that eventually became part of the Bible. None of the original manuscripts of the Bible remain. Instead, copies called apographa are available. Apographa were made by scribes whose occupation was the careful copying of manuscripts. There are enough of these copies to give us confidence that our present Bible accurately preserves the words of the autographs. *See* Bible, Manuscripts and Text of the (both articles).

Ava

The King James Version spelling of Avva in [2 Kings 17:24](#). Avva was a district in Syria.

See Avva.

Avaran

The nickname of Eleazar, brother of Judas Maccabeus ([1 Maccabees 2:5](#); [6:43](#)). The name might mean “Awake,” “Paleface,” or “Piercer.”

Aven

1. A term used by the prophet Ezekiel to describe the city of On, which is also called Heliopolis. On was the center of worship of the Egyptian sun god Ra ([Ezekiel 30:17](#)). The Hebrew word *aven* (“wickedness”) was similar to the name On. It was used in a prophecy against the idolatry and wickedness of Egypt. *See* Heliopolis.

2. A description of Bethel ([Hosea 10:8](#)), shortened from Beth-aven, “house of wickedness” ([Hosea 4:15](#); [5:8](#); [10:5](#)). The prophet Hosea was criticizing the northern kingdom’s idolatry. Bethel was a center of idolatry in the north ([1 Kings 12:28–29](#)). *See* Beth-aven #2.
3. A valley where Syria was going to be punished because of its crimes against the Lord ([Amos 1:5](#)). It might be a vague reference to Baalbek, the center of Syria’s Baal worship in the Beqa’a valley.

Avenger of Blood

A person who chased and eventually executed the murderer of a close relative ([Numbers 35](#)). This “redeemer” was expected to act in cases of intentional murder but not accidental manslaughter. Someone guilty of manslaughter could seek asylum in one of six designated cities ([Numbers 35:11](#)) to make sure that proper legal processes could take place. The role of the avenger of blood is mentioned in stories about:

- Gideon ([Judges 8:18–21](#))
- Joab ([2 Samuel 3:27, 30](#))
- The Gibeonites ([2 Samuel 21](#))
- Amaziah ([2 Kings 14:5–6](#))

During the monarchy, the king could stop the avenger ([2 Samuel 14:8–11](#)).

This custom was based on God’s command that a life should be taken for a life in cases of intentional homicide ([Genesis 9:6](#)). Unfortunately, the goal of the law—to highlight the importance of human life—has sometimes been misunderstood, leading to blood feuds and the destruction of entire families in some societies.

See also Civil Law and Justice.

Avim

The King James Version spelling of Avvim, a Benjaminite city, in [Joshua 18:23](#).

See Avvim (Place).

Avims, Avites

King James Version forms of Avvim and Avvites ([Deuteronomy 2:23](#) and [Joshua 13:3](#)).

See Avvites.

Avith

The capital city for Hadad, Edom's fourth king ([Genesis 36:35](#); [1 Chronicles 1:46](#)).

Avva

A district in Syria. It is also called Ivvah in [2 Kings 18:34](#); [19:13](#). Sargon of Assyria conquered it in the eighth century BC. After the Israelites were deported from Samaria in 722 BC, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, sent people from Avva and other districts to live in the cities of Samaria ([2 Kings 17:24](#)).

See also Ivvah.

Avvim (Persons)

The Hebrew term for an ancient people group mentioned in the Bible who lived in the southwestern part of Canaan before the Israelites. Avvim and Avvites refer to the same people group.

See Avvites.

Avvim (Place)

Avvim was a city in the tribal land of Benjamin ([Joshua 18:23](#)). It was located south of Bethel.

Avvites

1. An ancient people who lived in villages near Gaza before they were destroyed by a Philistine invasion ([Deuteronomy 2:23](#); [Joshua 13:3](#)).

2. The name for the people who lived in the Syrian district of Avva. Shalmaneser of Assyria moved them into Samaria after the conquest in 722 BC ([2 Kings 17:31](#)).
See Avva.

Ayyah

A town belonging to the tribe of Ephraim mentioned in [1 Chronicles 7:28](#). Ayyah is another name for Gaza, but different from the Philistine Gaza. Some scholars think that the Aija listed in [Nehemiah 11:31](#) refers to Ayyah or Ai, possibly a neighboring town. Many identify Aiath from [Isaiah 10:28](#) with Ayyah. It is the modern Khirbet Haiyan.

Azael

Ezra's son. He obeyed Ezra's command to divorce his non-Jewish wife after the exile in Babylon ([1 Esdras 9:34](#)). Azael is not included in the list of [Ezra 10:40-42](#).

Azal

An unknown place. It was likely located east of Jerusalem ([Zechariah 14:5](#)).

Azaliah

Meshullam's son and the father of the scribe of Josiah, Shaphan ([2 Kings 22:3](#); [2 Chronicles 34:8](#)).

Azaniah

Jeshua's father. Jeshua was a Levite who signed Ezra's promise of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile to Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:9](#)).

Azarael

The King James Version spelling of Azarel in [Nehemiah 12:36](#).

See Azarel #6.

Azareel

The King James Version spelling of Azarel.

See Azarel #1–5.

Azarel

1. A warrior from the tribe of Benjamin who joined David at Ziklag in his struggle against King Saul. Azarel was one of David's archers and slingers who could shoot with both his right and left hands ([1 Chronicles 12:2, 6](#)).
2. A levite selected by David to manage in the music of the sanctuary ([1 Chronicles 25:18](#), also called "Uzziel").
3. A chief of Dan's tribe selected by David to be a tribal leader during the census ([1 Chronicles 27:22](#)).
4. An Israelite of the family of Binnui who obeyed Ezra's command to divorce his non-Jewish wife after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 10:41](#)).
5. Amashsai's father. Amashsai was a priest of Immer's family who lived in Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 11:13](#)).
6. A priest who blew a trumpet at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 12:36](#)).

Azariah

A very common Jewish name. The name appears many times in the family histories of priests, which makes it hard to know which Azariah is being talked about at times. The following is one of several possible arrangements:

1. Zadok's son or grandson. According to most translations, Azariah was high priest during Solomon's reign ([1 Kings 4:2](#)). His position might have alternatively been that of a special counselor or keeper of the royal calendar.
2. Nathan's son, a high official in King Solomon's court. He was chief officer over the 12 regional administrators ([1 Kings 4:5](#)).
3. Amaziah's son, king of Judah ([2 Kings 14:21](#); [15:1–7](#)). He was also known as Uzziah. See Uzziah #1.
4. Ethan's son, a descendant of Judah ([1 Chronicles 2:8](#)).
5. Jehu's son, another descendant of Judah ([1 Chronicles 2:38](#)).
6. Ahimaaz's son and Zadok's grandson ([1 Chronicles 6:9](#)). If Azariah #1 was a high priest, this Azariah mean the same person.
7. Johanan's son and Amariah's father ([1 Chronicles 6:10–11](#)). He is the same Azariah who is mentioned in [Ezra 7:3](#) and [2 Esdras 1:2](#). His ancestor (called his "father") was Meraioth. The parenthetical note about Solomon's temple in [1 Chronicles 6:10](#) is generally associated with the Azariah of verse [9](#) (see #6). It is also possible that this Azariah served in the temple (built by Solomon) during the reign of Uzziah. This would mean he is the same Azariah as #17 below.
8. Hilkiah's son and Seriah's father ([1 Chronicles 6:13–14](#); [Ezra 7:1](#); [2 Esdras 1:1](#)). This Azariah may be the same as #10 or #11.
9. Zephaniah's son, an ancestor of the singer Heman. Heman sang in the worship ritual instituted by King David ([1 Chronicles 6:36](#)).

10. Hilkiyah's son or descendant, one of the first priests to settle in Jerusalem after the exile ([1 Chronicles 9:11](#); "Seraiah," [Nehemiah 11:11](#)).
11. Oded's son, a prophet in the days of King Asa of Judah. He encouraged Asa to start badly needed reforms in the king's 15th year ([2 Chronicles 15:1-15](#)).
12. A son of King Jehoshaphat of Judah. Along with four of their brothers, they were killed for political reasons by Jehoram, the heir to the throne ([2 Chronicles 21:1-4](#)).
13. Another son of King Jehoshaphat, with the same name as #12, his brother. Along with four of their brothers, they were killed for political reasons by Jehoram, the heir to the throne ([2 Chronicles 21:1-4](#)).
14. An alternate name of Ahaziah, king of Judah ([2 Chronicles 22:6](#), King James Version). *See* Ahaziah #2.
15. Jehoram's son, one of Judah's military commanders. This Azariah followed Jehoiada the priest in a rebellion. Joash was crowned king following the rebellion, and Queen Athaliah was executed ([2 Chronicles 23:1](#)).
16. Obed's son, another of the five commanders in league with Jehoiada against Athaliah ([2 Chronicles 23:1](#)).
17. The high priest in Jerusalem during the reign of King Uzziah ([2 Chronicles 26:16-21](#)). He opposed Uzziah's arrogant attempt to burn incense on the altar. Perhaps the same as #7.
18. Johanan's son, a leader of Ephraim's tribe. Azariah and other leaders of the tribe joined the prophet Obed to protest King Pekah of Israel's capture of Judean prisoners and demand their release ([2 Chronicles 28:12](#)).
19. A descendant of Kohath and the father of a Levite named Joel. Joel participated in the temple cleansing commanded by King Hezekiah of Judah ([2 Chronicles 29:12](#)).
20. Jehallelel's son. This Azariah, a descendant of Merari, also participated in Hezekiah's cleansing of the temple ([2 Chronicles 29:12](#)).
21. Zadok's descendant and high priest during the reign of Hezekiah of Judah ([2 Chronicles 31:10, 13](#)). He participated in Hezekiah's massive religious reforms.
22. Maaseiah's son, a householder in Jerusalem who participated in Nehemiah's rebuilding of the wall ([Nehemiah 3:23](#)).
23. A leader who returned to Judah with Zerubbabel after the Babylonian exile ([Nehemiah 7:7](#); "Seraiah," [Ezra 2:2](#)).
24. A Levitical assistant to Ezra who explained to the people passages from the law read by Ezra ([Nehemiah 8:7](#)).
25. A priest who signed Ezra's covenant of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile ([Nehemiah 10:2](#)).
26. A participant in the dedication of the rebuilt wall of Jerusalem ([Nehemiah 12:33](#)).
27. An alternate form of Jaazaniah, the name of Hoshai's son, in [Jeremiah 42:1](#) and [43:2](#). *See* Jaazaniah #1.
28. One of the three young Jews taken into captivity with Daniel. In Babylon he was renamed Abednego ([Daniel 1:6-7, 11, 19; 2:17](#)). *See* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Azarias

The name the angel Raphael called himself when he joined Tobit's son Tobias on Tobias's journey to Media ([Tobit 5:4, 13; 12:15](#)). Tobit is a story found

in some versions of the Bible, but not all Christians consider it part of their Scriptures.

Azaz

Shema's son and Bela's father from the tribe of Reuben ([1 Chronicles 5:8](#)).

Azazel

A Hebrew word of unclear origin and meaning. It appears in [Leviticus 16:8, 10, 26](#). Because there is little information about it in the Bible or other sources, scholars have suggested at least four interpretations:

1. Scapegoat: Some believe Azazel refers to the scapegoat used in the Day of Atonement ceremonies. However, this interpretation is unlikely because verses 10 and 26 say the goat was sent to Azazel, not as Azazel.
2. A place where the goat was sent: Many Jewish scholars think Azazel is a place where the goat was sent, possibly a high cliff from which the goat was thrown. Others suggest it means "desert places."
3. Abstract "place" or state of being: Some believe Azazel comes from a Hebrew word meaning "depart" or "remove," and thus interpret it as "utter removal," "complete sending away," or "solitude." That the goat is sent "into the wilderness as the scapegoat" in [Leviticus 16:10](#) may be interpreted as "sent to become nothing" or "utterly removed." This implies the removal of sins: they become "nothing," since they are totally removed. Sending the goat away would then be a symbolic and ritual act through which God removes one's past sins.

4. The personal name of a being, most likely a demon, to which the scapegoat was sent: Many modern scholars believe Azazel is a being, likely a demon, to which the scapegoat was sent. The noncanonical book of Enoch describes Azazel as a leader of fallen angels who mislead humans. This interpretation suggests one goat is given to the Lord, and the other to an evil being, possibly Satan.

Azaziah

1. A temple musician who was a Levite. He played the lyre when King David brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 15:21](#)).
2. Hoshea's father. Hoshea was leader of the tribe of Ephraim during King David's rule ([1 Chronicles 27:20](#)).
3. A temple administrator who was a Levite. He was appointed by King Hezekiah of Judah to help manage the offerings stored in the temple ([2 Chronicles 31:13](#)).

Azbuk

The father of Nehemiah. He was ruler of half the Beth-zur district ([Nehemiah 3:16](#)). Azbuk's son helped the more famous Nehemiah, the governor ([Nehemiah 10:1](#)), in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem.

Azekah

A town in the agricultural plain known as the Shephelah. It existed at least as early as the conquest of Canaan (the Promised Land), since Joshua drove the alliance of Amorite kings to Azekah ([Joshua 10:10, 22](#)). It is also mentioned in the story of the encounter of David and Goliath ([1 Samuel 17:1](#)). Archaeological digs have shown that Azekah was heavily defended with a system of underground refuge chambers ([2 Chronicles 11:9, 11](#)). Azekah, Lachish, and Jerusalem are mentioned as the only remaining walled cities of the southern

kingdom of Judah at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's attack on Jerusalem ([Jeremiah 34:7](#)). Some returnees from the exile in Babylon moved into Azekah ([Nehemiah 11:30](#)). Today it is known as Tell Zakariyeh.

Azel

A descendant of Benjamin, Saul, and Jonathan. Azel was the son of Eleasah and the father of six sons ([1 Chronicles 8:37-38](#); [9:43-44](#)).

Azem

The King James Version spelling of Ezem, a town in the Negev Desert area ([Joshua 15:29](#); [19:3](#)).

See Ezem.

Azgad

1. An ancestor of a group that returned to Judah with Zerubbabel after the exile in Babylon ([Ezra 2:12](#); [Nehemiah 7:17](#)).
2. A political leader who signed Ezra's promise of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile in Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:15](#)).

Aziel

Another name for Jaaziel, a Levite who played music when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 15:20](#)).

See Jaaziel.

Aziza

Zattu's descendant. He obeyed Ezra's command to divorce his non-Jewish wife ([Ezra 10:27](#)).

Azmaveth (Person)

1. A warrior among David's mighty men, known as "the thirty." His hometown was Bahurim ([2 Samuel 23:31](#); [1 Chronicles 11:33](#)).
2. Jehoaddah's son. He was a descendant of King Saul through Jonathan ([1 Chronicles 8:36](#); compare [1 Chronicles 9:42](#), when he is called "Jadah's son").
3. The father of Jeziel and Pelet from the tribe of Benjamin ([1 Chronicles 12:3](#)). He may be the same as #1 above.
4. Adiel's son. King David put him in charge of the palace money ([1 Chronicles 27:25](#)).

Azmaveth (Place)

A town near Anathoth.

Forty-two men from the town returned from the exile to Babylon with Zerubbabel ([Ezra 2:24](#)). It is called "Beth-azmaveth" in [Nehemiah 7:28](#). Later, Azmaveth gave singers to help celebrate the dedication of the rebuilt wall of Jerusalem ([Nehemiah 12:29](#)). It is modern-day Hizmeh, a site eight kilometers (five miles) north of Jerusalem.

Azmon

A city on the south of Judah between Kadesh-barnea and the "brook of Egypt" ([Numbers 34:4-5](#); [Joshua 15:4](#)).

Aznoth-Tabor

A location on the southwest border of the tribal land of Naphtali ([Joshua 19:34](#)). It is translated as the "peaks (or slopes) of Tabor."

Azor

A descendant of Zerubbabel and an ancestor of Jesus ([Matthew 1:1, 13-14](#)).

See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

Azotus

The New Testament form of Ashdod in [Acts 8:40](#).

See Ashdod, Ashdodite, Ashdothite.

Azriel

1. The head of a family in the half-tribe of Manasseh, which lived east of the Jordan River. The king of Assyria took Azriel and others as captives ([1 Chronicles 5:23-26](#)).
2. Jeremoth's father. Jeremoth was a leader in the tribe of Naphtali under King David ([1 Chronicles 27:19](#)).
3. Seraiah's father during the reign of King Jehoiakim. The king sent Seraiah to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch for prophesying against the evil ways of Israel and Judah ([Jeremiah 36:26](#)).

Azrikam

1. One of three sons of Neariah. A descendant of David through Zerubbabel ([1 Chronicles 3:23](#)).
2. One of six sons of Azel. A descendant of Saul ([1 Chronicles 8:38](#); [9:44](#)).
3. An ancestor of Shemaiah, a Levite who returned to Jerusalem after the exile to Babylon ([1 Chronicles 9:14](#); [Nehemiah 11:15](#)).
4. A palace officer under King Ahaz of Judah. He was killed by Zichri ([2 Chronicles 28:7](#)). He might be the same as #2 above.

Azubah

1. Shilhi's daughter and mother of King Jehoshaphat of Judah ([1 Kings 22:42](#); [2 Chronicles 20:31](#)).
2. The first wife of Caleb and mother of three of his sons ([1 Chronicles 2:18-19](#)).

Azur

The King James Version form of Azzur in [Jeremiah 28:1](#) and [Ezekiel 11:1](#).

See Azzur #2 and #3.

Azzah

The King James Version rendering of the Philistine city of Gaza ([Deuteronomy 2:23](#); [1 Kings 4:24](#); and [Jeremiah 25:20](#)).

See Gaza.

Azzan

Paltiel's father and a member of the tribe of Issachar. Paltiel was chosen to help Eleazar and Joshua in dividing the promised land ([Numbers 34:26](#)).

Azzur

1. A political leader who signed Ezra's promise of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile to Babylon ([Nehemiah 10:17](#)).
2. The father of the false prophet Hananiah ([Jeremiah 28:1](#)).
3. The father of Jaazaniah, one of the important men from Jerusalem whom Ezekiel saw in a vision ([Ezekiel 11:1](#)).