

Resource: Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

Aquifer Open Bible Dictionary

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Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

O

Oak, Oak of Meonenim, Oak of the Pillar, Oak of Weeping, Oak of Zaanannim, Oak, Diviners', Oaks of Mamre, Oath, Obadiah (Person), Obadiah, Book of, Obal, Obed, Obed-Edom, Obedience, Obil, Oblation, Oboth, Ochran, Ocina, Ocran, Offend, Offense, Offerings and Sacrifices, Og, Ohad, Ohel, Oholah and Oholibah, Oholiab, Oholibamah, Oil, Oil Tree, Oleaster, Oil, Anointing, Ointment, Old Gate, Old Man, Old Testament, Old Testament Canon, Old Testament Chronology, Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament, Oleander, Olive, Olive Tree, Olives, Mount of, Olivet, Olympas, Olympian Zeus, Temple of, Omar, Omega, Omen, Omer, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omri, On (Person), On (Place), Onam, Onan, Onesimus, Onesiphorus, Onias, Onion, Only Begotten, Ono, Onycha, Onyx, Ophel, Ophir (Person), Ophir (Place), Ophni, Ophrah (Person), Ophrah (Place), Oracle, Ordain, Ordination, Ordeal of Jealousy, Oreb, Oreb, Rock of, Oren, Organ, Orion, Ornan, Orontes, Orpah, Orphan, Orthosia, Oshea, Osiris, Osnapper, Osprey, Osprey, Ossifrage, Ossuary, Ostraca, Ostrich, Othni, Othniel, Outcast, Outward Man, Oven, Ovens, Tower of the, Overseer, Owl, Ox, Ox (Person), Ozem, Ozias, Oziel, Ozni, Oznite

Oak

At least five types of oak trees grow in Palestine. One of these is the kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*), which hosts the insect *Coccus ilicis*. This insect produces a scarlet (red) dye used for coloring linen and wool ([Genesis 38:28-30](#); [Exodus 25:4](#); [26:1](#); [28:33](#); [35:23](#); [39:24](#); [Leviticus 14:4-6](#), [51-52](#); [Numbers 19:6](#); [2 Chronicles 2:7](#), [14](#); [3:14](#); [Isaiah 1:18](#); [Hebrews 9:19](#); [Revelation 18:12](#)).

The kermes oak grows from 1.8 to 10.7 meters (6 to 35 feet) tall. It grows in the mountainous areas of Syria, Lebanon, and Israel and the surrounding areas. When it grows alone, the kermes oak often becomes a large tree. In the East, people regularly planted oak trees near tombs. During biblical times, oak trees were respected and even honored for their large size and strength. Important people were usually buried in the shade of oak trees. Abraham's oak in Hebron is one example.

A second type is the valonia oak (*Quercus aegilops*), possibly the oak mentioned in [Isaiah 2:13](#) and [44:14](#). It is common in middle mountain zones and was probably widespread in the area around Bashan.

The oak in [Genesis 35:4, 8](#) is thought to be the holm oak (*Quercus ilex*), an evergreen oak that grows up to 18.3 meters (60 feet) tall.

Another type is *Quercus lusitanica*, the cypress oak. This is a small deciduous tree that rarely grows

more than 20 feet (6.1 meters) tall. People sometimes ate the very large acorns from this tree.

The word translated as "plain" in [Genesis 12:6](#), [13:18](#), [14:13](#), and [18:1](#) in the King James Version should probably be translated as "oak" (as in the Berean Standard Bible).

The many references to "Asherah poles" in the Old Testament, usually connected with the worship of Baal or other non-Israelite gods, may have sometimes been associated with sacred oak groves ([Exodus 34:13](#); [Deuteronomy 16:21](#); [Judges 3:7](#); [1 Kings 14:23](#); [18:19](#); [2 Kings 17:16](#)). These were places where people performed pagan worship rituals.

Oak of Meonenim

Tree near Shechem ([Jgs 9:37](#), asv). See Diviners' Oak.

Oak of the Pillar

Sacred meeting place in Shechem where the citizens of that city and the inhabitants of Beth-millo made Abimelech king ([Jgs 9:6](#), asv, nas). It is perhaps identifiable with the Oak of Moreh. See Moreh, Oak of; Plain of the Pillar.

Oak of Weeping

Tree near Bethel under which Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, was buried ([Gn 35:8](#)), hence called Allon-bacuth, meaning "Oak of Weeping."

Oak of Zaanannim

Site regarded as a border point in the territory of Naphtali ([Jos 19:33](#); [Jgs 4:11](#)). *See* Zaanannim.

Oak, Diviners'

Tree near Shechem ([Jgs 9:37](#)). *See* Diviners' Oak.

Oaks of Mamre

Site associated with Abraham and Isaac ([Gn 13:18](#)). *See* Mamre (Place).

Oath

A solemn vow or promise to fulfill a pledge.

Two terms in Hebrew mean "oath":

1. *'ala*
2. *sebu'a*

In ancient times, the term meant to enter a solemn, magical bond with the number seven. The ancient connections are now lost. Abraham and Abimelech swore an oath at Beersheba (the well of seven). As proof he dug a well, Abraham set aside seven ewe lambs ([Genesis 21:22-31](#)). The former term *'ala*, often translated as "oath," properly means "curse." At times, the two terms are used together ([Numbers 5:21](#); [Nehemiah 10:29](#); [Daniel 9:11](#)). Any breach of the oath would result in a curse. The Lord said that he had made a covenant and a curse with Israel—that is, breaking the covenant would be followed by a curse ([Deuteronomy 29:14](#) and the following verses).

An oath was taken to confirm an agreement or, in a political situation, to confirm a treaty. In Israel and its neighbors, God (or the gods) guaranteed the agreement. His (or their) name was invoked for this purpose. When Jacob and Laban made an agreement, they erected a heap of stones as a witness ([Genesis 31:53](#)). If either party

transgressed the terms, it was a heinous sin. One of the Ten Commandments dealt with empty affirmations. It said, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who takes His name in vain" ([Exodus 20:7](#)). The people of Israel were forbidden to swear their oaths by false gods ([Jeremiah 12:16](#); [Amos 8:14](#)). To breach an international treaty, where the oath was taken in the Lord's name, merited death ([Ezekiel 17:16-17](#)). It was one of the complaints of Hosea that the people of his day swore falsely when they made a covenant ([Hosea 10:4](#)). Judgment would attend such wanton disregard of the solemnity of an oath. Certain civil situations in Israel called for an oath ([Exodus 22:10-11](#); [Leviticus 5:1](#); [6:3](#); [Numbers 5:11-28](#)). This practice set a pattern for the Israelite covenantal oath of allegiance to God.

Christ taught that oaths were binding ([Matthew 5:33](#)). In the kingdom of God oaths would become unnecessary ([Matthew 5:34-37](#)). At his trial before Caiaphas, Jesus heard an oath from the high priest ([Matthew 26:63-65](#)). Paul swore by an oath on occasion ([2 Corinthians 1:23](#); [Galatians 1:20](#)). God himself was bound by his own oath ([Hebrews 6:13-18](#)) to keep his promise to the patriarchs ([Genesis 50:24](#); [Psalms 89:19-37, 49](#); [110:1-4](#)).

See also Covenant; Vows.

Obadiah (Person)

1. Governor of Ahab's house ([1 Kings 18:3-16](#)). Obadiah was an important official who managed King Ahab's household. Elijah met him after a long drought and asked him to bring Ahab to him. Both Ahab and Obadiah were looking for water and grass (verse 5). Even though Obadiah worked for Ahab, he remained loyal to the Lord. He hid 100 prophets in caves and provided them with food and water.
2. A descendant of King David ([1 Chronicles 3:21](#)).
3. A descendant of Izrahiah from Issachar's tribe ([1 Chronicles 7:3](#)).
4. Azel's son and a descendant of King Saul from Benjamin's tribe ([1 Chronicles 8:38](#); [9:44](#)).

5. Son of Shemaiah, who was among the first Levites returning from exile to Jerusalem. He lived in one of the villages of the Netophathites ([1 Chronicles 9:16](#)). He is called Abda in [Nehemiah 11:17](#). See Abda #2.
6. A Gadite who joined David at his stronghold in the wilderness. He was a strong warrior, skilled with both shield and spear. He was also very fast ([1 Chronicles 12:8-9](#)).
7. The father of Ishmaiah, commander over the army of Zebulun ([1 Chronicles 27:19](#)).
8. Prince of Judah during King Jehoshaphat's reign ([2 Chronicles 17:7](#)). He joined four other officers and the Levites in teaching the law throughout the cities of Judah.
9. A Levite overseer during King Josiah's reign ([2 Chronicles 34:12](#)). He was in charge of the repair of the temple.
10. Son of Jehiel ([Ezra 8:9](#)). He joined Ezra in his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, leading 218 men with him.
11. A priest who signed Ezra's covenant ([Nehemiah 10:5](#)).
12. A gatekeeper and Levite who oversaw the storehouses by the gates during the time of Joiakim, son of Jeshua ([Nehemiah 12:25-26](#)).
13. A prophet who prophesied (gave a message from God) against Edom. The Edomites had celebrated when Babylon defeated Jerusalem in 597 BC. Obadiah described the behavior of the Edomites in his prophecy ([Obadiah 1:11-14](#)). Obadiah's prophecy is the shortest book in the Old Testament. It predicted God's judgment on Edom (verses [2-10](#), [15](#)).

See also Obadiah, Book of; Prophet, Prophetess.

Obadiah, Book of

The fourth book of the Minor Prophets is the shortest book in the Old Testament.

Preview

- Author
- Background
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- Theological Significance

Author

We know almost nothing about Obadiah the prophet. The superscription ([Obadiah 1:1](#)) does not mention his father's name or where he is from.

Background

Obadiah likely came from Judah because he shows deep concern about the Edomites invading his land during Judah's destruction ([Obadiah 1:12](#)). He probably had his vision about Edom ([Obadiah 1:1](#)) just before Jerusalem fell and Nebuchadnezzar devastated Judah in 586 BC. Although there is no certain evidence, Nebuchadnezzar might have invaded Edom in 582 BC. The Babylonian king Nabonidus stayed in Teima for several years, and the town of Tell el Kheleifeh near the Gulf of Aqaba thrived early in the century. However, Edom declined in the sixth century BC due to interference from trading partners in Arabia and the south, like Teima and Dedan.

Content

The prophet announces Edom's fall ([Obadiah 1:1-4](#)). A group of nearby Arab tribes planned to attack Edom, which strengthened his message ([Obadiah 1:1](#)). These tribes did not realize their attack on Edom was part of a divine plan.

The destruction of Edom is announced ([Obadiah 1:2-9](#)) and its downfall is described ([Obadiah 1:2-4](#)). Edom, which seemed strong and safe in its rocky mountain fortress ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), would be humbled ([1:4](#)). Edom's defeat would be total ([Obadiah 1:5-6](#)). Just as thieves and raiders attack at night, Edom would be stripped, with its houses and vineyards looted. Edom would not receive any mercy, unlike when robbers sometimes spare a house. Even allies would betray Edom ([Obadiah 1:7](#)), partners would deceive, and guests would set traps. Caught off guard, Edom would become easy prey. On the day of Edom's doom, the wise would

perish ([Obadiah 1:8](#)) and soldiers would be demoralized and killed ([Obadiah 1:9](#)).

Edom's wrongdoing is detailed in [Obadiah 1:10–15](#). Edom showed hostility toward Judah when the Babylonians attacked. Instead of helping, Edom stayed distant and acted like an enemy. Worse, Edom celebrated Judah's misfortune, mocked the people, and took their property. Edom worked with Babylon, blocking Judah's refugees from escaping and handing them over to enemies. These actions would bring consequences to Edom.

On the Day of the Lord ([Obadiah 1:15–21](#)), guilty Edom would face God's judgment along with all nations. After the disaster that Jerusalem faced in 586 BC, another day would come. This day would bring justice and judgment in favor of Israel.

On a positive note, the remnant of Judah ([Obadiah 1:17, 21](#)) would survive. The sacred site, Mount Zion, would be restored. The Edomites would fall under the control of the remnant of Israel. Like a fire, Israel would consume the remains of Edom ([Obadiah 1:18](#)) and reclaim lost territories ([Obadiah 1:19–20](#)).

Theological Significance

The prophecy emphasizes God's control during Judah's loss of power. God shapes events in the past and present. In the future, He will judge Israel's enemies. Zion will become the proud capital of a glorious nation, free from pagan influence forever.

See also Israel, History of; Prophecy; Prophet, Prophetess.

Obal

Alternate spelling of Ebal, Joktan's descendant, in [Genesis 10:28](#). See Ebal #2.

Obed

1. Ruth and Boaz's first child, listed among the family members of Jesus ([Ruth 4:17, 21–22](#); [1 Chronicles 2:12](#); [Matthew 1:5](#); [Luke 3:32](#)). See Genealogy of Jesus Christ.
2. Jerahmeelite and Ephlal's son ([1 Chronicles 2:37–38](#)).

3. One of David's mighty men ([1 Chronicles 11:47](#)).
4. Shemaiah's son and an able leader who ruled his father's house ([1 Chronicles 26:6–7](#)).
5. Father of Azariah, a captain of Jehoiada ([2 Chronicles 23:1](#)).

Obed-Edom

1. A man who took care of the ark of the covenant when David was moving it from Gibeah to Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 6:10–12](#); [1 Chronicles 13:5–14](#)). The Bible calls him a Gittite, which indicates that his birthplace was Gath. This was probably not the Philistine city of Gath, but a Levitical town called Gath-rimmon in the land of Dan. It is the same place as "Gath-rimmon" ([Joshua 19:45](#)). Obed-edom was likely a Levite, which made him able to care for the ark. Earlier, a man named Uzzah had touched the ark to keep it from falling. Because this broke the law, he died right away. David became afraid and decided not to move the ark to Jerusalem yet. Obed-edom lived nearby, so David left the ark in his house. After three months, David heard that God had blessed Obed-edom's family. David realized that Uzzah had died because the ark was not being carried in the right way according to the law of Moses ([Numbers 4:15](#); [7:9](#)). It was not because God was angry with Uzzah as a person. David then had the ark moved the right way to Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 15:25–28](#)). Later, Obed-edom may have become a gatekeeper for the ark in Jerusalem ([15:24](#); [26:4, 8, 15](#)). Some scholars think this may have been a different man with the same name.

2. A Levite musician who played music in front of the ark ([1 Chronicles 15:21; 16:5, 38](#)). He was the son of Jeduthun, one of David's lead singers. Some scholars think this Obed-edom was a different person from the man who cared for the ark.
3. A Levite who guarded the of the holy items in the temple. King Joash later took these items during a raid ([2 Chronicles 25:24](#)).

Obedience

The act or instance of submitting to the restraint or command of an authority. It is compliance with the demands or requests of someone over us. The general words for obedience in both Hebrew and Greek refer to hearing or listening to a superior authority. Another important Greek word includes the idea of submission to authority in the sense of arranging or ordering oneself under someone in a place of command. A third Greek word suggests obedience that is a result more of persuasion than of submission.

Obedience to God and human authorities is an obligation stressed in both the Old Testament and New Testament. Abraham was additionally blessed on one occasion because he obeyed God in offering Isaac on the altar ([Genesis 22:18](#); compare [26:5](#)). God would continue to bless Israel because of the covenant made at Mount Sinai, but this was dependent upon their obeying his voice and keeping his covenant ([Exodus 19:5](#)). As they were about to enter Canaan, Moses placed before the Israelites a blessing and a curse—a blessing if they listened to and obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and a curse if they did not ([Deuteronomy 11:22–28](#)).

Deuteronomy warns that the penalty for stubborn and rebellious children is, first of all, punishment, and then death by stoning if they persistently refuse to listen ([Deuteronomy 21:18–21](#)).

One sign that a person is a child of God is continued obedience to the commandments of God ([1 John 2:3–5](#)). Jesus said that those who love him would keep his commandments ([John 14:15](#)). And Peter, speaking of Christians, calls them “obedient children” ([1 Peter 1:14](#); see also [Hebrews 5:9; 11:8](#)).

Christians are to obey a variety of people:

- Believers are to obey the Lord ([John 14:21–24; 15:10](#)).
- Wives are to obey their husbands ([Ephesians 5:22–24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1, 5](#)).
- Children are to obey their parents ([Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20](#)).
- Citizens are to obey their government officials ([Romans 13:1–7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13–14](#)).
- Servants are to obey their masters ([Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18](#)).

However, despite the strong emphasis on obedience in the Bible, such obedience is never made the grounds for justification before God. Paul declares that salvation is a gift of God that will produce good works ([Ephesians 2:8–10](#)). So, too, James speaks of works of obedience as coming from faith ([James 2:14–26](#)).

Jesus himself, on the night of his betrayal, emphasized by repetition that love for him is measured by obedience to his commandments ([John 14:15, 21, 23–24; 15:10](#)). He emphasized this by declaring that his own love for God the Father was evidenced by his obeying the Father's commands ([14:31](#)). The Bible mentions many people whose obedience to God comes from their faith and love for him ([Hebrews 11](#)). For example, Abel believed God and offered a more excellent sacrifice (verse [4](#)). Noah put his faith in God's word and prepared a very large boat (or ark; see verse [7](#)). By faith Abraham left his home in Ur at God's direction, not knowing his destination (verse [8](#)). Moses put his faith in God and refused the privileges of being called Pharaoh's son, choosing rather to identify with Israel, God's people (verses [24–25](#)). The greatest example of obedience based on trust in God is Jesus Christ himself. He emptied himself, taking the form of a bond servant. He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross ([Philippians 2:7–8](#)).

Obil

Ishmaelite steward of King David's camels ([1 Chr 27:30](#)).

Oblation

See Offerings and Sacrifices.

Oboth

Oboth was a temporary camping place of the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. It was located between Punon and Iye-abarim ([Numbers 21:10-11](#); [33:43-44](#)). Its exact location is uncertain. Some scholars have attempted to identify Oboth with 'Ain el-Weiba, which is 53.1 kilometers (33 miles) south of the Dead Sea in the Arabah Valley.

See Wilderness Wanderings.

Ochran

Ochran is another way of spelling Ocran.

See Ocran.

Ocina

A town on the coast south of Tyre ([Idt 2:28](#)). Its location is uncertain, and it has been identified with both Sandaliam and Acco.

Ocran

The father of Pagiel. Pagiel was the leader of the tribe of Asher during the time when the Israelites traveled through the wilderness ([Numbers 1:13](#); [2:27](#); [7:72, 77](#); [10:26](#)).

Offend, Offense

The words "offend" and "offense" are used in two main ways in the Bible:

1. Doing something wrong oneself
2. Causing someone else to do wrong or to make a mistake in their faith

Doing Wrong

In both the Old Testament Hebrew and the New Testament Greek, there are many words for sin or wrongdoing. When we use the words "offend" or "offense," we focus on sin against a person or the law, which means an offense against either God or people.

Sin is mainly an offense against God. For example, the people of Edom offended God by taking revenge on Judah, so God judged them ([Ezekiel 25:12-13](#)). Israel offended God by worshipping Baal ([Hosea 13:1](#)). Breaking God's law is called an offense committed ([Deuteronomy 19:15](#); compare [22:26](#); [25:2](#)). In the New Testament, James talks about offenses against God and God's law ([James 2:10](#); [3:2](#)).

The Bible also talks about offenses between people. For example, Abraham offended Abimelech ([Genesis 20:9](#)). Pharaoh's chief butler and baker offended their master ([Genesis 40:1](#)). Sometimes, the offense is only alleged, and no real wrong was done (for example, [Genesis 31:36](#); [2 Kings 18:14](#); [Jeremiah 37:18](#)). Paul, defending himself before the Roman governor Festus, said, "I have committed no offense against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar" ([Acts 25:8](#)).

The Bible also teaches how to handle real offenses against God and people. Offenses should be acknowledged and confessed ([Hosea 5:15](#)). A proper resolution before God is, "I will offend no more" ([Job 34:31](#)). We need to make amends for offenses and forgive others' offenses ([Ecclesiastes 10:4](#); [Proverbs 17:9](#); [19:11](#)). Jesus Christ died for our offenses ([Romans 4:25](#); [5:15-21](#)). By turning to Jesus, there is forgiveness for all sins.

Causing Another to Sin

The words "offense" and "offend" also mean causing someone else to stumble or do wrong. There are three ways this can happen:

1. **Personal Cause:** Something within a person might cause them to stumble. Jesus emphasized the seriousness of this and suggested taking extreme measures to prevent it ([Matthew 5:29-30](#); [18:8-9](#)).

2. **Causing Others to Stumble:**

Something in a person's actions might cause others to stumble. Jesus warned, "Woe to the world for the causes of sin. These stumbling blocks must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!" ([Matthew 18:7](#)). The New Testament teaches that we should live in a way that does not cause others to stumble ([Romans 14:13](#)). The apostle Paul says, "Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to let his eating be a stumbling block. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything to cause your brother to stumble" ([Romans 14:20-21](#); compare [1 Corinthians 10:32](#); [2 Corinthians 6:3](#)).

3. **Offense at the Truth:** People may be offended by the truth, even if the person presenting it is not at fault. Isaiah describes God as "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" ([Isaiah 8:14](#)) because people would not always accept His demands and the way of faith in Him. The New Testament applies these words to the offense of the gospel of Christ ([Romans 9:32-33](#); [1 Peter 2:8](#)). During His ministry, people were offended by Jesus—by His humble birth ([Matthew 13:57](#)), at what he said and did ([Matthew 15:12](#)), or because of the cost of following him ([Matthew 13:21](#)). Even some disciples were offended and turned away ([John 6:61](#)). Eventually, all were offended and fled from Him ([Matthew 26:31, 56](#)). Paul spoke of the offense in preaching the cross of Christ. He could have avoided persecution by preaching a message that did not offend anyone ([Galatians 5:11](#)). He chose to preach the cross, even though it was a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles ([1 Corinthians 1:23](#)).

See also Sin.

Offerings and Sacrifices

Major ritual expressions of religious life with accompanying rites, such as libations, effusions, and sacred meals. The ideology expressed in Israel's ritual complex made its religion unique in the ancient Near East. The concepts of OT ritual also underlie NT theology with regard to sin and reconciliation to God through the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

Performance and Order of Sacrifices

The main source for a description of the correct performance of sacrificial ritual is the opening section of Leviticus ([Lv 1-7](#)). It consists of two separate parts. The first ([1:1-6:7](#)) is didactic, dealing with two categories of sacrifice: those of a "pleasing odor," namely, the burnt ([1:1-17](#)), the grain ([2:1-16](#)), and the peace offerings ([3:1-17](#)); and the expiatory sacrifices, namely, the sin ([4:1-5:13](#)) and the guilt or trespass offerings ([5:14-6:7](#)). Attention is paid to the minute details of each ritual, and they are grouped according to their logical or conceptual associations.

The grain (or cereal) offering follows the burnt offering because it always accompanied it in actual practice ([Nm 15:1-21](#); chs [28-29](#)); it also went with the peace offering ([Lv 7:12-14](#); [Nm 15:3-4](#)). Special emphasis is placed on burning the inward parts of a sacrifice on the altar to make a "pleasing odor to the Lord" ([Lv 1:9, 17](#); [2:2, 9, 12](#); [3:5, 11, 16](#)). When the Lord smelled the pleasing odor ([Gn 8:21](#)), it was a sign of divine favor; refusal indicated God's displeasure ([Lv 26:31](#)). The officiating priest evidently knew how to read the signs and would tell the offerer whether his sacrifice had been accepted ([1 Sm 26:19](#); cf. [Am 5:21-23](#)).

The sin and guilt offerings were expiatory ([Lv 4:1-6:7, 20](#)). The situations requiring such offerings are listed, and special emphasis is laid on the handling of the blood in the ritual.

The second major section in this passage ([Lv 6:8-7:38](#)) stresses the administrative details for the various offerings. This section consists of a series of "instructions" for each type of offering pertaining to the distribution of the sacrificial materials. Some went to the priest(s), some went to the offerer, and others were burned on the altar or disposed of outside the camp. Those sacrifices designated as "most holy" were to be eaten only by

qualified members of the priesthood ([Lv 2:3, 10; 10:12-17; 14:13; Nm 18:9](#)).

The burnt offering is discussed first because it was entirely consumed on the altar (and thus not eaten by anyone). After it, there follow the sacrifices distributed to the officiants ([Lv 6:17, 26, 29; 7:1, 6](#)), and at the end come the peace offerings, a significant portion of which was returned to the offender.

The order in which the sacrifices are treated in this passage also corresponds to their relative frequency in the rituals of the sacred calendar ([Nm 28:19; 2 Chr 31:3; Ez 45:17](#)). This would be particularly important for the priests and Levites on duty at the temple because they were responsible for the logistics of the daily sacrificial ritual, especially on the high holidays; management of the temple storehouse was a formidable task ([1 Chr 23:28-32; 26:15, 20-22; 2 Chr 13:10-11; 30:3-19; 34:9-11](#)).

Each section concerning a particular offering concludes with the logistic or administrative details peculiar to it. There then follows a summary of the matters treated thus far ([Lv 7:7-10](#)), and the section concludes with a treatment of the peace offerings (vv [11-36](#)). The latter did not play a role in the sacred calendar except during the Feast of Weeks ([23:19-20](#)); on all other occasions, with the two exceptions of the Nazirite vow and the installation of the priesthood, peace offerings were purely voluntary sacrifices and thus not subject to any fixed bookkeeping.

In other biblical contexts, the sacrifices are listed according to the same “bookkeeping” or “administrative” order: burnt, grain, and drink; sin (or guilt); and sometimes peace offerings. An example is the roster of donations made by the tribal leaders for dedication of the altar ([Nm 7](#)). The information is organized like an everyday ledger from the temple storehouse; the summary classifies the animals as burnt, grain, sin, and peace offerings (vv [87-88](#)) in accordance with the respective entries from each donor (vv [15-17](#)). The Levitical scribe had two purposes for such a record: to credit the offerers and to record the treasures and food supplies coming in. Much of the foodstuffs being given as offerings was actually apportioned to the officiating priests ([Nm 18:8-11; 2 Chr 31:4-19](#)).

When prescriptions were made as to the type and number of offerings to be brought (e.g., [Nm 15:24](#)), the “bookkeeping” order is generally followed. This

was true of the calendrical sacrifices; burnt and grain offerings and libations were listed, followed by a sin offering for each of the following: New Moon ([Nm 28:11-15](#)), each day of Passover (vv [19-22](#)), the Festival of Weeks ([Lv 23:18-19; Nm 28:27-30](#)), Trumpets ([29:2-5](#)), Day of Atonement (vv [8-11](#)), and each day of the Feast of Tabernacles (vv [12-16](#)).

For sacrifices required in specific cases, the instructions as to what offerings to bring follow this sequence (e.g., the purification of a woman after giving birth, [Lv 12:6-8](#)). Note also the offerings given at the successful termination of a Nazirite vow; the Nazirite brought burnt, sin, and peace offerings (with some special grain offerings, [Nm 6:14-15](#)). However, the priest conducted the actual ritual according to a different order; the sin offering was made first, followed by the burnt offering and finally the peace offering (vv [16-17](#)). In the case of an incomplete vow, the first step was to offer a sin offering and then a burnt offering to renew the vow (v [11](#)). The reconsecration of the Nazirite required a separate guilt offering—a distinct ritual act (v [12](#)).

The description of the offerings made by the prince of Israel in the latter days presents the same contrast between the two orders of sacrifices. On festival holidays the prince brought burnt, grain, and drink offerings, but he offered them as sin, grain, burnt, and peace offerings ([Ez 45:17](#)). This second order of sacrifices in which the sin offering precedes the burnt offering was also followed in the rededication of the altar ([43:18-27](#)).

The same “procedural” sequence of sacrifices appears in other instances: the purification of the leper—guilt and sin offerings ([Lv 14:19](#)), followed by a burnt offering (vv [12-20](#)); the man with a discharge—sin and burnt offerings ([15:15](#)); likewise the woman with a discharge (v [30](#)). The same order is followed for the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement ([16:3-6, 11, 15, 24](#)).

The book of Leviticus furnishes two examples of the proper order in which sacrifices were offered. One is the ordination of Aaron and his sons. The sin offering came first and then the burnt offering ([Ex 29:10-18; Lv 8:14-21](#)). The focal point in this ritual was the sacrifice of ordination, or literally “installation,” a special form of peace offering ([Ex 29:19-34; Lv 8:22-29](#)). The second passage is the formal inauguration of the sacrificial system at the tabernacle ([Lv 9](#)). The sacrifices for Aaron were sin and burnt offerings, followed by those for the

people: sin, burnt, grain, and peace offerings ([9:7–22](#)).

The same sequence is followed at the cleansing and restoration of the temple in Jerusalem conducted by King Hezekiah ([2 Chr 29:20–36](#)). A great sin offering was first, followed by the burnt offerings accompanied by music and song. Then the king proclaimed that the people had committed themselves to the Lord; in this new state of purity they could now share in the sacrifices of devotion (burnt offerings) and thanksgiving (peace offerings).

The procedural order of the sacrifices embodies the OT ideology of how God may be approached. First, atonement for sin had to be made and then total consecration of self; these are symbolized by the sin and/or guilt offerings and the burnt and grain offerings, respectively. When these conditions were met, the offerer could express his continued devotion by more burnt offerings and also take part in the fellowship sacrifices (peace offerings) in which he himself got a large portion of the slaughtered animal (to share with his friends and the poor in his community; [Dt 12:17–19](#)).

Description of Sacrifices

The ensuing description of the different types of sacrifice will treat them in accordance with the “procedural” order, that is, as symbolic stages in one’s approach to God.

Expiation

These two offerings were required for making atonement for sins and trespasses:

1. Sin offering ([Lv 4:1–5:13](#); [6:24–30](#)). Different animals were specified in accordance with the rank of the offerer. A high priest had to bring a young bull ([4:3](#)), as did the congregation as a whole (v [14](#)), except when the matter was a ritual infraction ([Nm 15:24](#)). A ruler would bring a male goat ([Lv 4:23](#)), but a commoner could provide a female goat (v [28](#); [Nm 15:27](#)) or a lamb ([Lv 4:32](#)). If he was indigent, he could offer two turtledoves or two young pigeons (one of which would be a burnt offering; [5:7](#)), or if he was extremely poor, he might even substitute a tenth of an ephah of fine flour ([Lv 5:11–13](#); cf. [Heb 9:22](#)).

The offerer brought the animal to the entrance of the temple court and laid his hand on it ([Lv 4:4](#)). He did not confess his sin in this act because the animal was not being sent away (cf. the goat for Azazel, [16:21](#)); rather, he was identifying himself with the

sacrifice. The offerer had to kill the animal on the north side of the altar ([4:24, 29](#)). The animals were never slaughtered on the altar proper. The officiating priest collected the blood; when it was a bull for himself or for the congregation, he sprinkled some of the blood before the veil inside the tent of meeting and put some on the horns of the incense altar (vv [5–7](#), [16–18](#)). On the Day of Atonement he brought the sacrificial blood for himself and for the people into the Holy of Holies ([16:14–15](#)). From all other animals, the blood was applied to the horns of the altar of burnt offering ([4:25, 30, 34](#)); the blood of fowl was sprinkled on the side of the altar ([5:9](#)). Finally, the remaining blood from any offering was poured or drained out at the base of the altar ([4:7](#)).

The choicest of the internal organs, namely, the fatty tissue over and on the entrails, the two kidneys and their fat, and the appendage to the liver, were all offered to the Lord on the altar ([Lv 4:8–10](#)). The carcass and the other entrails were burned outside the camp when it was a bull for the priest or for the people. This was also true of the bull for the ordination of the priests ([Ex 29:10–14](#); [Lv 8:14–17](#)). Otherwise, the priest who conducted the rites received the edible flesh as his portion. He had to eat it within the temple area, and its preparation was governed by strict rules of ritual purity ([Lv 6:25–30](#); cf. [10:16–20](#)). A sin offering of one male goat was presented at each of the sacred holidays: the New Moon ([Nm 28:15](#)), each day of Passover (vv [22–24](#)), the Festival of Weeks (v [30](#)), the Festival of Trumpets ([29:5](#)), the Day of Atonement (v [11](#)), and each day of the Feast of Tabernacles (vv [16, 19](#)). The high priest also offered a bull for himself and then sacrificed one of the two goats on the Day of Atonement. Certain purification rites required lesser sin offerings, namely, lambs or birds: childbirth ([Lv 12:6–8](#)), cleansing from leprosy ([14:12–14, 19–22](#)), and abscesses and hemorrhages ([15:14–15, 29–30](#)) or after defilement while under a vow ([Nm 6:10–11](#)).

2. Guilt offering ([Lv 5:14–6:7](#); [7:1–7](#)). The guilt or trespass offering was a special kind of sin offering (cf. [5:7](#)) required whenever someone had been denied his rightful due. Reparation of the valued amount that had been defrauded had to be made, plus a fine of one-fifth ([5:16](#); [6:5](#)). The animal was usually a ram ([5:15, 18](#); [6:6](#)). The cleansed leper and the defiled Nazirite had to bring a male lamb ([Lv 14:12, 21](#); [Nm 6:12](#)). The offerer apparently handled the sacrifice as he would a sin offering, but the priest had to sprinkle the blood around the altar ([Lv 7:2](#)). Viscera were burned on the altar as

usual (vv [3-5](#)). Some of the blood was then applied to the tip of the cleansed leper's right ear and to his right thumb and big toe ([14:14](#)). Again the priest received most of the animal's flesh for food ([7:6-7](#); [14:13](#)). A guilt offering was required whenever another party had suffered some loss. Ritual infractions, such as eating the "holy things" without proper authorization ([5:14-19](#); [22:14](#)), called for payment of the sum that should have gone to the Lord plus the fine of one-fifth that went to the priest ([Lv 5:16](#); [2 Kgs 12:16](#)). The leper belongs in this category, since during the time of his infection he was unable to render service to God ([Lv 14:12-18](#)). The same applies to the Nazirite who had suffered defilement while he was set apart to God by the vow; thus a guilt offering was required ([Nm 6:12](#)). Violation of another person's property rights could be expiated only by the guilt offering and its additional one-fifth. Such matters included cheating on deposits or security, robbery or oppression, failing to report the find of some lost property, or false swearing or failing to testify ([Lv 6:1-5](#)). Intercourse with a betrothed slave girl was also a violation of property rights ([19:20-22](#)). If the offended party was no longer living and had no surviving kinsmen, the payment went to the priest ([Nm 5:5-10](#)).

Consecration Offerings

These rituals usually come to mind when one hears the word "offering." They represent acts of personal commitment that must accompany the repentance expressed in the sin and guilt offerings. They were also a prerequisite for the fellowship or communal sacrifices that might follow.

1. Burnt offering ([Lv 1:3-17](#); [6:8-13](#)). The burnt offering could be a bull, a sheep, or a bird. The offerer presented the animal, laid his hand on it, and killed it on the north side of the altar. The bird was simply given to the priest. The latter collected the blood, presented it before God, and then sprinkled it around the altar. When the offering was a bird, he wrung off its head and drained the blood at the side of the altar. Though the slaughtering and sprinkling of the blood relates the burnt offering to the expiatory sacrifices of the previous section, the main emphasis here is on killing the animal, washing its unclean parts, and then carefully arranging all of the pieces on the altar. All of this was then consumed on the altar as a pleasing odor to the Lord. Since burnt offerings were offered morning and evening, a good supply of wood by the altar was necessary. The officiating

priest, dressed in proper garments, had to keep the fire burning continuously ([6:8-13](#)).

Burnt offerings played a prominent role in the sacrifices of the ritual calendar. The continual burnt offering was made twice a day, a male lamb morning and evening ([Ex 29:38-42](#); [Nm 28:1-8](#)). Two additional lambs were sacrificed each Sabbath ([Nm 28:9-10](#)).

Except for these daily offerings, a sin offering of one goat was usually made along with the burnt offerings on the following holidays: For the New Moon at the beginning of each month, two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs were offered ([Nm 28:11-14](#)). The same were required for each day of the Passover festival (vv [19-24](#)) and again on the Feast of Weeks (vv [6-29](#)). On the Festival of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, the requirement was one bull, one ram, and seven lambs ([29:2-4](#)).

The great Feast of Tabernacles was characterized by a series of elaborate burnt offerings, plus one goat per day as a sin offering. On the first day, 13 young bulls, 2 rams, and 14 male lambs were offered ([Nm 29:12-16](#)). Each successive day, the number of bulls was decreased by one until on the seventh day there were only seven (the rams and lambs remained the same; [29:17-25](#)). On the eighth day the animals required for Trumpets and Atonement were offered, namely, one bull, one ram, and seven lambs.

Certain rituals of purification also required burnt offerings in addition to sin offerings: after childbirth ([Lv 12:6-8](#)), abscesses ([15:14-15](#)), and discharges (vv [29-30](#)); or after defilement while under a Nazirite vow ([Nm 6:10-11](#)). Though it is not stated that grain offerings were required in these cases, they certainly were for the cleansing from leprosy ([Lv 14:10, 19-22, 31](#)) and the completion of the Nazirite vow ([Nm 6:14-16](#)).

2. Grain (Cereal) offering ([Lv 2](#); [6:14-23](#)). The Hebrew term referring to this particular offering means "gift," or "offering," including animals ([Gn 4:3-5](#); [Jgs 6:18](#); [1 Sm 2:17](#)). But in the specific sacrificial context it signifies a combination of fine flour, olive oil, and frankincense that could be made up in the form of baked loaves, wafers, or morsels. The offering of firstfruits was to be crushed heads of new grain ([Lv 2:14](#)). No leaven or honey was permitted on the cakes, although those same commodities could be accepted as a firstfruit offering. They would not go to the altar but were given to the priest. The offerer had to bring the

prepared loaves or wafers to the temple. The priest would burn one handful on the altar as its “memorial portion” (v 2), keeping the remainder for his own food (6:16; 7:9). But when the priest was making a grain offering on his own behalf, he burnt it all on the altar (6:22–23).

A grain offering was usually given with every burnt offering, especially those pertaining to the sacred calendar (Nm 28–29). The amounts of flour and oil were set according to the animal being sacrificed: three-tenths of an ephah of flour and one-half a hin of oil for a bull, two-tenths ephah and one-third hin for a ram, and one-tenth ephah plus one-fourth hin for a lamb (15:2–10). Other happy occasions for a grain offering included the cleansing of a leper (Lv 14:10, 20–21, 31; unspecified quantity of grain with a bird) and the successful consummation of a Nazirite vow (Nm 6:13–15).

Peace offerings were invariably followed by grain offerings (Lv 7:12–14; Nm 15:4). The priest received one of each pair of cakes or wafers. The remainder was returned to the offerer to be eaten with the flesh of the sacrificial animal at a place of his choice.

A special case where such offering was used was the one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal required in the jealousy ritual. It was to have no oil or frankincense (Nm 5:15, 18, 25–26). A very poor individual was permitted to bring one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour without oil or frankincense as a sin offering (Lv 5:11–13).

3. Drink offering (Nm 15:1–10). The standard libation was one-fourth of a hin of wine for a lamb, one-third for a ram, and one-half for a bull. The wine (Ex 29:40), also called “strong drink” (Nm 28:7), is probably an intentional substitute for the blood used by other nations (Ps 16:4). The libation was classed as a “pleasing odor” offering (Nm 15:7). As with the burnt offering, the entire drink offering was expended; nothing was given to the priest (28:7).

Drink offerings accompanied the daily offering (Ex 29:40–41; Nm 28:7) and the Sabbath offering (Nm 28:9), as well as the New Moon festival. Reference is also made to them in connection with the second and following days of the Feast of Tabernacles (29:18, 21); for the first day their absence is probably unintentional. The same might hold true for the Passover, Firstfruits, and Feast of Trumpets (Nm 28:16–29:11; cf. Ez 45:11). A libation was required for the rites concluding a Nazirite vow

(Nm 6:17) but not for cleansing a leper (Lv 14:10–20).

Fellowship Offerings

These sacrifices were voluntary on the part of the offerer and generally not imposed by regulations except for the Nazirite (Nm 6:17) and the Feast of Weeks (Lv 23:19–20). An offerer who had already fulfilled the ritual requirements for atonement and personal consecration was permitted to make a fellowship offering. Burnt offerings often accompanied the fellowship sacrifices as a further expression of devotion.

1. Peace offering (Lv 3; 7:11–36; Am 5:22). This is the basic class of all fellowship or communal offerings; the others are simply subclasses of the peace offering. In terms of holiness, or restrictedness, they were not so rigidly confined as the other offerings. Animals from the herd or flock, male or female (Lv 3:1, 6, 12), were permitted. The usual stipulation of freedom from blemish was in force, except in the case of the freewill offering, in which the animal could have one limb longer than the other (22:23). Unleavened cakes were also required, at least for the thank (7:12–13) and Nazirite (Nm 6:15–19) offerings. Each of these three types of peace offerings will be discussed below, with their special features.

The first parts of the ritual—the presentation and laying on of the hand—were identical to those of the other sacrifices. However, the animal was slaughtered at the door of the sanctuary courtyard and not on the north side of the altar (Lv 3:1–2, 7–8, 12–13; 7:29–30). The priest collected the blood and tossed it against the altar as he did with the burnt offering (3:2, 8, 13). The choice viscera were offered up as a “pleasing odor” (3:3–5, 6–11, 14–16).

The priest also received a certain portion of the offering. He was allowed to eat it in any ritually clean place and to share it with his family (Lv 7:14, 30–36; Nm 6:20), in contrast to his portion of other sacrifices, which he had to eat somewhere in the temple compound (Nm 18:10–11). He received one of the cakes and the breast as a wave offering and the right thigh as a contribution for the offerer. This latter is the so-called “heave offering”; the technical term developed from a root signifying “to be high” and meaning “that which is lifted up.” The heave offering did not really represent a special kind of ritual ceremony.

The ritual act of the peace offering culminated with a fellowship meal. Except for those parts on the altar or given to the priest, the body of the animal was returned to the man who offered it. He had to prepare it as a communal meal for himself, for his family, and for the Levite in his community ([Dt 12:12, 18-19](#)). This would have to be at the official sanctuary ([Dt 12:6-7, 11-12, 15-19](#); cf. [1 Sm 1:3-4](#)) and the participants had to observe strict rules of purity ([Lv 7:19-21](#); [19:5-8](#)). It may be contrasted with the ritual slaughtering of animals for a banquet that was permitted at any local altar ([Dt 12:16, 20-22](#)). The flesh of the thank offering had to be eaten on the same day of the sacrifice ([Lv 7:15](#)), while that of the votive or freewill offerings could be finished off on the following day (vv [16-18](#)). Whatever remained then had to be burned before the time limit expired.

Only three times is there a specific demand for a peace offering: in the Feast of Weeks ([Lv 23:19-20](#)), upon completion of a Nazirite vow ([Nm 6:17-20](#)), and at the installation of the priesthood ([Ex 29:19-22, 28](#)). Other public ritual occasions included the inauguration of the temple ([1 Kgs 8:63](#); [2 Chr 7:5](#)). Events on a national level that evoked the peace offering were the successful conclusion of a military campaign ([1 Sm 11:15](#)), the end of a famine or pestilence ([2 Sm 24:25](#)), confirmation of a candidate to the throne ([1 Kgs 1:9, 19](#)), or a time of religious revival ([2 Chr 29:31-36](#)). On the local level, they were offered at the annual family reunion ([1 Sm 20:6](#)) or other festive occasions, such as the harvest of the firstfruits ([Ex 22:29-31](#); [1 Sm 9:11-14, 22-24](#); [16:4-5](#)).

2. Wave offering. The first portion of the peace offering was “waved” before the Lord to signify that the priest was eating it as a representative of God (the actual motion evidently resembled the wielding of a saw or a staff, [Is 10:15](#)). The same technical term, “wave offering,” was also used for other kinds of offering: precious metals donated for making the cultic artifacts ([Ex 35:22](#); [38:29](#)) and the guilt offering of the cleansed leper ([Lv 14:12](#)).

3. Freewill offering. These gifts, brought to the holy convocations that took place three times per year ([Ex 23:16](#); [34:20](#); [Dt 16:10, 16-17](#); [2 Chr 35:8](#); [Ezr 3:5](#)), were voluntary ([Lv 7:16](#); [22:18, 21-23](#); [23:28](#); [Nm 15:3](#); [29:39](#); [Dt 12:6, 17](#)). Like the voluntary offering, the freewill offering could be a burnt rather than a peace offering ([Lv 22:17-24](#); [Ez 46:12](#)). If it was the latter, the flesh could be eaten on the second day but must be burned before the third ([Lv 7:16-17](#)). Unlike some other peace

offerings, the animal being sacrificed could have one limb longer than the other ([22:23](#)).

4. Installation offering. This Hebrew term refers to the settings of precious stones ([Ex 25:7](#); [35:9, 27](#); [1 Chr 29:2](#)), so “installation” seems an appropriate translation. It had to do with “filling the hand,” a ritual act that consecrated someone to divine service ([Ex 28:41](#); cf. [32:29](#)) and required ritual purity and spiritual devotion ([2 Chr 29:31](#)). The details of the original ceremony at the installation of the first priest is described in two passages ([Ex 29:19-34](#); [Lv 8:22-32](#)).

See also Atonement; Cleanness and Uncleanness, Regulations Concerning; Feasts and Festivals of Israel; Tabernacle; Temple.

Og

King of Bashan. This king was famous partly because he was a giant. “For only Og king of Bashan had remained of the remnant of the Rephaim. His bed of iron, nine cubits long and four cubits wide, is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites” ([Deuteronomy 3:11](#)). This means the bed was more than 4.1 meters (13 feet) long and 1.8 meters (6 feet) wide!

Moses defeated Og immediately after the defeat of King Sihon the Amorite ([Numbers 21:33-35](#)). Bashan lay along the northern part of the Transjordan (the region east of the Jordan River). The land of Og extended toward the northeast from the lower course of the Jarmuk (Yarmuk) River. High mountain ranges protected him on the east from scorching desert winds.

Og and his people had several settlements. The most important settlements were Ashtaroth and Edrei ([Joshua 13:12](#)). Og had fortified his land with 60 walled cities. He was likely overconfident when fighting the army of Moses. Moses destroyed everyone living in those cities. He only spared the livestock and the spoils of war ([Deuteronomy 3:5-6](#)).

Three tribes of Israel found the Transjordan most suitable for grazing their herds. So, at the defeat of Sihon and Og, Moses assigned these captured lands to the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh ([Numbers 32:33](#); [Joshua 12:4-6](#)).

Ohad

Simeon's son ([Genesis 46:10](#); [Exodus 6:15](#)). His name does not appear in the list of [Numbers 26:12-14](#).

Ohel

Descendant of Jehoiakim and King David ([1 Chr 3:20](#)).

Oholah and Oholibah

Names given to the northern kingdom (kjb "Aholah"), with its capital at Samaria, and to the southern kingdom (kjb "Aholibah"), with its capital at Jerusalem, respectively, by Ezekiel in his allegory depicting the unfaithfulness of God's people ([Ez 23](#)). The names characterized the basic attitude of each of the twin kingdoms toward God and his worship. Samaria (Oholah) had "her own tent" (the literal meaning of the name) and had invented her own centers of worship; Jerusalem (Oholibah, literally "my tent is in her") prided herself in being the custodian of the temple.

Rather than being true to the Lord, Samaria had committed spiritual adultery. Not being content with her spiritual infidelity in wooing the gods of Egypt, she had lusted after the idols of Assyria and the worldly attractions that the Neo-Assyrian culture held out before her. Both courses of action are adequately documented by archaeological discoveries from the ancient Near East, such as Jehu's act of homage as portrayed on the Black Obelisk of King Shalmaneser III of Assyria (859–824 BC). Samaria's conduct had been judged by God; her newfound desire had proved to be her destruction, God giving her over into the hands of the Assyrian conqueror.

Far from learning from Israel's example, Judah had not only courted Assyria and its idolatry (e.g., [2 Kgs 16:10-18](#)) but also had added to her affections the Neo-Babylonian Empire (e.g., [20:14-18](#)) and then had turned once again to Egypt (e.g., [Jer 37; 46](#)), her earlier lover ([Ez 23:11-21](#)). Therefore, God would sorely punish her at the hands of the Babylonians, and she would know the just judgment of God.

Ezekiel closes his allegory with a rehearsal of God's charges against the two kingdoms. God's people were doubly guilty. Not being content with their apostasy, they had gone so far as to profane the

sanctuary of God and his Sabbath by entering the temple with hands bloodied in the sacrifice of their own children in pagan rites.

Oholiab

A man Moses chose to help Bezalel, the master craftsman, with the tabernacle's construction and decoration. Oholiab, son of Ahisamach and of Dan's tribe, was a noted designer and stitcher. He taught, with Bezalel, the skills to build the tabernacle ([Exodus 31:6](#); [35:34](#); [36:1-2](#); [38:23](#); "Aholiab" in the King James Version).

Oholibamah

1. Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah the Hivite ([Gn 36:2, 5, 14, 18, 25](#), kjb "Aholibamah"), who bore to him Jeush, Jalam, and Korah before Esau left Canaan for Seir.

The absence of her name from the other lists of Esau's wives (see [Gn 26:34](#); [28:9](#)) has occasioned a great deal of discussion. The considerable variation in these lists may indicate either a confusion in the scribal transmission or may point to the use of alternate names, gained either at marriage or as a result of some memorable event in the women's lives. Whether or not she is identified with Judith, as some have suggested, the scriptural observation that she was "a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah" is true ([26:35](#)).

2. Edomite clan chieftain descended from Esau ([Gn 36:41](#); [1 Chr 1:52](#), kjb "Aholibamah").

Oil

A substance most often produced from the olive berry. In the Bible, oil could also apply to other oils, including myrrh ([Esther 2:12](#)).

How Did People Use Oil in Daily Life?

Oil was used primarily in cooking. Other known uses for olive oil include:

- as a cosmetic for anointing the body
- for medicinal purposes
- as a source of light
- for anointing kings and priests
- in religious offerings

Olive trees were plentiful, and the Israelites used this major crop to establish a thriving trade in oil with Tyre and Egypt. Like precious metals and animals, oil became a common economic exchange item. Solomon used oil as part of the payment to Hiram for construction expenses connected with the temple ([1 Kings 5:11](#); [Ezra 27:17](#)).

Because oil was essential for everyday life, it was an effective and acceptable medium of barter exchanges. Oil was used to prepare most food ([1 Kings 17:12-16](#)). The common cake or patty of grain, the basis of the noon meal, would be cooked on a griddle with a little oil.

Oil was used for anointing the body after a bath ([Ruth 3:3](#); [2 Samuel 12:20](#)). It was used on festive occasions, and at Egyptian banquets, the heads of both the guests and the female entertainers were anointed. The New Testament mentions anointing sick people with oil ([James 5:14](#)). Olive oil could also be taken internally as a medicine for the relief of gastric disorders. It had a soothing effect and was also used as a mild laxative. Olive oil was applied externally as an ointment for bruises, burns, cuts, and abrasions ([Isaiah 1:6](#); [Mark 6:13](#); [Luke 10:34](#)).

As soon as the sun set, the only source of light was oil lamps. Small, portable lamps could be placed easily on a shelf. In large homes, palaces, synagogues, or temples, the lamp could rest on a tall metal base. The wick of flax ([Isaiah 42:3](#)) or hemp was placed in the oil and gave out a flame until it was extinguished, or the supply of fuel ran out. Torches were used in the streets both to light the way and for more security.

How Was Oil Used in Worship and Ceremonies?

Torches added to the festive atmosphere of evening processions. They were an essential part of the wedding procession. In the event of a delay in the procession, those who carried the torches usually brought extra oil in a container. This scene is vividly portrayed in Jesus's parable of the wise and foolish virgins ([Matthew 25:1-13](#)).

In other ceremonial events, oil had a special meaning when used for the anointing of priests and kings ([Exodus 29:7](#); [1 Samuel 10:1](#); [1 Kings 1:39](#)). It was symbolic of the office and of the recognition of God's blessing on the officeholder.

Oil was used in the temple. It was donated as part of the first fruit offering and was also subject to tithing ([Exodus 22:29](#); [Deuteronomy 12:17](#)). Oil was used for ceremonial parts of temple life or as part of the offering. The grain offering was mixed with oil ([Leviticus 8:26](#); [Numbers 7:19](#)). The oil in the lamp that burned in the sanctuary needed frequent refilling ([Leviticus 24:2](#)). The daily sacrifice required oil ([Exodus 29:40](#)). But the sin offering and the jealousy offering did not use oil ([Leviticus 5:11](#); [Numbers 5:15](#)).

How Did People Make Oil?

A pestle and mortar, or a stone press, pressed oil from the olives ([Exodus 27:20](#)). Where the latter was used, the pulp produced by the press was often pressed again. Stone presses were set up to process the olives available at the Mount of Olives. The word for "oil press" was *gatt-semen*, and this is why the Garden where Jesus prayed was called Gethsemane.

What Did Oil Mean to People in Bible Times?

Oil was symbolically associated with joy, festivity, ceremony, honor, and light. Physical and spiritual health were also associated with the presence of oil. The absence or loss of oil meant sorrow and the withdrawal of all that is good in life ([Joel 1:10](#)).

See also Anoint; Food and Food Preparation; Medicine and Medical Practice; Ointment; Plants (Olive, Olive Tree).

Oil Tree, Oleaster

The oleaster is a small Eurasian tree with oblong silvery leaves, greenish flowers, and olive-like fruit. There is some question about which tree is mentioned in [1 Kings 6:23, 31-33](#) and [1 Chronicles 27:28](#) when they refer to "olive wood" and "olive trees." The same Hebrew word appears in [Isaiah 41:19](#) and [Micah 6:7](#). The plant in question is probably the oleaster (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*). It grows from 4.6 to 6.1 meters (15 to 20 feet) tall. It is common in all parts of Israel and the surrounding areas, except in the Jordan Valley.

At one time, the oleaster was especially common on Mount Tabor and in the areas of Hebron and Samaria. The wood is hard and fine-grained, making it well suited for carving images and figures. The oil that comes from this tree is rather low quality. People use it for medicine but not for food. This may be the oil mentioned in [Micah 6:7](#).

Oil, Anointing

See Anoint.

Ointment

Various mixes for medicinal use. Most ointments have an oil base, mixed with spices or herbs. Most Palestinians used olive oil for ointments. Olive oil itself was considered an ointment. The Old Testament does not distinguish between "oil" and "ointment."

In Egypt and Mesopotamia, various vegetable oils and animal fats were used for ointments. People also used other vegetable oils, including castor oil, sesame oil, linseed oil, radish oil, colocynth oil, and oil from various nuts.

Ointments were important in ancient times. In the hot and dry climate of the Near East, ointments were used to protect and heal the skin. All classes used ointments for medicinal purposes, soothing qualities, and masking odors. The Old Testament mentions apothecaries or perfumers ([1 Samuel 8:13](#); [2 Chronicles 16:14](#)). Some artisan makers organized into guilds ([Nehemiah 3:8](#)).

How Were Ointments Made?

In general, people made ointments by heating aromatic plants or spices in oil (compare [Job 41:31](#)). Perfumed ointments were combinations of certain materials with specially prepared oil. In the Old Testament, descriptive words like "fragrant" ([Song of Solomon 1:3](#)) or "precious" ([Ecclesiastes 7:1](#)) mean perfumed oils. Many types of containers could store ointments, but people preferred flasks made of alabaster. An alabaster jar held the expensive ointment Mary used to anoint Jesus in Bethany ([Mark 14:3](#)).

How Were Ointments Used?

Ointments had many uses. Among the Jewish people, ointments held important meaning. Holy

anointing oil consecrated Aaron, his sons, the tabernacle, and its furnishings. Anointing oil was made of myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia mixed with olive oil ([Exodus 30:23-25](#)). Oil was also used to anoint kings and prophets, but not the same holy anointing oil mixture.

As a cosmetic, perfumed ointments controlled unpleasant odors. Oil was applied to the body ([2 Samuel 12:20](#)), clothing ([Psalms 45:8](#)), or personal objects ([Proverbs 7:17](#)). Women used ointments for cleansing and enhancing the attractiveness of skin ([Esther 2:12](#)). The fragrance of certain ointments attracted the attention of the opposite sex ([Song of Solomon 4:10](#)). Song of Songs has several references to fragrant ointments.

Using ointments to refresh and soothe guests was a mark of hospitality in the ancient Near East. The Egyptians used cones of ointment. They placed the cones on the heads of guests to drip down over the body (compare [Psalms 133:2](#)). As a sign of respect and honor, hosts anointed the heads of guests with oil. Jesus chided a Pharisee who neglected this traditional mark of hospitality ([Luke 7:37-40](#)). Mary anointed Jesus with a costly flask of nard, a fragrant ointment obtained from the roots of an aromatic herb from India ([Mark 14:3](#)).

Ointments Used for Burial

Burial processes used anointing oils. In the New Testament, a corpse would be washed and anointed with ointments ([Mark 16:1](#); [Acts 9:37](#)). Then, attendants wrapped the body in linen garments with spices and ointments ([Luke 23:56](#); [John 19:40](#)). Both the Jews and the Romans used nard for burials. A mixture of myrrh and aloes was used for Jesus's burial.

Ointments Used as Medicine

Medicinal uses of ointment were common:

- Oil was applied to wounds ([Luke 10:34](#)).
- Healing ointments called balm included aromatic gums or resins. Gilead is associated with healing balm ([Jeremiah 8:22](#)).
- Palestine exported balm for trade ([Genesis 37:25](#); [Ezekiel 27:17](#)).
- The city of Laodicea produced and exported a famous eye ointment ([Revelation 3:18](#)).
- Ointments were an important trade item for merchants in the Roman period ([Revelation 18:13](#)).
- Anointing with oil came to be associated with gladness and joy ([Psalms 45:7](#); [Isaiah 61:3](#)).
- People refrained from anointing during times of mourning ([2 Samuel 14:2](#)).
- The lack of oil for anointing was viewed as judgment ([Micah 6:15](#)).
- Shields were anointed with oil to make them supple and possibly to help deflect weapons ([2 Samuel 1:21](#)).

See also Medicine and Medical Practice; Oil; Plants (Olive, Olive Tree).

Old Gate

Jerusalem gate repaired by Joiada and Meshullam under Nehemiah's supervision ([Neh 3:6](#)), and subsequently mentioned in the northerly route traveled by one of the companies of celebrants during the Jerusalem wall's dedication ([12:39](#)). The Old Gate was located in the city's northern wall between the Fish Gate and the Gate of Ephraim ([12:38-39](#)).

See also Jerusalem.

Old Man

See Man, Old and New.

Old Testament

See Bible.

Old Testament Canon

See Bible, Canon of the.

Old Testament Chronology

See Timeline of the Bible (Old Testament).

Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament

See Bible, Quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament.

Oleander

A poisonous evergreen shrub that grows in warm climates. One suggestion for the plants called "roses" in various Bible translations is the oleander ([Sirach 24:14](#), King James Version). This plant originally came from the East Indies but has been grown throughout warm regions of the world for hundreds of years.

The oleander (*Nerium oleander*) grows well in Israel and the surrounding areas. It forms thick clusters in some parts of the Jordan Valley. It is usually a shrub that grows from 0.9 to 3.7 meters (3 to 12 feet) tall. Every part of the oleander plant is dangerously poisonous.

Olive, Olive Tree

The olive is an evergreen tree from semi-tropical regions in Europe, Asia, and Africa. It produces edible fruit. The olive (*Olea europaea*) was certainly one of the most valuable trees known to the Jewish people. The Bible contains countless references to it and to olive oil, which people used for anointing (the practice of pouring oil on a person's head as part of a religious ceremony to mark them for a special role or blessing).

The tree is quite common in Israel and the surrounding areas. In many places, it is the only tree of any substantial size. The branches of the

wild olive are rather stiff and have thorns. The typical cultivated tree has many branches, is evergreen, and grows 6.1 meters (20 feet) tall or more. It has a twisted trunk and smooth, ash-colored bark. The leaves are leathery, and the flowers are small and yellow or white.

The fruits are large and black or violet in color. They ripen in September. The outer fleshy parts of the fruit produce the valuable olive oil sold commercially. Nearly a third (31 percent) of the ripe fruit is oil. People eat both the ripe fruit raw and the green, unripe fruit.

The wood from the trunk and limbs is hard, rich yellow or amber in color, and has a fine grain, often with beautiful patterns. People still use it today for the finest cabinet work and wood turning. The olive tree grows very slowly, but it lives for a very long time.

It is difficult to kill an olive tree by cutting it down. This is because new sprouts grow up from the root and all around the edges of the old stump. These often form a grove of two to five trunks, all from a single root that originally supported only one tree.

See Agriculture; Food and Food Preparation.

Olives, Mount of

The Mount of Olives is a large ridge running north to south in the Judean mountains. It lies directly east of Jerusalem and the Kidron Valley. The mountain has three peaks, with two valleys between them. The northern peak is Mount Scopus. To the south of Mount Scopus is a small saddle where the ancient Roman road to Jericho passed. The central peak is the traditional Mount of Olives, standing 818.1 meters (2,684 feet) high, across from the temple platform (the *Haram esh-Sherif*).

Notable Places and Features

On the main peak, Emperor Constantine built a large church around AD 325. This church was called the Church of the Ascension, and he dedicated it to his mother Helena. South of this church, there is a low area where today's road to Bethany runs.

The southern peak looks down on the oldest part of Jerusalem, which was once called the City of David. This peak has a special name: the "Mount of Offense." It got this name because King Solomon built temples for his foreign wives' gods there,

which was against God's commands. At the bottom of this southern peak is an Arab village called Silwan. This is where two valleys, the Kidron Valley and the Hinnom Valley, come together.

The Mount of Olives got its name from the many olive trees that grew there. In ancient times, these olive groves were well-known and important ([Zechariah 14:4](#); [Mark 11:1](#)). The western side of the mountain gets rain from the Mediterranean Sea. This rain, combined with the rich soil made from broken-down rocks, helps many fruit trees grow well here.

The eastern side of the mountain marks where the Judean desert begins. Two villages mentioned in the New Testament, Bethany and Bethphage, were built on the eastern slopes of the mountain.

The Mount of Olives in the Old Testament

The first time the Mount of Olives appears in the Old Testament is in a story about King David. David had to run away from Jerusalem because his son Absalom was trying to take his throne. David went east, climbing the Mount of Olives as he escaped toward the Jordan Valley ([2 Samuel 15:30](#)).

Later, King Solomon (David's son) built "high places" of worship on the mountain for foreign gods. These included gods worshiped by people from Sidon, Moab, and Ammon ([1 Kings 11:7](#)). Many years later, another king named Josiah destroyed these places of worship because they were against God's law ([2 Kings 23:13](#)).

The prophet Ezekiel wrote about seeing God's presence leave the temple in Jerusalem and move to the Mount of Olives ([Ezekiel 11:23](#)). Another prophet, Zechariah, wrote one of the most well-known descriptions of the Mount of Olives. In his vision about future events, he wrote:

"On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half the mountain moving to the north and half to the south." ([Zechariah 14:1-5](#), verse 4).

The Mount of Olives in the New Testament

In the New Testament, most stories about Jesus at the Mount of Olives take place during the last week of his life, which Christians call Holy Week. There are two earlier stories that happened in Bethany, a village on the mountain:

- Jesus visited his friends Mary and Martha ([Luke 10:38-42](#)).
- Jesus brought his friend Lazarus back to life after Lazarus had died ([John 11:17-44](#)).

When Jesus came to Jerusalem for the last time, he traveled from the city of Jericho. He went over the Mount of Olives from the east side and came down into the Kidron Valley ([Mark 11:1-10](#)). This was the day people welcomed him as a king, spreading palm branches on the road.

As Jesus came down the mountain and saw Jerusalem, he stopped and cried because he knew what would happen to the city in the future ([Luke 19:41-44](#)).

During the last week of Jesus's life, he spent much of his time on the Mount of Olives. He taught people there during the day ([Mark 13](#)). At night, he likely stayed either on the mountain or in the nearby village of Bethany ([Luke 21:37](#), although this may refer to Bethany).

After the Last Supper, Jesus came to the Mount of Olives to pray ([Mark 14:26](#)). In the garden of Gethsemane, near an olive oil press, he was arrested (verse [32](#)). Later, after Jesus rose from the dead, he met with his followers one last time on the Mount of Olives. As they watched, Jesus was lifted up to heaven. Christians call this event the ascension ([Acts 1:12](#)).

Olivet

See Olives, Mount of.

Olympas

Member of the church in Rome to whom Paul sent personal greetings ([Rom 16:15](#)).

Olympian Zeus, Temple of

Name given to the temple of Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC when he turned the holy place into a shrine for the chief of the pagan gods of Greece ([2 Macc 6:2](#)). Jews were forced to abandon ancestral customs and could no longer observe God's law. The desecration included

temple prostitution, forced cannibalism, and humiliation for the Jews.

Omar

Second son of Eliphaz, grandson of Esau and the great-grandson of Abraham ([Gn 36:11, 15](#); [1 Chr 1:36](#)); an Edomite clan chief.

Omega

English spelling of the name of the last letter of the Greek alphabet. *See* Alpha and Omega.

Omen

Natural sign or occurrence prefiguring the outcome of a future event. Augury was listed among the abominable pagan practices forbidden to Israel ([Dt 18:10](#)). Balaam, upon seeing that the Lord was pleased with his blessings on Israel, did not seek omens as he normally did ([Nm 24:1](#)). The men of Syria looked for an omen to see if King Ahab of Israel (874–853 BC) would be favorably disposed to release the Syrian king Ben-hadad from captivity ([1 Kgs 20:33](#)). Isaiah reveals the Lord as one “who frustrates the omens of liars, and makes fools of diviners” ([Is 44:25](#), rsv).

See also Magic; Sorcery.

Omer

A measuring unit used in gathering manna ([Exodus 16:16, 18, 22, 36](#)).

See Weights and Measures.

Omnipotence

God's unlimited authority to bring into existence or cause to happen whatsoever he wills. *See* God, Being and Attributes of.

Omnipresence

Aspect of God's infinity in which he transcends the limitations of space and is present in all places at all times. *See* God, Being and Attributes of.

Omniscience

God's infinite knowledge and understanding of things past, present, and future. It is without end, limit, or boundary.

See God, Being and Attributes of.

Omri

1. King of Israel who first appears in Scripture as general of the army during the reign of Elah, king of Israel. In 885 BC Elah sent Omri to besiege the Philistine fortress of Gibbethon. During the siege, Zimri, another military leader, launched a coup against Elah, killed him, and immediately wiped out all of Elah's male relatives. When Omri heard of the assassination, he had the army declare him king and marched to the capital at Tirzah to deal with Zimri. When Zimri saw that the siege of Tirzah was going to be successful, he set fire to the king's palace and died in the flames after only seven days on the throne.

But Omri's rule over Israel was not yet established. Tibni seized control of part of the state and held it for about four years. Finally, Omri was able to crush Tibni and extend his power over all Israel. He established Israel's fourth ruling dynasty, which was destined to continue through three more generations after his own. His reign lasted a total of 12 years (885–874 BC), including the years of sovereignty disputed with Tibni.

International Developments

To the northeast of Israel, the Arameans of Syria were building a strong state with its capital at Damascus. A few years before Omri took the throne, Asa of Judah had sought the help of Syria against Baasha of Israel. Soon Syria would become a threat to both Hebrew kingdoms.

Farther east, Assyria was growing in strength under the leadership of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC), the founder of the empire. He marched into Phoenicia, but Israel was spared Assyrian attack until the days of Omri's son Ahab.

Omri's Reign

Since the purpose of Scripture is not to provide a political, military, or even social history of Israel or the countries surrounding it, administrations of the kings of Israel and Judah are often very briefly treated. For a fuller picture, it is necessary to turn to nonbiblical sources. From Assyrian records, it is evident that Omri must have been an impressive ruler. Generations later, Assyrians still spoke of Israel as the "land of Omri."

Perceptive leader that he was, Omri recognized that the nations needed a capital that was centrally located and militarily defensible. He settled on the site of Samaria, the third and most significant capital of the realm (Shechem and Tirzah had previously served as capitals). Located seven miles (11.3 kilometers) northwest of Shechem on the main road leading to Galilee and Phoenicia, it perched on a free-standing hill that rose some 300 to 400 feet (91.4–121.9 meters) above the surrounding plain. Thus it could be quite easily defended; it had a prosperous hinterland to supply it with food and taxes; and it was conveniently located on a main road. Omri bought the hill from Shemer and named the city after its owner. Then he leveled the top of the hill and built the palace compound. He also built a 33-foot- (10.1-meter-) thick wall around the summit of the hill.

Omri's expansionist activities are not mentioned in 1 Kings, but Scripture is supplemented by discovery of the Moabite Stone in 1868 at Dibon, east of the Jordan River. On this stela, Mesha, king of Moab, tells that Omri conquered Moab. Israel had continued to subjugate the land in the days of Ahab, but during his days, Mesha successfully rebelled against Israel ([2 Kgs 3:4](#)). That Omri could mount a successful war against Moab soon after becoming king shows that he was a capable ruler, because previously the kingdom of Israel had been greatly weakened by insurrection and political instability.

Omri also reestablished the friendly relations with Phoenicia that had been initiated in the days of David and Solomon. Presumably, he made a full alliance with King Ethbaal of Tyre and then sealed it with the marriage of his son Ahab to the Phoenician princess Jezebel. Such an alliance would have been mutually beneficial, for it would have brought cedar, beautifully crafted goods, and Phoenician architectural and technical expertise to Israel, and it would have provided Israelite grain and olive oil to Phoenicia. Moreover, it would have linked their forces against the threat of the rising power of Assyria.

This pact was destined to corrupt Israel, however, for it brought Baal worship into the land. Probably this is what the writer of Kings had in mind when he said that Omri “did worse” than the other kings of Israel before him ([1 Kgs 16:25](#)) because he practiced the idolatrous ways of Jeroboam. Baal worship was regarded as more degrading than the calf worship Jeroboam had introduced. Omri, and his son Ahab after him, subscribed to both.

Omri was one of the most powerful kings of Israel, building its new capital, winning for the state a reputation for prowess, and setting a course for future kings to follow. But unfortunately that course was morally corrupt; the introduction of Baal worship was one of the terrible results of Omri’s alliance with Tyre.

2. One of Beker’s sons from Benjamin’s tribe ([1 Chr 7:8](#)).
3. Descendant of Perez, son of Judah ([1 Chr 9:4](#)).
4. Son of Michael, prince of the tribe of Issachar during David’s reign ([1 Chr 27:18](#)).

On (Person)

The son of Peleth. He was from the tribe of Reuben. On joined the rebellion of Korah against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness ([Numbers 16:1](#)). This rebellion challenged the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

On (Place)

Hebrew name for Heliopolis, an Egyptian city ([Gn 41:45, 50; 46:20](#)). *See* Heliopolis.

Onam

1. Grandson of Seir and Shobal’s fifth son ([Gn 36:23; 1 Chr 1:40](#)).
2. Son of Jerahmeel and Atarah, the father of a clan in Judah ([1 Chr 2:26–28](#)).

Onan

Second son of Judah and a Canaanitess named Shua ([Gn 38:4–10; 46:12; Nm 26:19; 1 Chr 2:3](#)). Judah forced him to enter into a levirate marriage with

Tamar, the wife of his deceased brother, Er. Er and Tamar had no children. Onan refused to have children by Tamar, knowing that they would be heirs to his brother’s estate. As a result of Onan’s refusal to raise up descendants for his brother, the Lord punished him with death ([Gn 38:8–10](#)).

Onesimus

Slave on whose behalf Paul wrote the Letter to Philemon. A slave of Philemon, he had robbed his master and run away from him. He is also mentioned with Tychicus as a bearer of the Letter to the Colossians ([Col 4:9](#)), indicating that he came from that region. Paul became acquainted with him, converted him, and developed a close friendship with him ([Phlm 1:10](#)). Paul wanted to keep Onesimus with him during his imprisonment because he had been helpful to him (in Greek, Onesimus means “useful”). However, Paul returned the slave to his master, confident that the runaway slave would be received by his former owner as a Christian brother and that Philemon would charge any wrong that Onesimus had done to Paul’s account.

See also Philemon, Letter to.

Onesiphorus

A Christian who took care of Paul while imprisoned in Ephesus. Then Paul was moved to Rome. Onesiphorus searched for him and “refreshed” him there ([2 Timothy 1:16](#)). Paul mentions Onesiphorus in the greetings of his Second Letter to Timothy. Paul greeted Onesiphorus and his household ([4:19](#)).

Onias

Onias is the family name of four high priests in the intertestamental period. They were descendants of Zadok, the high priest in Solomon’s reign. Their lives spanned a period from the end of the fourth century BC down to the second. In their times the high priesthood was not only a religious office but included great political power.

Little is known of Onias I, except that he was son and successor to Jaddua, who was high priest at the time of Alexander the Great (336–323 BC). Onias II was his grandson. He eventually succeeded his

father, Simon I, after two relatives had held office until he was old enough to take over. According to Josephus, Onias II was an old man by the reign of Ptolemy III of Egypt (246–221 BC). It was probably to Onias II that King Arius of Sparta sent the famous letter preserved in [1 Maccabees 12:20–23](#), claiming that the Jews and Spartans were both descended from Abraham. Josephus claims that Onias III was the recipient, but there is no knowledge of a Spartan king Arius in his period. During this time, Judea was under the control of Egypt. Onias II attempted to secede by refusing to pay taxes. During the period of office of his successor, Simon II, Palestine changed hands and became subject to the Seleucid kings of Syria.

The powerful family of the Tobiads became political rivals to the Oniads, especially to Simon's son and heir, Onias III, who succeeded him about 180 BC. Their rivalry included religious tensions, since Onias stood for orthodox Judaism, while the Tobiads represented liberal concessions to Hellenism. In the power struggle Onias III was denounced as being pro-Egyptian, after a Syrian attempt to plunder the temple failed ([2 Macc 3:4–40](#)). In 175 BC, when the Seleucid king Antiochus IV came to the throne, he was removed from office and exiled to Antioch. His brother Jason was appointed high priest in his place. Eventually Jason, in turn, was succeeded by Menelaus, who had bribed the Syrians to displace Jason. Fearing opposition from the exiled Onias, Menelaus arranged to have him assassinated ([4:33–38](#)). Eventually, the Syrians deposed Menelaus.

The legitimate successor, Onias IV, son of Onias III, was prevented from taking over and fled to Egypt. In Egypt he built a temple at Leontopolis, probably as a sanctuary for the local Jewish military colony rather than as a religious center for Egyptian Jews generally, who continued to support the Jerusalem temple. According to the Jewish Mishnah, the religious authorities in Jerusalem apparently regarded its sacrifices as legitimate but refused to allow its (authentically Zadokite) priesthood to officiate in the temple at Jerusalem. It remained in use until the Roman emperor Vespasian had it closed down in AD 73.

Onion

The onions mentioned in [Numbers 11:5](#) are certainly *Allium cepa*, the Egyptian onion. This onion has a compact bulb covered with a coat and formed of layers. These layers consist of broad,

fleshy bases of leaves that closely overlap each other. The leaves are slender and hollow. The entire plant has a strong, distinctive taste and smell.

Closely related to the onion is garlic and leek.

See Food and Food Preparation; Garlic; Leek.

Only Begotten

A phrase that is often used to describe Jesus in Christian language. The term, often translated as "only begotten," does not mean "born" or "begotten." Instead, it means "the only one of its kind" or "unique." This is clear from its use in the New Testament and the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament).

In the New Testament, the Greek word for this phrase appears nine times. However, only five of these instances, all in the writings of John, refer to Jesus ([John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9](#)). Three of the other occurrences describe an only son or daughter ([Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38](#); compare [Judges 11:34](#) in the Septuagint).

Since it often refers to an only child, it implies something special, favored, or precious. The other non-Johannine reference, in [Hebrews 11:17](#), speaks of Isaac as Abraham's "favored" or "unique" son. Isaac was not Abraham's "only begotten" son. Abraham had other children. But, Isaac was the son through whom God's promise was fulfilled.

In the Septuagint, the word is used in [Psalm 22:20](#) and [35:17](#), where the psalmist, asking for deliverance, refers to his soul as something of great value. The Hebrew word behind these Old Testament texts also means "only" and does not suggest birth.

When the word is applied to Jesus, it means not "only begotten," but "only" or "unique." The phrase is used with "son" and should be understood as God's only Son, emphasizing both God's favor toward him and his uniqueness ([John 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9](#)). At Jesus's baptism and transfiguration, God says, "This is my beloved Son." The Synoptic Gospels share this idea. In fact, in the Septuagint, the word "beloved" is sometimes used as a translation of the word "only" in Hebrew.

In [John 1:14](#), the word "only" is used alone to stress that the incarnate Word (Jesus), in becoming human, is unique and comes from the Father. The final reference ([John 1:18](#)) is particularly

interesting because some texts say “the only son,” while others say “the only God.” Scribes could have easily written “only son” due to their familiarity with other texts in John. Given the stronger support for “only God,” this reading is preferred. The highest possible attitude is shown toward the incarnate Word (Jesus) who became human. No one has ever seen God, but the unique (or only) God, who is close to the Father, has revealed him.

See also Christology.

Ono

Benjaminite town built by Shemed ([1 Chr 8:12](#)). Some of its inhabitants returned to Palestine with Zerubbabel following the exile ([Ezr 2:33](#); [Neh 7:37](#)). Its location was variously known as the plain of Ono ([Neh 6:2](#)) or as the valley of craftsmen ([11:35](#)). Ono is identified with Kefr ‘Ana, seven miles (11.3 kilometers) southeast of Joppa.

Onycha

One of the sweet spices used in the sacred incense of the tabernacle ([Exodus 30:34](#)). It is unclear what precise spice this refers to. Some suggest that onycha came from the shell of a certain mussel found in India that smelled musky when burned.

Onyx

A semiprecious stone used on the breastplate of the high priest ([Exodus 28:9](#)).

See Stones, Precious #18.

Ophel

1. Hill or mound in Samaria where Elisha’s house stood ([2 Kgs 5:24](#)).
2. Fortification in the southeast portion of ancient Jerusalem high above the slopes of the Brook Kidron, strengthened by Jotham ([2 Chr 27:3](#)) and Manasseh ([33:14](#)). Isaiah described the destruction of such a fortress when prophesying the judgment of God upon Jerusalem ([Is 32:14](#)). After the exile, the temple servants lived there and repaired its walls ([Neh 3:26–27](#); [11:21](#)). Josephus states that it was near the temple. Archaeological excavations at

the traditional site in Jerusalem reveal fortifications dating from pre-Israelite times to the Maccabean period.

Ophir (Person)

Joktan’s son and a descendant of Shem through Arphaxad’s line ([Gn 10:29](#); [1 Chr 1:23](#)).

Ophir (Place)

Place to which Solomon sent a fleet of merchant ships to bring back gold and all sorts of precious and exotic products. The location of Ophir is not certain; most scholars place it in southwest Arabia. There may be a relationship between the place and the man named Ophir who appears in the table of nations as a son of Joktan ([Gn 10:29](#); cf. [1 Chr 1:23](#)), a descendant of Shem. The names of Joktan and his sons are connected with the southern and western parts of Arabia.

[First Kings 9:26–28](#) reports that Solomon built a fleet of merchant ships at Ezion-geber, which was near Elath on the Gulf of Aqaba. Hiram, king of Tyre, provided seamen to accompany those of Solomon. This expedition returned with 420 talents of gold for Solomon. [First Kings 10:11](#) adds that the fleet of Hiram brought from Ophir a great amount of almuq wood and precious stones.

Later, Jehoshaphat built “ships of Tarshish” to go to Ophir for gold, but the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber. Then Ahaziah, the son of Ahab of Israel, offered to send his men with the seamen of Judah, but Jehoshaphat refused (see [1 Kgs 22:48–49](#)).

The premier product of Ophir was fine gold. Eliphaz the Temanite comments that the Almighty should be one’s gold rather than the gold of Ophir ([Jb 22:24](#)). Job himself declares that wisdom is far more valuable than all the gold of Ophir ([28:16](#)). In his description of the glories of the king, the psalmist describes his queen at his right hand as wearing jewelry of finest gold from Ophir ([Ps 45:9](#)).

Some suggest that the ships of Tarshish mentioned ([1 Kgs 10:22](#)) were those ships that went to Ophir and returned every three years with gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. Traders brought the products, some from as far away as India, to the ports of Ophir, where Solomon’s representatives bought them.

Ophni

Village allotted to Benjamin after Israel had taken possession of Palestine ([Jos 18:24](#)). Its precise location is unknown, but some early writers suggest the town of Gophna (modern Jifna) on the highway from Samaria to Jerusalem, a day's march north of Gibeah. This identification assumes that the boundary of Benjamin turned north near Bethel on the northern boundary. The modern Jifna is located three miles (4.8 kilometers) northwest of Bethel.

Ophrah (Person)

Meonothai's son from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 4:14](#)).

Ophrah (Place)

1. A city in the land of Benjamin. This city was probably the same place as Ephraim ([2 Samuel 13:23](#); [2 Chronicles 13:19](#), where it is called "Ephron"; [John 11:54](#)). Most scholars think this city is now the town called *et-Taiyibeh*, which is eight kilometers (five miles) north of Michmash and six and a half kilometers (four miles) northeast of Bethel.

2. A city in Manasseh that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. He was the father of the judge Gideon. Gideon lived in this city ([Judges 6:11](#)). An angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon at Ophrah. The angel told Gideon to rescue Israel from the Midianites (verses [12-24](#)). After Gideon won the battle, the people wanted him to be king. But he refused. Instead, he made an ephod (a special garment used by priests) from the gold he had taken in the battle ([Judges 8:22-28](#)). Sadly, the people began to worship this object as an idol. It became a problem for Gideon and his family. Gideon died in Ophrah as an old man (verses [29-32](#)). Later, Gideon's son Abimelech wanted to become king. He killed his 70 brothers at Ophrah so he could rule. Only one brother, Jotham, escaped ([9:1-6](#)).

Oracle

An oracle is a divine message from God given through a spokesperson (like a prophet, priest, or king). Oracles usually announce blessings, give instructions, or declare judgments.

When Balak asked Balaam to speak a curse against Israel, Balaam instead spoke an oracle of blessing ([Numbers 24:3-16](#)). God instructed Moses through "living words" ([Acts 7:38](#)). God trusted the Jewish people with these messages ([Romans 3:2](#)).

The book of Proverbs contains two wisdom oracles: one from Agur, who was Jakeh's son ([Proverbs 30:1](#)), and another from King Lemuel ([31:1](#)).

The Bible lists oracles of judgment delivered against kings Joram of Israel ([2 Kings 9:25](#)) and Joash of Judah ([2 Chronicles 24:27](#)). The prophets often spoke oracles against nations that did evil:

- Isaiah spoke oracles against Babylon ([Isaiah 13:1; 21:1](#))
- Isaiah spoke oracles against Damascus ([17:1](#))
- Isaiah spoke oracles against Egypt ([19:1](#))
- Isaiah spoke oracles against Jerusalem ([22:1](#))
- Isaiah spoke oracles against Moab ([15:1](#))
- Isaiah spoke oracles against Philistia ([14:28](#))
- Isaiah spoke oracles against Tyre ([23:1](#))
- Nahum spoke oracles against Nineveh ([Nahum 1:1](#))
- Habakkuk spoke oracles against Judah ([Habakkuk 1:1](#))
- Malachi spoke oracles against Israel ([Malachi 1:1](#))

Sometimes false prophets gave false and misleading oracles ([Lamentations 2:14](#)).

See also Prophecy.

Ordain, Ordination

The act of officially giving someone religious authority. Other words for this are “appoint,” “institute,” “make,” and “establish.” Today, we use “ordain” and “ordination” to mean choosing and appointing people to serve God.

Ordination in the Old Testament

Throughout the Old Testament, God chose who he wanted to serve him. The role of priests first belonged to the head of each family. Later, God chose the tribe of Levi to be priests ([Deuteronomy 33:8–11](#); [Judges 17:13](#)). Even as different family groups competed for power (like the Zadokites, Aaronites, and Hasmoneans), they all claimed this special role passed down in their families. Divine appointment through Levi was traced back to Moses ([Exodus 4:14](#); [28:41](#); [29:9](#)). This special role was also claimed for Samuel, who was from the tribe of Ephraim, not Levi ([1 Chronicles 6:28](#)). This

idea was still celebrated in later writings like Sirach, which was written around 180 BC ([Sirach 45:6–22](#)). The book of Hebrews explains that no one chooses this honor for himself. As it says in [Hebrews 5:1 and 4](#), a person is “called by God, just as Aaron was.” This means they are born into a family with this special role.

The first Levites were presented at the tabernacle (a special tent used for worship) in front of all the people. The people acknowledged them as priests by placing their hands on them ([Numbers 8:10, 14–18](#)). Similarly, God gave Moses instructions for a week-long ceremony to make Aaron and his sons priests. This ceremony involved many sacrifices, special clothing, anointing with oil, and other rituals ([Exodus 29](#); [Leviticus 8](#)). The Bible carefully preserves the details of these ceremonies. This suggests that people continued to use these ceremonies, at least in some form, for many years afterwards. However, the Bible does not record these ceremonies being repeated.

Along with priests, there were also groups of recognized prophets or communities of prophets. Sometimes these groups had support from kings ([1 Samuel 10:5](#); [1 Kings 1:9–10](#); [18:17–19](#); [20:35](#); [22:5–28](#); [2 Kings 2:3–7](#); [23:2](#)). People traced the history of prophecy back to very early times (see [Genesis 20:7](#); [Deuteronomy 34:10](#); [Judges 4:4](#); [Jeremiah 7:25](#)). The phrase “sons of the prophets,” and a hint in [Jeremiah 35:4](#), may suggest that the role of prophet, like that of priest, sometimes passed from parent to child. However, we do not know exactly how prophets were chosen or installed in their role.

The most important prophets often disagreed with these prophet groups or “schools” (Elijah in [1 Kings 17](#); Micaiah in [1 Kings 22:5–28](#); Jeremiah in [Jeremiah 27:14–16](#); [28](#)). God called these major prophets directly ([1 Kings 17:1](#); [21:17](#); [Isaiah 6](#); [Jeremiah 1](#); [Amos 7:15](#)). The only exception was Elisha, whom God told Elijah to call and anoint as a prophet ([1 Kings 19:16](#); compare [Isaiah 61:1](#)). People knew a prophet was genuine not because of any special ceremony, but because their message was clearly true. For prophecies about the future, people could tell a true prophet when their predictions came true ([1 Kings 22:13–14, 26–28](#); [Jeremiah 28:5–9](#)).

Ordination in the New Testament

Christian ordination (the process of making someone a leader in the church) is also based on God’s choice. Jesus and his disciples were not from

the professional religious groups of their time. When Jesus chose his 12 apostles, he called those he wanted. He later told them, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you." ([John 15:16](#)).

In the early Christian church, leaders were chosen in various ways, but always with the understanding that God was guiding the process. For example:

- When the apostles chose Matthias to replace Judas, they prayed and used a special method (casting lots) to determine God's will ([Acts 1:24-26](#)).
- Paul said that God had chosen him to be an apostle before he was born. He insisted that he did not receive this role from any person ([Galatians 1:1, 15](#)).
- The Holy Spirit directed the church to send out Paul and Barnabas as missionaries, probably through a message from a Christian prophet.
- Timothy was first chosen to be Paul's assistant because of prophetic messages that pointed to him ([1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14](#)).

In the church at Corinth, different roles such as speaking, teaching, healing, and administration were given directly by the Holy Spirit ([1 Corinthians 12:8-11, 28](#); compare [Ephesians 4:11](#)).

In Ephesus, the Holy Spirit made the church leaders ("overseers") guardians of the congregation ([Acts 20:28](#)).

Throughout these examples, it is clear that God chooses who serves in these roles. The Bible strongly condemns any attempt to get these roles through personal efforts or improper means ([Acts 8:18-24](#)).

On the other hand, the church also played a role in choosing leaders:

- The gathered church "nominated" (or suggested) Barsabbas and Matthias as candidates before asking God to make the final choice ([Acts 1:15, 23](#)).
- The believers selected seven people to serve, then presented them to the apostles ([Acts 6:2-6](#)).
- A gathered church, following the Holy Spirit's instruction, sent out Paul and Barnabas as missionaries ([Acts 13:3](#)).
- Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in various places ([Acts 14:23](#)). Titus was instructed to do the same ([Titus 1:5](#)), and Timothy probably did this as well ([1 Timothy 5:22](#)).
- The elders in Lystra and Iconium, along with Paul, appointed Timothy as a leader. They did this in response to a message from a Christian prophet ([1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6](#)).

By the time Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus, there were detailed lists of qualities required for church leaders ([1 Timothy 3:1-13; 2 Timothy 2:2](#)).

The gathering of believers also participated in choosing leaders. They did this in several ways:

- Leaders could be chosen through prayer, fasting (going without food for spiritual purposes), and casting lots (a method of making a random choice believed to reveal God's will; [Acts 1:26; 6:6; 13:2-3; 14:23](#)).
- Sometimes leaders were chosen by a "selection by hands" (in Greek, *cheirotonein*). This word originally meant "election by raising hands," but was used later to mean "selection by pointing to" (compare [Acts 14:23; 2 Corinthians 8:19](#)).
- Sometimes leaders were chosen by group choice ([Acts 1:15, 23; 6:2-5; 13:3; 16:2; 1 Timothy 4:14](#)).

See also Foreordination.

Ordeal of Jealousy

The Ordeal of Jealousy was a ceremony described in [Numbers 5:11-28](#). This procedure was used when a husband suspected his wife of adultery but had no proof. The process worked like this:

The husband would bring his wife to the priest along with a grain offering. The wife had to take an oath before God. Then she had to drink "bitter" water that was mixed with dust taken from the tabernacle floor. As the woman drank this water, the priest would offer the jealousy offering to God.

If the woman was guilty of adultery, her body would react badly and "her belly will swell, her thigh will shrivel" ([Numbers 5:27](#)). She would also become cursed among the people. If she was innocent of adultery, nothing bad would happen to her body.

See Bitterness or Jealousy, Water of.

Oreb

One of two Midianite chieftains (the other being Zeeb) put to death by men from Ephraim's tribe ([Jgs 7:25](#)). The occasion for this execution was Gideon's surprise attack on the Midianite encampment at the hill of Moreh in the valley of Jezreel. The Midianites' line of retreat eastward required them to recross the Jordan River. Gideon sent word to the Ephraimites to seize the fording places on the river to prevent the Midianites from escaping. The Ephraimites, following the orders, intercepted a contingent of fleeing Midianites, including the prominent leaders Oreb and Zeeb. They beheaded these two leaders and sent their heads as a war prize to Gideon, who was then pursuing the Midianites on the east side of the Jordan ([8:3](#)).

During Israel's later history, the deaths of Oreb and Zeeb were recognized as a great triumph of God over the enemies of his people. The psalmist implores God to overthrow the nobles among Israel's current enemies just as he did the Midianite chieftains ([Ps 83:11](#)). The Lord, speaking through his prophet Isaiah, pledged that the Assyrians would be overthrown like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb ([Is 9:4](#); [10:26](#)), implying that the earlier victory amounted to more than the capture of two leaders; it was an important and strategic defeat of the Midianite invasion force.

Oreb, Rock of

Place where the Ephraimites killed the Midianite chieftain Oreb ([Jgs 7:25](#); [Is 10:26](#)). *See* Oreb.

Oren

Descendant of Judah and the third son of Jerahmeel ([1 Chr 2:25](#)).

Organ

KJV mistranslation for pipe in [Genesis 4:21](#), [Job 21:12](#), [30:31](#), and [Psalm 150:4](#). *See* Musical Instruments (Ugab).

Orion

Septuagint name for a constellation widely believed to resemble a giant hunter, belted or fettered. Various legends grew about this hunter—in Greece, that he had been banished to the sky for foolish boasting; in Semitic lands, for foolishly asserting his strength against God (the Hebrew means both "sturdy" and "fool"). [Job 9:9](#) mentions the "making" of Orion among the great, unsearchable things God does in nature (cf. [Am 5:8](#)). God challenged Job to attempt what only God could do—loose Orion's fetters ([Jb 38:31-32](#)). The real significance of the question lies in the fact that the appearance of the Pleiades ushers in the spring and Orion ushers in the winter, both under the direction of God.

See also Pleiades.

Ornan

Alternate rendering of Araunah, the Jebusite, in [1 Chronicles 21:15](#) (nlt mg). *See* Araunah.

Orontes

River of the Great Rift Valley, flowing northward from the watershed and reaching the Mediterranean at Seleucia Pieria, the harbor city for Antioch. The Orontes never provided Syria with an economy as did the Nile for Egypt or the Tigris-Euphrates for Mesopotamia.

The countries that form the Fertile Crescent include Syria, which powerfully affected Israel's history, principally through the cities that stood on the Orontes; for example, the city of "Hamath the great" ([Am 6:2](#)) on the Orontes against which Solomon fought ([2 Chr 8:3-4](#)) and which Jeroboam II much later recovered for Israel ([2 Kgs 14:28](#)). When Samaria fell to Assyria, Sargon deported its inhabitants and replaced them with people from Hamath ([17:24, 30](#)). The inscriptions of Shalmaneser III say that Ahab of Samaria fought in the battle of Qarqar on the Orontes in 854 BC. Jehoahaz of Judah was summoned by Pharaoh Neco to Riblah on the Orontes ([23:33](#)), an event that Jeremiah mourned in a dirge ([Jer 22:10](#)). At Riblah, Nebuchadnezzar had Zedekiah blinded and led in chains to Babylon ([2 Kgs 25:20](#)).

Orpah

Woman of Moab who married Chilion ([Ru 1:1-14](#)), son of Elimelech and Naomi. After her husband and sons died, Naomi decided to return to Judah. Both Orpah and Ruth resolved to go with Naomi, but at Naomi's urging Orpah remained in her homeland.

See also Ruth, Book of.

Orphan

A person who no longer has one or both parents, often because of death. The word comes from a Hebrew root meaning "to be alone" or "bereaved," and is often translated as "fatherless." The idea describes any person without legal protection in Israel's covenant community. They are unprotected or needy, and especially vulnerable to oppression. It also speaks of one who lacks the care of one or both earthly parents (compare [Lamentations 5:3](#)).

God shows special concern for orphans ([Exodus 22:22-24](#); [Deuteronomy 10:18](#); [Psalms 10:14, 18](#); [27:10](#); [68:5](#); [146:9](#); [Isaiah 1:17](#); [Hosea 14:3](#)). Old Testament laws protected their rights of inheritance ([Numbers 27:7-11](#); [Deuteronomy 24:17](#); [Proverbs 23:10](#)). The law allowed them to take food from the fields and vineyards ([Deuteronomy 24:19-21](#)). It also allowed them to participate in the great annual feasts ([Deuteronomy 16:11, 14](#)). They were also given a part of the tithe crops collected every three years ([Deuteronomy 14:29](#); [26:12](#)). The Bible strongly

condemns those who mistreat orphans ([Deuteronomy 24:17](#); [27:19](#); [Malachi 3:5](#)).

Friends and relatives sometimes helped orphans in Israel ([Job 29:12](#); [31:17](#)). But many people failed to follow these laws. This failure is shown by the accusations of the writers of the Bible ([Job 6:27](#); [22:9](#); [24:3, 9](#); [Psalm 94:6](#); [Isaiah 1:23](#); [10:2](#); [Jeremiah 5:28](#); [Ezekiel 22:7](#)). As a result, the prophets often pleaded for better treatment of orphans ([Jeremiah 7:6](#); [22:3](#); [Zechariah 7:10](#)).

The New Testament uses the word only twice. Once, it describes those who are desolate or in "distress" ([John 14:18](#)). The second use describes the "fatherless" ([James 1:27](#)). In the spirit of an Old Testament prophet, James says that true religion includes caring for orphans.

Orthosia

A city north of Tripolis in Phoenicia to which the Syrian usurper Trypho fled after being defeated by Antiochus VII Sidetes during the time of Simon Maccabeus ([1 Macc 15:37](#)).

Oshea

The King James Version form of Hoshea. This is the alternate name for Joshua in [Numbers 13:8, 16](#).

See Joshua (Person) #1.

Osiris

See Egypt, Egyptian.

Osnapper

Aramaic name for the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal ([Ezr 4:10](#), nlt mg). *See* Ashurbanipal; Assyria, Assyrians.

Ospray, Osprey

A large bird of prey (*Pandion haliaetus*) that eats fish. It has brown feathers on its back and white feathers on its head and underside. Ospreys catch fish by diving into the water with their sharp talons.

In [Leviticus 11:13](#) and [Deuteronomy 14:12](#), some older Bible translations use the word *osprey*, but the Hebrew word probably refers to the black vulture. In modern bird science, the osprey is different from the black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*).

See also Birds; Vulture.

Ossifrage

Largest of the vulture family, also known as the bearded vulture, considered ceremonially unclean ([Lv 11:13](#); [Dt 14:12](#), kjv). See Birds (Lammergeier).

Ossuary

A small stone coffin (Latin, *ossuarium*), vase, or casket for the reception of the calcined remains of the dead, or a sepulchral house, where the bones of the dead were deposited. *Sarcophagus* was the name given by the Greeks and Romans to a big stone coffin. Some religious ideas were involved in calling a coffin a “body eater” (Greek, *sarx*, “flesh,” and *phagein*, “to eat”). In many cases, the burial was not completed until the bones were taken up from the earth or from the sarcophagus. The bones were cleaned and put into their final deposit, that is, into an ossuary, usually a small coffin of stone. The tendency to postpone the final burial, where it involves exhumation or the collection of bones, is accentuated by making a common ossuary for a number of the departed. This exhuming and collecting the bones is connected with the idea of final reunion with one’s fathers.

Ostraca

Inscribed pieces of pottery. See Inscriptions; Potsherd; Pottery; Writing (Potsherds).

Ostrich

The ostrich is the biggest bird alive today. It cannot fly, but it runs very fast. Ostriches live in dry places with few plants.

In Bible times, they lived as far north as Syria and across the desert of the Negev. Today, they no longer live in those areas. The Hebrew name for ostrich means “daughter of the desert.”

An ostrich can grow as tall as 10 feet (3 meters) and weigh about 79.5 kilograms (175 pounds). Some males may weigh as much as 136.4 kilograms (300 pounds). Females are smaller. Ostriches have strong legs and large thighs. They can run as fast as 64 kilometers per hour (40 miles per hour).

Ostriches eat many different things. They eat grass, fruit, small animals like lizards, snakes, and birds. They also swallow large pebbles. These pebbles help break down food in the bird’s stomach.

Female ostriches lay their eggs in a shallow hole in the sand. A group of eggs is called a clutch. A clutch may have as many as 25 eggs. Some eggs are left uncovered during the day. This may look like the bird does not care for the eggs, but the male ostrich usually sits on them at night to keep them warm. The female helps during cold days. The strong eggshell keeps the baby birds safe from the desert heat.

Ostrich eggs are large and valuable. People in Bible times traded the empty shells. Some used them to make tools or beads.

People sometimes ride ostriches or use them to pull small carts. Their feathers are also valuable. In ancient times, royal courts used ostrich plumes (soft, decorative feathers) as fans. King Tutankhamen (King Tut) of Egypt had a fan with ostrich feathers. Male ostriches have white feathers. Females have brownish-gray feathers.

Ostriches have a reputation for foolish behavior. When they are hunted and cannot escape, they often freeze instead of running away. But in open areas, they are cautious and run quickly to escape danger.

Ostriches do not protect their eggs and chicks like other birds do. If chased, they run away instead of staying with their young. This is different from birds like the partridge.

Ostriches in the Bible

The Bible often shows ostriches in a negative light. They were considered unclean in Jewish law ([Leviticus 11:16](#); [Deuteronomy 14:15](#)). They are linked with lonely or empty places ([Job 30:29](#); [Isaiah 13:21](#); [34:13](#); [43:20](#); [Jeremiah 50:39](#)). Their cry at night sounds painful, like the low sound of an ox ([Micah 1:8](#)). The Bible also talks about how ostriches seem to forget or ignore their eggs and chicks ([Job 39:13–18](#); [Lamentations 4:3](#)).

See also Birds.

Othni

Levite; Shemaiah's son and a gatekeeper in Solomon's temple ([1 Chr 26:7](#)).

Othniel

Judge of Israel, mentioned as the son of Kenaz and Caleb's nephew (or perhaps brother), who delivered Israel from the tyranny of Cushan-rishathaim, and who earlier distinguished himself by capturing Debir ([Jos 15:15-17](#); [Jgs 1:11-13](#); [3:8-11](#)).

At Caleb's prompting (promising his daughter Achsah to anyone who could conquer Debir), Othniel took Kiriath-sepher (Debir) and received Achsah for his wife. When Caleb gave her and her land as a present, Achsah asked for a water source and was given the upper springs and the lower springs ([Jos 15:19](#); [Jgs 1:15](#)).

Later, Othniel delivered the Israelites from the oppressive Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia (Aram-naharaim), whom the Israelites had served for eight years on account of their sin ([Jgs 3:7](#)). When the people cried for relief, the Lord raised up Othniel. Delivering them, he was described as someone that the "Spirit of the Lord came upon" (v [10](#)). The effects of his work as judge lasted for a generation (vv [9-11](#)).

See also Judges, Book of.

Outcast

English translation of two related Hebrew terms whose primary meanings are to push away, banish, or cast out. In five of seven passages the term refers to exiles from Israel who are to be regathered by the Lord ([Ps 147:2](#); [Is 11:12](#); [27:13](#); [56:8](#); [Jer 30:17](#)). In two other passages it refers to fugitives from Moab ([Is 16:3-4](#)) and from Elam ([Jer 49:36](#)).

Outward Man

A part of a person that can be seen by others. Unlike "inner man," do not confuse the term with other biblical and nonbiblical terms like:

- "Old man and new man"
- "Natural man and spiritual man"
- "Body and soul"

Near Eastern, especially Semitic, thinking dealt in wholes, not dichotomies. The inner and outward man were viewed as parts of a whole, not opposites.

The phrase appears only in [2 Corinthians 4:16](#). Similar terms, such as "outward appearance," are in other verses ([1 Samuel 16:7](#); [Matthew 23:27-28](#); [2 Corinthians 10:7](#)). The Bible says a person's appearance should match their inner self. The Talmud says, "A scribe whose inner man does not correspond to the outer is no scribe."

See also Inner Man; Man.

Oven

See Food and Food Preparation.

Ovens, Tower of the

Structure in the Jerusalem wall restored by Nehemiah and his workmen after the exile ([Neh 3:11](#); [12:38](#)). Malkijah, son of Harim, and Hasshub, son of Pahath-moab, are named as its builders. The tower was likely a defensive work on the northwest section of the wall, named for its proximity to nearby baking ovens.

Overseer

A word that appears 12 times in the Old Testament (King James Version) and once in the New Testament. The New International Version uses it at least six times in the New Testament to translate the Greek word *episkopos*. The word *episkopos* is derived from "peer" or "watch over." In the Old Testament, "overseer" is used to translate three words, which mean

1. one with authority who visits,
2. the preeminent one, or
3. the head writer.

Joseph was given authority to watch over and administer all aspects of Potiphar's house ([Genesis 39:4-5](#)). He advised Pharaoh to appoint fifty men

to regulate and watch over the abundant harvest for seven years ([41:34](#)). Solomon appointed 3,600 overseers (“supervisors” in the New American Standard Bible) to make the people work ([2 Chronicles 2:18](#)). In Josiah’s time of temple renovation, there were overseers over all the workmen in every job ([34:13, 17](#)). Nehemiah appointed men to oversee the rebuilding of the wall ([Nehemiah 11:9, 14](#)), to oversee the Levites (verse [22](#)), and to be in charge of the Levitical singers ([12:42](#)).

The word “overseer” speaks of the highest person of authority who exercised oversight over others. Included in this authoritative oversight was the idea of watching, directing, and protecting the master’s interests. The New Testament communicates these ideas also regarding men appointed to serve the church on behalf of Jesus Christ ([Acts 20:28](#); [Philippians 1:1](#); [1 Timothy 3:1-2](#); [Titus 1:7](#)). Jesus Christ himself is the great Overseer ([1 Peter 2:25](#), New International Version).

See also Bishop; Elder.

Owl

Owls are birds that are active at night. They have large heads and big eyes that face forward. Their soft feathers help them fly without making noise. An owl’s body is small and light, about the size of a pigeon, but it looks bigger because of its thick feathers.

Owls live in quiet, dark places. In the Middle East, they often live in old temple ruins, pyramids, rock graves, and caves. These places include areas in Egypt and on both sides of the Jordan River in Israel. Owls usually stay away from places where people live.

Owls have very good eyesight at night. This helps them find and catch small animals like mice. Their large eyes do not work well during the day because bright light bothers them.

Owls can swallow animals whole because their throats (called esophagus) stretch. Later, they cough up pellets made of hair and bones that they cannot digest. Owls have short, curved beaks that are sharp and strong.

Owls may lay up to ten eggs in one nest. Both parents take care of the young. Owl families often stay near the same place where they were born.

Owls in the Bible

The Bible mentions owls several times. Owls were seen as unclean birds under Jewish law ([Leviticus 11:17](#); [Deuteronomy 14:16](#)). Because owls eat other animals, they were not allowed for food.

There are eight types of owls in the land of the Bible. Five of them are common. However, it is hard to know which types match the four Hebrew words for “owl” in the Bible. One of the words translated “owl” in the King James Version probably means “ostrich” instead.

Some of the owl species found in the land of the Bible include:

- Barn or White Owl
- Great Owl
- Little Owl
- Scops Owl

See also Birds; Ostrich.

Ox

An ox is a large, strong animal of the cattle family. In Bible times, oxen were often used for pulling carts and plows. The word can mean either a male or female, but usually refers to one trained for work.

See Cattle; *see also* Animals.

Ox (Person)

Descendant of Israel, grandfather of Judith, the heroine of Maccabean times ([Jdt 8:1](#)).

Ozem

1. Sixth son of Jesse and a descendant of Hezron ([1 Chr 2:15](#)).

2. Fourth son of Jerahmeel by his first wife ([1 Chr 2:25](#)).

Ozias

The King James Version spelling of Uzziah, king of Judah in [Matthew 1:8-9](#).

See Uziah #1.

Oziel

Ancestor of Judith, the heroine of Maccabean times
([Jdt 8:1](#)).

Ozni, Oznite

Ozni was another name for a person called Ezbon.
The Oznites were the family group that came from
Ozni ([Numbers 26:16](#)).

See Ezbon #1.