

## **Resource: Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)**

### **Aquifer Open Bible Dictionary**

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## Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

### N

*Naam, Naamah (Person), Naamah (Place), Naaman, Naamathite, Naamite, Naarah (Person), Naarah (Place), Naarai, Naaran, Naarath, Naashon, Naasson, Nabal, Nabataeans, Nabateans, Naboth, Nachon, Nachor, Nacon, Nadab, Nag Hammadi Manuscripts, Naggai, Nagge, Nahalal, Nahaliel, Nahallal, Nahalol, Naham, Nahamani, Naharai, Nahash, Nahath, Nahbi, Nahor (Person), Nahor (Place), Nahshon, Nahum (Person), Nahum, Book of, Nain, Naioth, Nanea, Naomi, Naphath-Dor, Naphish, Naphoth-Dor, Naphtali (Person), Naphtali, Mount of, Naphtali, Tribe of, Naphtuhim, Naphtuhites, Narcissus (Person), Narcissus (Plant), Nard, Spikenard, Nathan, Nathan-Melech, Nathanael, Nations, Natural Man, Naum, Nazarene, Nazarenes, Nazareth, Nazarite, Nazirite, Neah, Neapolis, Neariah, Nebai, Nebaioth, Neballat, Nebat, Nebo (Deity), Nebo (Person), Nebo (Place), Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadrezzar, Nebushasban, Nebushazban, Nebuzaradan, Necho, Nechoh, Neco, Necoh, Necklace, Necromancer, Necromancy, Nedabiah, Needle, Negeb, Negev, Neginah, Neginoth, Nehelamite, Nehemiah (Person), Nehiloth, Nehum, Nehushta, Nehushtan, Neiel, Neighbor, Nekeb, Nekoda, Nemuel, Nemuelite, Nepheg, Nephilim, Nephish, Nephishesim, Nephisim, Nephthalim, Nephtoah, Waters of, Nephushesim, Nephusim, Nephussim, Nepthalim, Ner, Nereus, Nergal, Nergal-Sharezer, Neri, Neria, Nero, Net, Netaim, Nethaneel, Nethanel, Nethaniah, Nethinim, Netophah, Netophathite, Nettle, New, New Birth, New Birth, New Commandment, New Covenant, New Creation, New Creature, New Gate, New Heavens and New Earth, New Jerusalem, New Man, New Person, New Moon, New Testament, New Testament Canon, New Testament Chronology, Nezia, Nezib, Nibhaz, Nibshan, Nicanor, Nicodemus, Nicolaitans, Nicolas, Nicolaus, Nicopolis, Niger, Night, Night Hag, Night Hawk, Night Monster, Nile River, Nimrah, Nimrim, Waters of, Nimrod, Nimshi, Nineveh, Ninevite, Nisan, Nisroch, No, No-Amon, Noadiah, Noah, Noah's Ark, Nob, Nobah (Person), Nobah (Place), Nod, Nodab, Nodabites, Noe, Nogah, Nohah (Person), Nohah (Place), Non, Noph, Nophah, North, North Country, Northeast, Not Loved, Not Pitied, Not My People, Numbers and Numerology, Numbers, Book of, Numenius, Nun, Nurse, Nurture, Nut, Nuzi, Nuzi Tablets, Nympha*

### Naam

Caleb's descendant from Judah's tribe ([1 Chr 4:15](#)).

### Naamah (Place)

One of the 16 cities located in the Shephelah assigned to Judah's tribe for an inheritance, mentioned between Beth-dagon and Makkedah ([Jos 15:41](#)).

### Naamah (Person)

1. A daughter of Zillah and Lamech in the list of the descendants of Cain ([Genesis 4:22](#)).
2. One of the wives of King Solomon. She was from Ammon ([1 Kings 14:21, 31](#); [2 Chronicles 12:13](#)). It is certain that she had partial responsibility for the idolatry of Solomon. Her son Rehoboam ruled Judah after the death of Solomon ([1 Kings 14:21-24](#)).

### Naaman

1. The grandson of Benjamin and son of Bela, who gave his name to the Naamite clan ([Genesis 46:21](#); [Numbers 26:38-40](#); [1 Chronicles 8:4, 7](#)).

2. The commanding general of the Aramean army during the reign of Ben-hadad, king of Syria ([2 Kings 5](#)). The king respected him for his character and military successes even though he had leprosy. This did not exclude him from society, as it would have done in Israel (compare [Leviticus 13-14](#)). Ben-hadad's allowed him to bring gifts to the court of his very suspicious neighboring king. This king was probably Jehoram. Elisha, the prophet, intervened and required an unlikely method of healing. The reluctant Naaman followed through. His servants said, "If the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?" Naaman then confessed that the one true God is in Israel. He returned home with two mule-loads (the amount one mule can carry) of earth, thinking he could only worship this God on his ground (compare [Exodus 20:24](#)). In [Luke 4:27](#), Jesus reminds his synagogue listeners of how Naaman, a non-Israelite, was the only one of his time to be cleansed of leprosy.

## Naamathite

Any resident of Naamah in northwest Arabia. Zophar, one of the friends of Job, was a Naamathite ([Job 2:11](#); [11:1](#); [20:1](#); [42:9](#)).

## Naamite

Any descendant of Naaman, the son of Bela from the tribe of Benjamin ([Numbers 26:40](#)).

See Naaman #1.

## Naarah (Person)

One of Ashhur's two wives, who bore him four sons ([1 Chr 4:5-6](#)).

See also Maid, Maiden.

## Naarah (Place)

City on the eastern border of Ephraim's tribe, just north of Jericho ([Jos 16:7](#)); alternately called Naaran in [1 Chronicles 7:28](#). Josephus locates it near Jericho and associates it with abundant water supply in Archelaus's day (*Antiquities* 17.13.1). Some locate Naarah at modern Tell el-Gisr near 'Ain Duq at the foot of the mountains northwest of Jericho. A synagogue dating to the fourth or fifth century AD has been excavated here; it contains a mosaic floor with a zodiac, an ark of the law, and other figures.

## Naarai

One of the mighty men of King David ([1 Chronicles 11:37](#)). He might have been the same person as Paari ([2 Samuel 23:35](#)).

## Naaran

Alternate name for Naarah, an Ephraimite border town, in [1 Chronicles 7:28](#). See Naarah (Place).

## Naarath

KJV spelling of Naarah, an Ephraimite border town, in [Joshua 16:7](#). See Naarah (Place).

## Naashon

The King James Version spelling of Nahshon, Amminadab's son, in [Exodus 6:23](#).

See Nahshon.

## Naasson

The King James Version form of Nahshon, Amminadab's son, in [Matthew 1:4](#) and [Luke 3:32](#).

See Nahshon.

## Nabal

Wealthy, successful farmer of Maon in the southern wilderness of Judah. Unlike his godly forefather, Caleb, Nabal was hard of heart and wicked in all his ways ([1 Sm 25:3](#)).

When he enters the story of David ([1 Sm 25](#)), it is sheep-shearing time, which seems to have been a time of festivity and hospitality. Fleeing from Saul, who wanted to kill him, David decided to ask Nabal for a gift, not only to mark the occasion, but also because David's presence in the area had served to protect Nabal's flocks. Nabal refused in a most insulting way, suggesting that David was no better than a runaway slave.

David decided on revenge. But Abigail, Nabal's quick-witted wife, saved Nabal by bringing David the presents he had asked for and by begging him not to stain his record by acting in anger. David agreed. But when Nabal heard what had happened, he was struck down by what appears to have been a stroke and died 10 days later.

Nabal, whose name means "fool," stands as a reminder of the deep folly of opposing God. God himself, not David, took revenge.

## Nabataeans, Nabateans

Inhabitants of an independent kingdom bordering Judea, which existed from 169 BC to AD 106. The reader of the Bible and of standard histories often overlooks them for two reasons: their achievements are of recent discovery, and they flourished in a period when other major events, including the life of Christ and the beginning of the church, vastly overshadowed their existence.

The Judeans and Nabateans of the Hellenistic-Roman era shared borders and politics. The mother of Herod the Great, son of the Idumean ruler Antipater, was herself a Nabatean. Herod fled to Petra, the Nabatean capital, in 40 BC, when the Parthians attacked Jerusalem. Relations between the two kingdoms were strengthened by the marriage in the next generation of Herod Antipas to a daughter of the powerful Nabatean king Aretas IV (9 BC–AD 40); relations soured again due to his divorce to marry his niece and sister-in-law, Herodias.

The NT alludes to the extent of Nabatean influence in the region, when Paul tells of his narrow escape from incarceration following his return from the

Arabian desert: "At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city . . . in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket . . . and escaped his hands" ([2 Cor 11:32–33](#), rsv).

Nabatean origins are obscure. The best-known remains of Nabatean culture are the funerary monuments of Petra. Aramaic inscriptions abound, standardized on coins and dedicatory items, with papyri and ostraca (sherds) revealing a cursive variation that anticipates Arabic script. Adoption of Aramaic language and Syrian deities shows the pragmatism by which they also adapted to their hostile environment. Only their Byzantine heirs approached their ingenuity for capturing precious water to sustain life in an arid region. Caravan travel was enhanced and permanent control thereof made possible only by skillful engineering.

The earliest historical reference to the Nabateans associates them with Antigonos, Alexander's successor in Syria (312 BC). The succession of known kings begins with Aretas I, around 170 BC ([2 Macc 5:8](#)). Josephus writes that about 100 BC the citizens of Gaza looked to "Aretas [II], king of the Arabs," for aid against Alexander Janneus. Aretas III controlled Damascus (80–70 BC).

The golden age at Petra lasted from 50 BC to AD 70 and included the reigns of Malichus I and Obodas II (period of Herod the Great), Aretas IV, and Malichus II. The rule of Rabbel II marks the end of the Nabatean kingdom. His predecessor, Malichus III, had moved the capital to Bostra, 70 miles (112.6 kilometers) east of Galilee. This in turn became the capital of the Roman province of Arabia, following Trajan's conquests, in AD 106. The Nabateans were absorbed into the population, while their distinctive script continued into the fourth century.

*See also* Petra.

## Naboth

Owner of a vineyard that Ahab, king of Israel, coveted (see the story in [1 Kgs 21](#)). Ahab's request was perhaps not unreasonable, and Naboth's refusal may have been a little curt. While Ahab sulked, however, Jezebel had two scoundrels accuse Naboth of blasphemy, the greatest crime an Israelite could commit, which was punishable by death ([Ly 24:10–23](#)). Two witnesses secured a conviction, according to the law of Moses ([Dt 17:6–7](#)). The murder that was carried out had the appearance of being a legal and just execution. A

fast was proclaimed and held according to royal instructions. The accusation and trial of Naboth was supervised by the elders of the city, and he was stoned to death in accordance with the law.

The prophet Elijah, however, knew the real wickedness that lay behind the deed. He faced Ahab with it and prophesied that he and Jezebel and all their family would be wiped out because of it.

The words came true. Ahab got a temporary reprieve when he repented but was later killed in battle ([1 Kgs 22:34-40](#)). The blood of Jezebel was indeed licked up by dogs ([2 Kgs 9:36](#)), and the body of Joram, their son, was flung into Naboth's vineyard (v [25](#)).

## Nachon

The King James Version spelling of Nacon in [2 Samuel 6:6](#).

See Nacon.

## Nachor

The King James Version spelling of Nahor, Abraham's ancestor, in [Joshua 24:2](#) and [Luke 3:34](#).

See Nahor (Person) #1.

## Nacon

The threshing floor of Nacon was a place King David passed through when he was bringing the ark of the covenant from Baale-judah (also called Kiriath-jearim) to Jerusalem. When they reached the threshing floor of Nacon, a man named Uzzah reached out and touched the ark to steady it, and God struck him dead ([2 Samuel 6:6](#)).

Because of this incident, David renamed this place "Perez-uzzah," which means "the breaking forth upon Uzzah" ([2 Samuel 6:8](#)). In another account of this same event, this place is called "Kidon" instead of "Nacon" ([1 Chronicles 13:9](#)).

## Nadab

1. The oldest son of Aaron and Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab ([Exodus 6:23](#); [Numbers 3:2](#); [1 Chronicles 24:1](#)). Nadab became one of Israel's first priests together with his brothers and father. He participated in the signing of the covenant with God on Mount Sinai ([Exodus 24:1, 9](#)). God chosen him to serve as a priest ([28:1](#)). Nadab and his brother Abihu, Aaron's second son, died because they offered "strange fire" to the Lord ([Leviticus 10:1-2](#); [Numbers 3:4](#); [1 Chronicles 24:2](#)). Incense offered in the morning usually came before the cutting up of the sacrifice. In this case "fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them." The offering of "strange fire" does not appear anywhere else in the Bible. Jewish teachers have suggested different explanations for what Nadab and Abihu did wrong. An warning against drinking wine in the tent of meeting follows this event ([Leviticus 10:9](#)). So, an early tradition held that the brothers were drunk. Any priest who drank alcohol in this holy tent would be punished by death. An important detail appears in the instructions Moses gave to Aaron, the grieving father of Nadab and Abihu. Moses told Aaron not to mourn or stop his duties as priest. Because Aaron had been set apart by the holy anointing oil, he had to continue serving God. He was not allowed to leave the tent "lest he die." Instead, the rest of Israel mourned for Nadab and Abihu ([Leviticus 10:3-7](#)).

2. The son of Jeroboam, who became king of Israel after his father. Nadab ruled for two years, from 909 to 908 BC ([1 Kings 14:20; 15:25](#)). He became king during the second year of King Asa's reign in Judah and was replaced in the third year of Asa's reign ([1 Kings 15:28](#)). Jeroboam may have arranged for Nadab to take power before his death, since Nadab likely understood the dangers that continued among the northern tribes. However, Nadab failed to make the kingdom stable. To gain the support of the army, he went to battle against the Philistines at Gibbethon, about 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) southwest of Gezer. Baasha from the tribe of Issachar, probably a military officer, killed Nadab and all his sons and took the throne. This fulfilled the prophecy that Ahijah the Shilonite had spoken against the family of Jeroboam ([1 Kings 15:29](#)).
3. A Jerahmeelite, the son of Shammai and grandson of Onam, and the great-grandson of Jerahmeel. Nadab had two sons, Seled and Appaim ([1 Chronicles 2:26-30](#)).
4. The son of Jeiel and Maacah, a Gibeonite ([1 Chronicles 8:30; 9:36](#)).

## Nag Hammadi Manuscripts

The Nag Hammadi Manuscripts are a group of ancient religious texts discovered in Egypt. These texts include 52 different documents bound into 12 ancient books. They contain early Christian and Gnostic writings, which means they show how some people understood Christianity differently in ancient times.

In 1947, people discovered an important collection of ancient religious texts in Egypt near a place called Nag Hammadi. They found 12 ancient books that contained 52 different documents, though 6 of these documents were copies of others.

Someone took one of these books out of Egypt without permission. The Jung Institute in Zurich, Switzerland bought this book in 1952. (The Jung

Institute studies psychology and Gnosticism is important to the study of the psychology of religious experience.) Later, after the documents were published, the Institute returned the book to Egypt.

Today, all of these ancient texts are kept in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, Egypt. Scholars have organized these documents into different groups based on what they teach.

### *Gnostic Writings with Christian Influences*

Several important Gnostic texts show Christian influences. Here are some of the most important ones:

1. The Gospel of Thomas
  - This is a collection of Jesus's sayings.
  - Some scholars think Matthew and Luke may have used these sayings when writing their gospels.
1. The Gospel of Truth
  - Some scholars believe this text was written by Valentinus.
  - Valentinus was a teacher whose ideas the early Christian church rejected as false.
1. The Gospel of Philip
  - This text contains many sayings about Gnostic religious ceremonies.
1. The Apocryphon of John
  - This text tells a different version of the Garden of Eden story.
  - It was written by Syrian Gnostics who had their own understanding of the Bible.

Other texts that show clear Christian influence on Gnosticism include:

- The Treatise on the Resurrection
- Several apocalypses of Peter and James
- The Book of Thomas the Contender
- Melchizedek

### *Early Gnostic Writings*

Some scholars wondered if certain Gnostic ideas existed before Christianity began. However, there is not enough evidence to prove this idea.

One text that scholars often discuss is *Eugnostos*. Some people thought this text was written before Christianity. However, when scholars studied it carefully, they found it actually contains ideas from early Christian teachers in Alexandria, Egypt. It also includes references to the New Testament.

Another text called The Paraphrase of Shem is also sometimes thought to be pre-Christian. This text talks about baptism and mentions someone called the Redeemer. But these ideas might have come from Christian teachings that were changed by Gnostic writers. This could show how Gnostic groups and early Christian churches sometimes disagreed about religious teachings.

Other texts that some scholars think might be from this early period include:

- The Apocalypse of Adam
- The Three Pillars of Seth
- The Thunder

### *Non-Gnostic, Christian Writings*

The Nag Hammadi collection also includes some early Christian writings that are not Gnostic. These texts teach Christian ideas instead of Gnostic beliefs. They include:

- The Acts of Peter and the Twelve (stories about Jesus's followers, Peter and the other apostles)
- The Sentences of Sextus (a collection of wise sayings about Christian living)
- The Teachings of Silvanus (instructions about Christian faith and behavior)

### *Other Nag Hammadi Writings*

Some texts in the Nag Hammadi collection are neither Christian nor Gnostic. These writings came from ancient Egyptian religious traditions, and the Gnostic writers found them very interesting.

Among these are texts called "hermetic writings." These writings share some ideas about God and the world that were common in ancient Egypt. While Gnostic texts usually see a strong division between good and evil, these Egyptian texts had a more balanced view.

Scholars already knew about these kinds of Egyptian religious writings. They had found another collection called the *Corpus Hermeticum* (also known in English as *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*).

The first document in this collection is called "Poimandres." This text is especially interesting to people who study the Bible because:

- It has a positive view of how God created the world
- It uses important ideas like 'light' and 'life' in ways similar to the Gospel of John

*See also* Apocrypha.

## **Naggai, Nagge**

An ancestor of Jesus, according to [Luke 3:25](#). It is spelled "Nagge" in the King James Version.

*See* Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

## **Nahalal**

City in Zebulun's territory ([Jos 19:15](#)), given to the Levites for an inheritance ([21:35](#)). Zebulun's tribe was unable to drive the Canaanites from the city, so



they forced them into hard labor ([Jgs 1:30](#), “Nahalol”). The exact location of the city is unknown. Some possible locations include Tell el-Beida, south of modern Nahalal, and Tell en-Nahl, north of the Kishon River and near the southern end of the plain of Acco, near modern Nahalal.

*See also* Levitical Cities.

## Nahaliel

A temporary camping place for the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. It was east of the Dead Sea in the region of Moab between Mattanah and Bamoth ([Numbers 21:19](#)).

*See also* Wilderness Wanderings.

## Nahallal

KJV spelling of Nahalal, a city of Zebulun, in [Joshua 19:15](#). *See* Nahalal.

## Nahalol

A city of Zebulun, in [Judges 1:30](#). *See* Nahalal.

## Naham

Judahite chief and the brother of Hodiah's wife ([1 Chr 4:19](#)).

## Nahamani

One of the leading officials who returned with Zerubbabel to Palestine following the exile ([Neh 7:7](#)). His name is omitted in the parallel list of returning officials in [Ezra 2:2](#).

## Naharai

One of the mighty men of King David. He was also the armor bearer for Joab. Naharai was from the city of Beeroth ([2 Samuel 23:37](#); [1 Chronicles 11:39](#)).

## Nahash

1. A king of the Ammonites. He attacked the town of Jabesh-gilead during the time when Saul was king of Israel. The people of the town asked to make a peace treaty. Nahash agreed, but only if he could gouge out the right eye of every man. He wanted to shame all of Israel ([1 Samuel 11:1-2](#); [12:12](#)). The people of Jabesh asked for seven days to find help. During that time, they sent a message to Saul. Saul gathered Israel's army and rescued the town. His army defeated the Ammonites. Later, Nahash showed kindness to David. But when Nahash died, his son Hanun became king. Hanun listened to bad advice and insulted David's messengers ([2 Samuel 10:2](#); [1 Chronicles 19:1-2](#)).
2. The father of Abigail and Zeruiah ([2 Samuel 17:25](#)). These women were also called the daughters of Jesse and the sisters of David and his brothers in [1 Chronicles 2:16](#). To explain the difference, some think Nahash's wife married Jesse after Nahash died. She then gave birth to David with her second husband, Jesse.
3. The father of Shobi from Rabbah. Shobi was from Rabbah, the main city of the Ammonites. He helped David when David ran away from Absalom. Shobi brought supplies to David and his men ([2 Samuel 17:27](#)). This Nahash might be the same person as #1 above.

## Nahath

1. Chief of a clan in Edom and Reuel's firstborn son ([Gn 36:13, 17](#); [1 Chr 1:37](#)).
2. Levite of the family of Kohath and Elkanah's grandson ([1 Chr 6:26](#)).
3. Levite who oversaw the temple during King Hezekiah's reign ([2 Chr 31:13](#)).



## Nahbi

Son of Vophsi. Nahbi was the leader of tribe of Naphtali. He was also one of the 12 spies whom Moses sent to explore the land of Canaan ([Numbers 13:14](#)).

## Nahor (Person)

1. Abraham's grandfather ([Genesis 11:22-25](#); [1 Chronicles 1:26](#)), also an ancestor of Jesus according to [Luke 3:34](#). Some English translations use the Greek spelling "Nachor." The Genesis and 1 Chronicles passages show that Nahor is from Shem's line. Therefore, Abraham and his descendants are part of the Semitic family of nations.
2. Son of Terah and Abraham's brother ([Genesis 11:26-29](#); [Joshua 24:2](#)). He married Milcah, Haran's daughter, and his family is named in [Genesis 22:20-23](#). Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac at Nahor's residence in Mesopotamia (see [Genesis 24:10](#), which possibly suggests that the city itself was called Nahor). There he found Rebekah, Nahor's granddaughter ([Genesis 24:1-51](#)). Nahor is also named as the father (perhaps grandfather) of Laban, to whom Jacob went when he fled from his brother Esau ([Genesis 29:5](#)). Both of these texts link Abraham's family with related Semitic people. In [Genesis 31:53](#) God is spoken of as "the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor." *See also* Nahor (Place).

## Nahor (Place)

Northwestern Mesopotamian city; home of Rebekah, Isaac's wife, and Nahor, Abraham's brother ([Gn 24:10](#)). Nahor is frequently mentioned in the Mari documents (18th century BC) as the town of Nakhur, located near Haran in the Balikh

River Valley. This city was probably the home of some of the ancient Habiru people. Its site is unknown.

*See also* Nahor (Person) #2.

## Nahshon

Amminadab's son and brother of Elisheba and Salmon's father ([Exodus 6:23](#); [1 Chronicles 2:10-11](#)).

Nahshon, the prince of Judah's tribe at the start of Israel's wandering in the wilderness wanderings ([Numbers 1:7](#); [2:3](#); [10:14](#)), represented his tribe at the dedication of the altar ([Numbers 7:12](#)).

In [Ruth 4:20](#), he is listed as David's ancestor and a descendant of Judah through the line of Perez. In Matthew and Luke's family lists, he is listed as an ancestor of Jesus Christ ([Matthew 1:4](#); [Luke 3:32](#)).

## Nahum (Person)

1. A prophet of Judah whose name means "consolation" or "consoler." This name fits his message. He wrote to encourage the people of Judah while the Assyrians oppressed them ([Nahum 1:1](#)). Nothing is known of Nahum, the prophet who wrote the book of Nahum, except that he came from the village of Elkosh. Its exact location is unknown, but four suggestions have been made:

- **Alqush:** Elkosh may be the town of Alqush, near Mosul on the Tigris River just north of Nineveh. A tradition says this is the site of Nahum's tomb, but it is first mentioned by Masius in the 16th century. There is no historical physical evidence of the tomb or its location. Many people think this tomb is probably not real.
- **Helcesaei:** Jerome recounts a Jewish tradition that identifies Elkosh with "a village in Galilee called 'Helcesaei'" (*Helceseī* or *Elcesi*). He writes, "A very small one, indeed, and containing in its ruins hardly any traces of ancient buildings, but one which is well known to the Jews and was also pointed out to me by my guide." This village is located about 24.1 kilometers (15 miles) northwest of the Sea of Galilee.
- **Capernaum:** On the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee rests the ruins of **Capernaum**, meaning "village of Nahum." But there is no proof that this name goes back to the prophet.
- **Elcesi:** Some believe Elkosh should be identified with **Elcesi**, near Bet-gabre. It is about halfway between Gaza and Jerusalem in Judah. [Nahum 1:15](#) supports this position.

Nahum may have been a northern tribesman. He could have moved to Judah after the conquest of 722 BC and ministered there.

See also Nahum, Book of; Prophet, Prophetess.

1. An ancestor of Jesus, according to [Luke 3:25](#).  
See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

## Nahum, Book of

The seventh book in the group of the 12 Minor Prophets. It is important because it outlines God's plan for Judah and the world's nations.

Preview

- Author
- Date
- Background
- Purpose and Theological Teaching
- Content

### Author

Nahum is called an Elkoshite in the book's introduction ([Nahum 1:1](#)). The term's meaning is unclear but likely refers to an unknown city. If it indicates a place, it might be the village of Elcesi in Judah.

### Date

The book of Nahum discusses the fall of two major cities:

- Nineveh
- Thebes

It mentions the fall of Thebes in [Nahum 3:8-10](#), and the entire book focuses on the future destruction of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. The Assyrians destroyed Thebes around 663 BC, and Nineveh fell in 612 BC. Scholars suggest various dates for when Nahum was written. Some think it was written close to Nineveh's fall, possibly during the invasion of Assyria. However, Assyria still influenced Judah at the time of writing ([Nahum 1:13-15](#); [2:2](#)), which does not align with its imminent downfall. Since Assyria's influence in the western regions began to decline in the late seventh century, it is likely that Nahum was written in the mid-seventh century, after Thebes' destruction but before Assyrian power weakened in Syro-Palestine.

Scholars who question biblical prophecy usually date the book after the fall of Nineveh.

### Background

In the mid-seventh century, Assyrian power was unmatched. Assyrian influence had never reached so far before. The destruction of Thebes ended any

major Egyptian resistance to Assyria, their strongest enemy.

The destruction of Thebes happened during the reign of Manasseh of Judah, from 696 to 642 BC. He was essentially a subordinate to the Assyrians. Assyrian influence in Judah introduced non-Yahwistic practices. This included the revival of fertility cults and the worship of Assyrian star gods ([2 Kings 21:1-9](#)).

Assyria's massive expansion had many weaknesses that led to its decline and fall. It had grown too large. Controlling hostile captive countries, many far from the capital, became harder.

Assyria faced internal problems, especially with the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans were loosely connected tribes absorbed into the Assyrian Empire. Egypt also stopped paying tribute. Many border raids by barbarians gradually weakened the empire.

The situation worsened as internal conflict grew into a major crisis. A coalition of Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians caused the fall of Assyria. After a three-month siege, Nineveh fell in 612 BC.

Henry Layard excavated the site of Nineveh in 1840. The excavation showed that the city had strong defenses. Evidence of the moats and bulwarks built for protection still exists. Layard also uncovered the palace of Sennacherib, which had 71 rooms decorated with art. Despite being buried for thousands of years, the palace still showed the splendor of Nineveh's great days.

The prophet Nahum predicted that the city would burn ([Nahum 2:13](#)). Layard described how a great fire destroyed Nineveh. This was clear even after exploring only two small parts of the site. The city's massive gates, which Nahum said would open to enemies ([Nahum 3:13](#)), were also burned. The large sculptures that once stood by the gates were found buried in debris of earth, brick, and stones mixed with charcoal.

An important archaeological find is a Babylonian chronicle that records events during the reign of King Nabopolassar of Babylon, from 625 to 605 BC. This chronicle dates the fall of Nineveh to the 14th year of Nabopolassar, which is 612 BC.

### *Purpose and Theological Teaching*

The book of Nahum predicts the fall of the Assyrian Empire, focusing on its capital, Nineveh. It shows God's great power in history.

At first, the book may seem to lack deep theological teaching. It is, after all, a long poem celebrating the fall of a non-religious city. However, when viewed through a prophet's eyes, history reveals many of God's qualities.

In [Nahum 1](#), the prophet includes important religious themes in his story about the city's fall. He shows that God loves and cares for his people. In [Nahum 1:7](#), he describes the Lord as knowing those who seek safety in him. In [Nahum 1:13](#), God promises to end the Assyrian oppression of Judah.

God's control is also shown. God controls the nations that oppose him ([Nahum 1:2](#)). He controls nature, as the clouds are like the dust of his feet ([Nahum 1:3](#)). No one can defy God ([Nahum 1:6](#)). He is the ruler of his people ([Nahum 1:13](#)).

The book's main idea is that God rules over history. History is where God acts. To the prophet, God is not just an idea or an uninterested god. God creates nations and destroys them. Godless nations or random events do not control history; the Creator does.

Nahum explains that God is not only wrathful. He shows wrath to those who oppose him. He treats those who seek refuge in him with tenderness and love.

### *Content*

#### **Superscription ([1:1](#))**

Like other prophetic books, Nahum starts with an introduction. It credits the prophet Nahum as the author. The introduction begins with, "This is the burden against Nineveh," which shows the book's topic.

#### **The Prophet Considers the Wrath and Might of God ([1:2-6](#))**

The prophet's message starts by describing several attributes of God, especially his anger and supreme power. Saying God is a jealous God ([Nahum 1:2](#)) does not mean he has selfish motives. Instead, it shows God's deep devotion and loyalty to his people.

This section emphasizes that God takes revenge on his enemies. This idea is central to Nahum's description of Nineveh's fall. History shows that Assyria was an enemy of God. The Assyrians were not only used by God to punish his people, but they also opposed and harassed the Hebrews whenever possible. Their conquest and exile of Israel's

kingdom showed their opposition to Yahweh. This difficult time in Hebrew history likely influenced Nahum's thoughts.

An opening statement in this book says, "The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished" ([Nahum 1:3](#)). Even toward his enemies, God acts with grace. He does not react with uncontrolled anger but tries to change their ways. The phrase "the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished" refers to God's promise in [Exodus 34:6](#). It is best translated as, "He will not completely clear the guilty," meaning God forgives but often lets the effects of sin happen. This is shown in the story of David. Although forgiven for his sin with Bathsheba, the child from their union died. The destruction of Nineveh was certain, based on Nahum's principle: God punishes those who oppose him.

[Nahum 1:3b-6](#) shows God's control over nature. It is also where his great power is displayed.

### **The Fall of Nineveh and the Deliverance of Israel ([1:7-15](#))**

The prophet then directly addressed the city of Nineveh. In [Nahum 1:11](#), he mentions someone from Assyria plotting evil against the Lord. This is a reminder of the Rabshakeh, the Assyrian messenger mentioned in [Isaiah 36:14-20](#), who advised the people to surrender. The words predicting doom for Nineveh become comforting for Judah, as Nahum says Assyria will no longer trouble them ([Nahum 1:12](#)).

[Nahum 1:13-15](#) describe the final destruction of the city. Assyria will no longer trouble the Jews. [Nahum 1:15](#) celebrates this truth. The prophet urges the people to return to worshipping God, as Assyria will no longer be their enemy.

### **The Fall of Nineveh ([2:1-13](#))**

Nahum's writing style in this section is excellent. The quick action, shown through short and direct phrases, creates excitement and urgency as the city falls. The defenders' commands are clear: "Guard the fortress! Watch the road! Brace yourselves! Summon all your strength!" ([Nahum 2:1](#)).

Nahum describes the rush into the city moments after the walls are breached. One sees the flashes of red as soldiers brandish shields ([Nahum 2:3](#)) and hears the crushing sound of chariots dashing wildly ([2:4](#)). However, the defenders arrive too late ([Nahum 2:5](#)).

An important part of Nineveh's defense was the moats surrounding the city. These moats, fed by two nearby rivers, are mentioned in [Nahum 2:6, 8](#). However, these moats could not stop the invaders.

The language becomes vivid again, with sharp commands: "Stop! Stop!" ([Nahum 2:8](#)). The invaders shout, "Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold!" Finally, the siege ends, leaving only desolation and ruin ([Nahum 2:10](#)).

This section ends with a mention of lions ([Nahum 2:11-13](#)). In the Old Testament, lions often represent wicked people, especially when they harm the righteous. Assyria acted like a lion in its treatment of the Jews. However, God states that he opposes the Assyrians ([Nahum 2:13](#)) and will completely destroy them.

This section is vivid and colorful, with a deep theological message. It highlights God's role in history and assures believers that God's enemies will not defeat his people. God is almighty and protects his followers with great care.

### **A Lament for Nineveh ([3:1-19](#))**

The prophet declares "woe" on the city in a long poem celebrating Nineveh's fall. If he appears to enjoy Nineveh's destruction too much, it is not because he is cruel. The Old Testament writers saw the godless nations as symbols of evil. When Nineveh fell, history saw God's victory over evil in that area.

In [Nahum 3:1-7](#), the prophet talks about the shame Nineveh will face when it falls. He mentions that one cause of Assyria's downfall is its sorceries and harlotries ([Nahum 3:4](#)). This clearly refers to Assyria's idolatrous religion. Assyrian priests were known for using divination and omens. They especially tried to predict the future by watching the movements of the stars and planets.

The prophet mentioned other countries that fell to their enemies ([Nahum 3:8-11](#)) and stated that Assyria is no better than them. He concluded by describing Nineveh's grandeur and might, but he clearly showed how all of that would disappear. Whether it is fortifications ([Nahum 3:12](#)), extensive trade ([3:16](#)), or soldiers ([3:17](#))—all will collapse.

See also Israel, History of; Nahum (Person) #1; Prophecy; Prophet, Prophetess.

## Nain

A village in southern Galilee near the border of Samaria. It is the location of the miracle in which Jesus brought a dead man back to life ([Luke 7:11](#)). The man was the son of a widow who lived in this village.

## Naioth

Naioth was a place where David found safety when King Saul was trying to kill him ([1 Samuel 19:18-20:1](#)). The prophet Samuel gave David a place to stay there. Samuel also led a group of prophets in Naioth. These prophets lived and worked together in the town of Ramah, where Samuel was from ([1 Samuel 1:9, 23](#)).

The name "Naioth" is hard to explain. It only appears in this story, and the Hebrew word is not clear. Some people think it comes from a Hebrew word that means "dwelling place" (a place where people live). In [2 Samuel 15:25](#), a similar word is used for the place where God lives. This has led some to think that Naioth might have been a kind of sanctuary (a special place for worship or prayer) in Ramah (see also [1 Samuel 10:5](#)).

Others think Naioth was a place where prophets lived and learned together, like a school or a small community. Samuel was the leader of this group.

## Nanea

Persian goddess mentioned in [2 Maccabees 1:13](#). In a temple to her in Elymais, a certain Antiochus was assassinated.

## Naomi

The wife of Elimelech. She was the mother of Mahlon and Chilion. Naomi was a member of the tribe of Judah. She lived in Bethlehem during the time when judges ruled Israel. The book of Ruth tells her story.

Because of a severe famine in Canaan, Naomi resettled with her family in the land of Moab, east of the Dead Sea ([Ruth 1:1-2](#)). Her husband and two sons died in Moab (verses [3-5](#)). So, Naomi returned to Bethlehem with Ruth, her Moabitess daughter-in-law (verses [8-22](#)). When she reunited with her friends, she told them not to call her "Naomi,"

which means "pleasant." Instead, she told them to call her, "Mara," which means "bitter." Naomi said, "I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty" (verses [20-21](#)). Her family troubles were later resolved when Ruth married Boaz. Boaz was a close relative of Elimelech (chapters [2-4](#)).

## Naphath-Dor

Region or town identified with Dor, a site on the Mediterranean coast, in [Joshua 12:23](#) and [1 Kings 4:11](#). See Dor.

## Naphish

Eleventh of Ishmael's 12 sons ([Gn 25:15](#); [1 Chr 1:31](#)) and the founder of a tribe that later went to war against the tribes of Israel living east of the Jordan ([1 Chr 5:19](#)).

## Naphoth-Dor

Alternate form of Naphath-dor, a site on the Mediterranean coast, in [Joshua 11:2](#). See Dor.

## Naphtali (Person)

One of Jacob's 12 sons ([Genesis 35:25](#); [1 Chronicles 2:2](#)). He was the second of two sons borne to Jacob by Bilhah, Rachel's maid. Overjoyed at giving Jacob another son, Rachel named the boy Naphtali, meaning "my wrestling." She named him Naphtali because of her conflict with Leah: "In my great struggles, I have wrestled with my sister and won" ([Genesis 30:8](#)). Naphtali eventually moved his family with Jacob to Egypt ([Genesis 46:24](#); [Exodus 1:4](#)). He had four sons ([Numbers 26:50](#); [1 Chronicles 7:13](#)). His descendants became one of the 12 tribes of Israel ([Numbers 1:43](#)).

See also Naphtali, Tribe of.

## Naphtali, Mount of

Hill country comprising the majority of Naphtali's territory, in which the town of Kedesh was set apart as a city of refuge ([Jos 20:7](#)).

See also Cities of Refuge; Naphtali, Tribe of.



## Naphtali, Tribe of

The tribe of Naphtali was one of the 12 tribes of Israel. They moved from Egypt to Canaan and settled in the northern part of Canaan, in the hills of Galilee.

### *During the Exodus*

The Bible mentions Naphtali's tribe briefly during the exodus (the journey of the Israelites out of Egypt). Ahira was the leader of the tribe and helped with the census of Naphtali as Israel prepared for possible battles ([Numbers 1:15](#); [2:29](#); [7:28](#)). The initial census recorded 53,400 men ready for war, but a later count showed 45,400 ([1:42-43](#); [26:48](#)). When Moses sent spies to explore Canaan, Nahbi, from Naphtali, was one of the twelve ([13:14](#)). The tribe was also involved in the arrangement of the camp around the tabernacle, and the land distribution process ([2:29](#)). Pedahel represented Naphtali in the land allocation ceremony ([34:28](#)). Naphtali was also involved in the approval of the covenant at Shechem ([Deuteronomy 27:13](#)). Naphtali, like the other tribes, received a blessing from Moses ([33:23](#)).

### *Settling in Canaan*

The tribe of Naphtali received land in the eastern part of upper Galilee. Their land was next to Zebulun in the south and Asher in the west ([Joshua 19:34](#)). Several cities for the Levites were in Naphtali's land ([Joshua 21:6](#); [1 Chronicles 6:62](#)). One of these cities, Kedesh, was a city of refuge (a safe place for people who accidentally killed someone, [Joshua 20:7](#); [1 Chronicles 6:76](#)).

Naphtali successfully settled in their land, but they did not drive out all the Canaanites (the people who lived there before) at first ([Judges 1:33](#)). However, they made the people of two Canaanite cities, Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath, work for them. Because of where they lived, Naphtali was involved in several big fights with the local people and foreign attackers. The most important of these was the war with Jabin, the king of Hazor. Barak, who was from Kedesh in Naphtali, joined Deborah the prophetess (a woman who spoke for God). Together, they led the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali to fight against the Canaanites ([Judges 4-5](#)). Later, Gideon called the tribe of Naphtali, along with Asher, Zebulun, and Manasseh, to fight against the Midianites (another group of enemies) ([Judges 6:35](#)).

### *During Israel's United Kingdom*

When Israel was united under one king, Naphtali showed their support for David. They sent soldiers to Hebron to help make David king over all of Israel ([1 Chronicles 12:34](#)). Naphtali continued to support David's family even after he died. They helped Solomon, David's son, run the country. Ahimaaz, a man from Naphtali, was one of 12 officers who managed different parts of the land for King Solomon. This same Ahimaaz also married Basemath, Solomon's daughter ([1 Kings 4:15](#)).

### *During Israel's Divided Kingdom*

After Solomon died, Israel split into two kingdoms. We do not know much about Naphtali during this time, but we hear about them in some wars.

During the rule of King Asa in Judah (the southern kingdom), King Baasha of Israel (the northern kingdom) tried to build a fort at Ramah. This worried Asa, so he asked Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, to attack Israel. Ben-hadad agreed, and his attack hit Naphtali's land very hard ([1 Kings 15:16-24](#)). Baasha had to stop building the fort and fight the Syrian army instead. This shows how Naphtali often got caught in the middle of fights between other countries.

Later, another foreign power, Assyria, became strong in the area where Naphtali lived. This happened when Tiglath-pileser III was the king of Assyria. In 732 BC, while Pekah was ruling Israel and Rezon was ruling Syria, Tiglath-pileser III came and captured Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali ([2 Kings 15:29](#)).

### *Prophecy and Future*

The prophet Isaiah spoke about Naphtali's land. He said that even though God had made Naphtali's land seem unimportant, God would make it great again ([Isaiah 9:1](#)). Many years later, Matthew, who wrote about Jesus' life, saw this prophecy come true. He said that Jesus brought God's message to the Jewish people living in the area that used to belong to Naphtali ([Matthew 4:13-15](#)). In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, Naphtali is mentioned again. It says that 12,000 people from Naphtali's tribe are included in a large group of Israelites chosen by God ([Revelation 7:6](#)).

## Naphtuhim, Naphtuhites

Egyptian descendants of Noah through Ham's line ([Gn 10:13](#); [1 Chr 1:11](#)), listed between the Lehabim and Pathrusim tribes. Some scholars suggest that the Naphtuhim were the inhabitants of Middle Egypt, situated between the Libyans of Lower Egypt and the Pathrusim of Upper Egypt. However, the exact site of their ancient settlements is uncertain.

## Narcissus (Person)

Christian whose household knew the Lord and received greetings from Paul in his letter to Rome ([Rom 16:11](#)).

## Narcissus (Plant)

A fragrant plant growing on the plains of Sharon in abundance. It also grows in other parts of Palestine. It has narrow leaves and usually white or yellow flowers. The flowers have a cup-shaped or trumpet-shaped crown. Because of its sweet fragrance, many people cultivate and enjoy this plant.

The polyanthus narcissus (*Narcissus tazetta*) appears to be the plant mentioned in [Isaiah 35:1](#) ("rose" in the Berean Standard Bible).

## Nard, Spikenard

A perennial herb with strong, fragrant roots. It grows naturally at high elevations in the Himalaya mountains and extends into western Asia. People dry the roots and the fuzzy, spike-shaped young stems before the leaves open. These dried parts are used to make perfume.

In India, people still use nard as a perfume for hair. There is good evidence that the spikenard mentioned in the Bible originally came from India ([Song of Solomon 1:12](#); [4:13-14](#); [Mark 14:3](#); [John 12:3](#)).

## Nathan

1. The son of David with Bathsheba, the third son to be born in Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 5:14](#); [1 Chronicles 3:5](#); [14:4](#)). Nathan was Solomon's older brother. He appears in the apocalyptic oracle (prophecy about the future) of [Zechariah 12:12](#). He is also a part of the family line of Jesus, through Joseph ([Luke 3:31](#)).  
*See also* Ancestry of Jesus Christ.



2. One of the early prophets and advisers of David. As David's military campaigns neared an end, he told Nathan of his wish to build a home for God. Nathan initially reacted favorably. But, after receiving direct orders from the Lord, he withdrew his approval. He foretold that one of David's sons would build God a house. God would establish a dynasty for David through his son Solomon. The prophecy includes not only the Davidic line but also the messianic king. Nathan's oracle was vital. It dealt with two great institutions: the temple and the Davidic monarchy ([2 Samuel 7:1-7](#); [1 Chronicles 17:1-15](#)). During a war with the Ammonites, David had a child with a woman named Bathsheba, who was not his wife. David tried to hide what he had done. He tried to get Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to go home to her ([2 Samuel 11:1-13](#); [23:39](#)). When this did not work, he had Joab, the army's general, arrange for Uriah to be killed in battle. After that, David took Bathsheba as his wife ([2 Samuel 11:14-27](#)). A prophet named Nathan came to talk to David. Nathan was brave. He told David a story (parable) about a rich man who took a poor man's only sheep. This story made David very angry at the rich man ([2 Samuel 12:1-9](#)). Then Nathan told David that he was like the rich man in the story. Nathan helped David see how bad his actions were and told him what would happen because of his sin ([2 Samuel 12:10-12](#)). This prophecy was fulfilled through a rape, the deaths of three of David's sons, and civil war ([2 Samuel 13-18](#); [1 Kings 1](#)). Bathsheba's child also would not live ([2 Samuel 12:14](#)). When David was near death, one of his sons, Adonijah, seized power ([1 Kings 1:1, 10](#)). Nathan urged Bathsheba to remind David of a promise. It concerned Solomon's

succession. He supported her by intervening in time ([1 Kings 1:10-27](#)). David immediately approved Solomon's crowning ([1 Kings 1:28-53](#)).

Nathan was an important historian ([1 Chronicles 29:29](#); [2 Chronicles 9:29](#)). He and David played a vital role in developing the music for temple worship ([2 Chronicles 29:25](#)).

3. A man from Zobah and the father of Igal, one of David's 30 heroes ([2 Samuel 23:36](#)). He was possibly the Nathan noted as the brother of Joel ([1 Chronicles 11:38](#)).
4. The father of two important court officials ([1 Kings 4:5](#)). He is probably either the prophet or David's son.
5. A descendant of Judah, in the clan of Jerahmeel, the son of Attai and the father of Zabad ([1 Chronicles 2:36](#)).
6. A delegation sent by Ezra to secure Levitical reinforcements for the Israelites returning to Jerusalem ([Ezra 8:16](#)). Nathan might be among those who promised to divorce their foreign wives ([Ezra 10:39](#)). But, "Nathan," meaning "gift," was a very common name.

## Nathan-Melech

Official during King Josiah's reign. Horses for sun worship were kept near his quarters but were removed by Josiah ([2 Kgs 23:11](#)).

## Nathanael

A Jew from Cana of Galilee whom Jesus called to be a disciple ([John 1:45-50](#); [21:2](#)). He was initially skeptical when Philip described Jesus as the fulfillment of the whole Old Testament ([1:45-46](#)). Nathanael proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God and the King of Israel (verse [49](#)) after an astonishing personal encounter.

## Who Was Nathanael?

The only New Testament references to Nathanael occur in the Gospel of John. This fact has led some scholars to identify him with several personalities appearing in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).

### Is Nathanael the Same Person as Bartholomew?

Because his call appears with those of Andrew, Peter, and Philip, some have speculated that he was one of the 12, possibly Bartholomew. Three pieces of evidence are cited in support of this position:

1. The name Bartholomew is a name that comes from his father's name ("son of Tolmai") and would be accompanied by another name.
2. Each of the Synoptic lists of the 12 apostles places Bartholomew after Philip ([Matthew 10:2-4](#); [Mark 3:16-19](#); [Luke 6:14-16](#)). This placement parallels the call of Nathanael after Philip in John's account.
3. Bartholomew's name does not appear in the John's Gospel.

### Is Nathanael the Same Person as James, the Son of Alphaeus?

A second position identifies Nathanael as James, the son of Alphaeus. According to this view, Jesus' comment in [John 1:47](#) should read "Behold, Israel [not "an Israelite"] indeed, in whom is no guile!" Israel is the name God gave to Jacob, and the New Testament form of Jacob is James. John addressed James, the son of Alphaeus, as Nathanael in order to distinguish him from others who had become prominent in the early church.

### Other Possible Identities

Two less plausible identifications equate Nathanael with either Matthew or Simon the Cananaean. The first is weakly based on the similar origins of the names Matthew ("gift of Yahweh") and Nathanael ("Yahweh has given"). The second identifies the two on the basis of the common hometown of Cana.

In the final analysis, Nathanael was most likely a disciple who was not a member of the 12 and was known only to John. This suggestion conforms to

evidence in the writings of early church fathers. In John's Gospel, Nathanael is as a symbol for the true Jew who overcomes doubts to believe in Christ.

This is confirmed by three observations:

1. Nathanael's initial reaction to Jesus parallels that of others who believed in the Law and the Prophets ([John 7:15, 27, 41; 9:41](#)).
2. Jesus's perception of Nathanael under a fig tree ([John 1:48](#)) points to Nathanael's devotion to Torah. In rabbinic literature, the proper place to study the Torah is under a fig tree.
3. Jesus identifies Nathanael with Jacob, the father of the Israelite nation. In [Genesis 25–32](#), Jacob is certainly clever and tricky in his dealings with Esau and Laban. [John 1:51](#) strengthens the ties between Nathanael and Jacob. The passage presents the imagery of angels ascending and descending, reminiscent of Jacob's dream. It locates the event in Galilee close to Bethel and Jabbok, the sites of Jacob's experiences. Nathanael is a symbol of the faithful Israelite for whom Christ came. Nathanael's response shows what the writer of John's Gospel understands the response of a true Israelite to Jesus should be. Initial skepticism becomes faith (compare [Romans 9:6](#)).

*See also* Apostle, Apostleship.

## Nations

Nations are groups formed based on political or social interests, or family relationships. The term "nations" usually refers to people worldwide other than the Hebrews, but it can also include the Jews.

### *Where Did the Nations Come From?*

The book of Genesis says Noah's three sons began the different "families" or ethnic groups (about 70 in total) who lived in the eastern Mediterranean regions ([Genesis 10](#)). The story assumes each

group has its own land and language ([Genesis 10:5, 20, 31](#)).

The story of the tower of Babel in [Genesis 11](#), a tall tower (called a ziggurat) meant to reach heaven, explains that language differences separated these groups. This scattering prevented them from working together on ambitious projects.

In his sermon in Athens, Paul suggests that all nations share a common origin, similar to the writer of Genesis. He accepts that God intended for nations to have separate geographical boundaries ([Acts 17:26](#)).

The prophet Zephaniah anticipated a future when God would unite all nations under one language ([Zephaniah 3:9](#)).

In Revelation, the writer envisions a new heaven and earth where these boundaries disappear. Nations freely mix in the new Jerusalem ([Revelation 21:22–26](#)).

The difference between "Israel" and "the nations" is not obvious. "Israel" came from various ethnic groups, and some of "the nations" traced their roots to important figures in the Israelite community. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, lived in Ur of the Chaldees in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. He migrated north to Haran with his father and then southwest to Canaan ([Genesis 11:31–12:9](#)). [Deuteronomy 26:5](#) ("My father was a wandering Aramean") suggests Abraham lived in Mesopotamia, known as Aram-naharaim.

When Abraham made a covenant (special agreement) with God, God gave him circumcision as a sign of this covenant. Foreigners bought as slaves were circumcised, including them in the covenant community. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt into the wilderness, a mixed group also went with them ([Exodus 12:38](#)), showing that people not biologically related still identified with the people of Israel.

The nation of Israel did not include everyone descended from Abraham. Abraham's first son, Ishmael, had an Egyptian mother and is the ancestor of the Ishmaelites, nomads who roamed the southern wilderness ([Genesis 16](#)). Of Isaac and Rebekah's twin sons, Esau, the firstborn, is the ancestor of the Edomites who lived in the southeast and were traditional enemies of Israel ([Genesis 25:23; Numbers 20:21](#)).

## God and the Nations

Scripture shows both negative and positive views of the nations. The nations between the Tigris-Euphrates Valley and the Nile River were seen as wicked. Therefore, God took their land and gave it to Abraham's descendants ([Genesis 15:16-20](#)).

These nations were known for incest, adultery, homosexuality, and relationships between men and animals, which displeased God ([Leviticus 18](#)). They practiced spiritism (communicating with spirits), fortune-telling, witchcraft, and communicating with the dead, so the Hebrews were told to avoid these activities ([Leviticus 19:26](#); [Leviticus 20:6](#)). The nations worshiped many gods and practiced human sacrifice, often of children, which God detests ([Leviticus 20:1-5](#); [2 Kings 17:29-34](#)).

The prophet Isaiah criticized craftsmen who used part of a tree to make a fire and the rest to create an idol to worship ([Isaiah 44:12-20](#)). The fertility gods Baalim and Ashteroth of the Canaanites often tempted the people of Israel. Scripture repeatedly says that God would drive out these nations and give their land to Israel for these reasons ([Exodus 34:24](#); [Deuteronomy 12:29-31](#)). The prophetic messages against the nations supported this negative view ([Jeremiah 46-51](#); [Amos 1:3-2:3](#)).

However, Scripture also shows a positive view of other nations. In the book of Psalms, God cares not only for Israel but watches over all nations. The entire earth praises and worships him ([Psalm 66:1-8](#)). The psalmist prays for God's saving power to be known among all nations. He states that God judges people fairly and guides nations. Everyone on earth should respect him ([Psalm 67:7](#)).

The prophet Isaiah says the Jerusalem temple should be a house of prayer for all people. God welcomes foreigners who come with sacrifices and worship ([Isaiah 56:6-8](#)). Isaiah's hopeful vision for the future shows people from all nations coming to Jerusalem to worship the Lord and learn his ways. Instead of nations fighting, all will live in peace under God's rule ([Isaiah 2:2-4](#)).

## The Nations in the New Testament

According to the Gospels, Jesus helped both Jews and non-Jews (called "gentiles"). This fulfilled ancient prophecy ([Matthew 4:15-16](#)). Jesus taught in Galilee, which was a mostly non-Jewish area. He traveled to Tyre and Sidon ([Mark 7:24](#)). He also traveled through the region of the Decapolis ([Mark 7:31](#)). He ministered to:

- A Roman centurion ([Luke 7:1-10](#))
- The widow of Nain ([Luke 7:11-17](#))
- A Syrophoenician woman ([Mark 7:26](#))

People from Idumea came to see his miracles ([Mark 3:8](#)).

Jesus taught about many topics. The story of the great judgment in [Matthew 25:31-46](#) shows all nations gathered before the Son of Man. Jesus tells the apostles to "make disciples of all nations" ([Matthew 28:19](#)).

The book of Acts acknowledges the nations' role in Jesus's death ([Acts 4:27](#)). It also acknowledges their opposition to Paul's ministry ([Acts 26:17](#)). However, it shows that the church successfully shared the good news about Jesus with non-Jewish people. Peter shares the message about Jesus with Cornelius, a Roman soldier from the Italian Regiment ([Acts 10](#)).

Initially, the early church resisted the idea that non-Jewish people could freely receive the Holy Spirit, but they eventually accepted it ([Acts 11:1-8](#); [15:1-29](#)). Paul traveled through Cyprus, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy, founding or visiting churches mainly composed of non-Jewish believers. The book of Acts ends with Paul dramatically preaching the good news about Jesus in Rome, the center of the Roman Empire.

## Natural Man

See Man, Natural.

## Naum

The King James Version spelling of Nahum, an ancestor of Jesus ([Luke 3:25](#)).

See Nahum (Person) #2.

## Nazarene

A Nazarene is someone who comes from the town of Nazareth. Nazareth was a town in the southern part of Galilee during the time of Jesus.

### *Why Was Jesus Called a Nazarene?*

Jesus lived in Nazareth for the first 30 years of his life, so people called him a Nazarene. The name Jesus was a common name among the Jews. Surnames were not used, so identifying Jesus as a Nazarene may have differentiated him from others with the same name (see Greek texts of [Matthew 27:16–17](#); [Acts 7:45](#); [Colossians 4:11](#); and [Hebrews 4:8](#), where the name Jesus refers to other men).

In original texts, the designation Jesus the Nazarene (or Jesus of Nazareth) was used by:

- demons ([Mark 1:24](#); [Luke 4:34](#))
- the crowd outside Jericho ([Mark 10:47](#); [Luke 18:37](#))
- a servant girl ([Mark 14:67](#))
- soldiers ([John 18:5–7](#))
- Pilate ([John 19:19](#))
- the two disciples on the road to Emmaus ([Luke 24:19](#))
- the angel at the tomb ([Mark 16:6](#))

The apostles in Acts use Nazareth to identify Jesus:

- Peter speaks of "Jesus of Nazareth" in his sermon on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:22](#)).
- Peter speaks of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" while healing someone at the temple gate ([Acts 3:6](#); [4:10](#)).
- Paul refers to "Jesus of Nazareth" in [Acts 26:9](#).

People sometimes used "Nazarene" in a negative way when talking about Jesus. For example, in [Acts 6:14](#), some people brought false charges against Stephen, one of Jesus's early followers. They took Stephen to the Jewish religious court (called the Sanhedrin) and said, "This Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place [temple] and alter the customs that Moses handed down to us."

There is another negative use of the word "Nazarene" in [Acts 24:5](#). This is the only place in the Bible where Jesus's followers are called "Nazarenes." In this passage, a man named Tertullus accused Paul in front of Roman leaders. He said, "We have found this man to be a pestilence, stirring up dissension among the Jews all over the

world. He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."

### *What Does Matthew's Prophecy About a Nazarene Mean?*

The Bible's use of the name "Nazarene" raises an interesting question in [Matthew 2:23](#). The verse says, "And he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophets: 'He will be called a Nazarene.'" No Old Testament prophecy says that the Messiah would be called a Nazarene.

Scholars have different explanations for what Matthew meant. Some scholars look at [Isaiah 11:1](#) in the Old Testament, where it describes the Messiah as a "Branch." In the Hebrew language, the word for "Branch" is similar to the word "Nazareth." These scholars think Matthew was showing this connection.

Other scholars have a different explanation. They point out that the Old Testament said people would reject the Messiah. During Jesus's time, people looked down on anyone who came from Nazareth. This was especially significant because everyone knew the Messiah was supposed to be born in Bethlehem, the hometown of King David.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but he grew up in Nazareth. People called him a Nazarene because he came from Nazareth, and they often made fun of him for this. Many people in Jesus's time treated anyone from Nazareth with disrespect. When people treated Jesus this way because he was from Nazareth, it showed that the Old Testament prophecies were coming true ([John 1:46](#); compare [Matthew 13:54](#); [Mark 6:2–3](#); [Luke 4:22](#)).

*See also Nazareth.*

## **Nazarenes**

Nazarenes was name given to those who followed Jesus of Nazareth. Since people knew Jesus as "Jesus of Nazareth" or "Jesus the Nazarene," it was easy to transfer that title to his followers. They were "followers of the Nazarene" or "Nazarenes."

The earliest use of the term is in [Acts 24:5](#). Tertullus accused the apostle Paul of being "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." This was not meant as a compliment.

The early Christians probably did no use that name for themselves. However, later Jewish-Christian



and Gnostic groups (religious groups that emphasized special secret knowledge) did call themselves Nazarenes. One early writing was even called *The Gospel of the Nazarenes*.

## Nazareth

A village in the Roman province of Galilee. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus lived in this town for much of Jesus's early life.

### *Where Is Nazareth?*

The Old Testament, the Apocrypha, intertestamental writings, and Josephus do not mention Nazareth. The town is located just north of the plain of Esdraelon in the limestone hills of the southern Lebanon range. It is situated on three sides of a hill. This location forms a sheltered valley with a moderate climate. Fruits and wildflowers grow easily there.

Trade routes and roads passed near Nazareth, but the village itself was not on any main road. Nazareth is about 24.1 kilometers (15 miles) west of the Sea of Galilee and 32.2 kilometers (20 miles) east of the Mediterranean. Jerusalem lies about 112.6 kilometers (70 miles) south. Archaeological remains show that the ancient town was higher on the western hill than the present village (compare [Luke 4:29](#)).

In the time of Christ, Nazareth, along with the entire region of south Galilee, lay outside the mainstream of Jewish life. This isolation offers context for Nathanael's wry remark to Philip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" ([John 1:46](#)).

### *Why is Nazareth Important to Jesus's Story?*

Nazareth is first mentioned in the New Testament as the home of Mary and Joseph ([Luke 1:26–27](#)). Sometime after Jesus's birth in Bethlehem (about 128.7 kilometers, or 80 miles, to the south), Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth ([Matthew 2:23](#); [Luke 2:39](#)). Jesus grew up in Nazareth ([Luke 2:39–40, 51](#)). He left the village to be baptized by John in the Jordan River ([Mark 1:9](#)).

When Herod arrested John, Jesus moved to Capernaum ([Matthew 4:13](#)). Jesus was often identified by his boyhood city as "Jesus of Nazareth" (see [Mark 10:47](#); [John 18:5, 7](#); [Acts 2:22](#)). However, the New Testament records only one later visit by Jesus to Nazareth. On this occasion, Jesus preached in the synagogue and was

rejected by the townspeople ([Luke 4:16–30](#); compare [Matthew 13:54–58](#); [Mark 6:1–6](#)). Jesus's followers were also derisively called "Nazarenes" ([Acts 24:5](#)).

### *What Happened to Nazareth After Jesus's Time?*

Nazareth remained a Jewish city until the time of the emperor Constantine (died AD 327), when it became a sacred place for Christian pilgrims. A large basilica was built in Nazareth about AD 600. Arabs and Crusaders exchanged control of the village until 1517 when the Turks took control. They forced all Christians to leave. Christians returned in 1620, and the town became an important Christian center.

*See also* Nazarene.

## Nazarite, Nazirite

Person who was either chosen or consecrated for life or for a set period of time to complete a vow to God. The Nazirite (Nazarite) devoted himself to self-imposed discipline in order to perform some special service ([Nm 6:1–21](#)).

Israelite tradition viewed the Nazirite as consecrated for life. Samson was the ancient hero of the Nazirites. He was "consecrated to God" through the vow of his mother ([Jgs 13:5](#); [16:17](#)) and remained under that vow to the "day of his death" ([13:7](#)). As long as Samson's hair was not cut, he was able to receive the Spirit of the Lord and thereby perform amazing physical feats.

Early Nazirite vows may have been associated with holy-war ceremonies. Combatants were consecrated to God and perhaps wore long hair ([Jgs 13:5](#)). The prophet Samuel did not cut his hair because of his mother's vow that no razor would touch his head ([1 Sm 1:11](#)); the Septuagint adds that he was not to drink wine. The Nazirite vow of uncut hair was associated with being consecrated to God's service and was especially common during the charismatic days of Israel's early leaders.

Naziritism developed into a ritual for those who sought to consecrate themselves temporarily to God. During the period of consecration, the devotee abstained from drinking wine, allowed his hair to grow, and avoided all contact with dead bodies.

Uncut hair symbolizes strength and life. Perhaps this is the intended meaning of nazir when used to

describe Joseph in the blessing of Jacob ([Gn 49:26](#)) and in the blessing of Moses ([Dt 33:16](#)). Vineyards that were not pruned in sabbatical or jubilee years were said to be nazir.

In later times, touching or coming in close proximity to a dead body was the most serious offense against the vow. Should anyone die in his presence, a Nazirite became impure. Such a contaminated Nazirite was expected to shave his "defiled head" on the day of cleansing. Next, he would bring two young pigeons to the priest, who would offer one as a sin offering. And finally, he must bring a male lamb for a guilt offering ([Nm 6:9-12](#)). Because of this defilement, the Nazirite had to begin his days of separation again.

At the end of his period of separation he "desecrated" himself through a ceremony: he offered a sacrifice for sin and a communion sacrifice, then he shaved his head and burnt the hair. Thereafter, the Nazirite returned to his normal life and could drink wine ([Nm 6:13-21](#)).

Paul completed a similar vow at Cenchrea in NT times ([Acts 18:18](#)) and, then again, along with four other Nazirites in Jerusalem ([Acts 21:23-24](#)). In the Talmud the period of time for the consecration was usually 30 days. It was customary for the wealthy to aid poor Nazirites in the purchase of their offerings. During the Maccabean period, the Nazirites were unable to complete their rites because the temple was profaned ([1 Macc 3:49-51](#)).

## Neah

Border town in Zebulun's territory ([Jos 19:13](#)).

## Neapolis

Neapolis was a port city that served the larger city of Philippi. Today, this ancient city is known as Kavalla. The name Neapolis comes from a Greek word meaning "new city." Neapolis existed as early as the fifth century BC. During the time of the Roman Empire, Neapolis clearly depended on the nearby city of Philippi.

The apostle Paul dreamed about a man from Macedonia asking for help. After that, Paul left Troas and the continent of Asia to travel to the continent of Europe. Paul and his companions sailed past the island of Samothrace and then

arrived at Neapolis. This made Neapolis the first European city that Paul visited during his missionary journeys ([Acts 16:11](#)).

## Neariah

1. One of Shemaiah's six sons and a descendant of David ([1 Chr 3:22-23](#)).

2. Captain of 500 men of Simeon's tribe who went to Mt Seir, where they destroyed the remnant of the Amalekites and settled their own people in Hezekiah's time ([1 Chr 4:42](#)).

## Nebai

Political leader who signed Ezra's covenant of faithfulness to God with Nehemiah and others after the exile ([Neh 10:19](#)).

## Nebaioth

The firstborn of Ishmael's 12 sons ([Genesis 25:13; 1 Chronicles 1:29](#)). His sister was Mahalath, who was also called "Basemath" (compare [Genesis 36:3](#)). She later married Esau ([Genesis 28:9](#)).

The identity of Nebaioth's descendants is uncertain. They might be the ancestors of the Nabatean Arabian tribe who owned the land of Edom and parts of the area east of the Jordan River (Transjordan) as far north as Palmyra (ancient Tadmor). The descendants of both Nebaioth and Kedar are known for their excellent flocks of sheep ([Isaiah 60:7](#)). They are also mentioned in the writings of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, who lived in the seventh century BC.

## Neballat

Town situated in the hills overlooking the southeastern region of the plain of Sharon, settled by Benjamites after the exile ([Neh 11:34](#)). It is identified with modern Beit Nebala, four miles (6.4 kilometers) east of Lod and two miles (3.2 kilometers) north of Hadid.



## Nebat

Ephraimite of Zeredah in the Jordan Valley, a servant to Solomon, and the father of King Jeroboam ([1 Kgs 11:26](#)).

## Nebo (Deity)

Nebo was an important god of ancient Babylon. The Babylonians spelled his name as "Nabu," while the Hebrew Bible spells it as "Nebo." He was considered the son of Marduk, who was the chief god of Babylon.

Nebo was known as the god of wisdom, education, and writing. He first served as the main god of a city called Borsippa. As the Babylonian Empire grew larger, more people began to worship Nebo.

Many ancient writings show that the kings of Babylon and Assyria greatly respected Nebo. They built a special temple for him and his partner, Tashmit, in the city of Kalkhi (now called Nimrud), which was once the capital of Assyria.

In the Bible, the prophet Isaiah wrote about Nebo. He mocked this god, saying that Nebo could not even save himself from being captured ([Isaiah 46:1](#)).

*See* Babylon, Babylonia.

## Nebo (Person)

Forefather of 52 descendants who returned with Zerubbabel to Judah following the exile ([Ezr 2:29](#); [Neh 7:33](#)), 7 of whom were encouraged by Ezra to divorce their foreign wives ([Ezr 10:43](#)). Some suggest that Nebo refers to a town in Benjamin's tribe from which some inhabitants went into exile to Babylon.

## Nebo (Place)

1. City located on the pastoral tablelands of the Transjordan and desired by the sons of Gad and Reuben ([Nm 32:3](#)). Reuben was apportioned this town ([Nm 32:38](#); [1 Chr 5:8](#)) but eventually lost it to King Mesha of Moab around 850 BC. Later, Isaiah ([Is 15:2](#)) and Jeremiah ([Jer 48:1, 22](#)) predicted Nebo's destruction as part of God's judgment against Moab.

2. Summit in the Pisgah portion of the Abarim mountain range, situated eight miles (12.9 kilometers) east of the Jordan River at the northeastern corner of the Dead Sea, atop of which Moses viewed the Promised Land of Canaan before he died ([Dt 32:49](#); [34:1](#)). Its site has been variously identified with Jebel en Neba or with Khirbet el-Mekhaiyet.

*See also* Nebo, Mount.

## Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadrezzar

A Babylonian ruler who was one of the most powerful kings of ancient times. He ruled Babylon from 605 to 562 BC. Nebuchadnezzar is most famous for capturing and destroying the city of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Nebuchadnezzar became the greatest ruler of what historians call the Neo-Babylonian Empire (meaning "new Babylonian Empire"), which lasted from 612 to 539 BC. His father, Nabopolassar, was the first king of this empire. In the Hebrew text of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar's name is also spelled Nebuchadrezzar (for example, see [Jeremiah 21:2](#) marginal note in the Berean Standard Bible).

### *Conquests and Control of Judah*

According to historical records, Nebuchadnezzar conquered an area called "Hatti-country," which included all the lands of Palestine and Syria, including the kingdom of Judah. Pharaoh Neco of Egypt had put Jehoiakim in power as king of Judah ([2 Kings 23:34](#)). At first, Jehoiakim agreed to serve under Nebuchadnezzar's rule ([24:2](#); compare [Daniel 1:1-2](#)). After three years, Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.

When Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin became the new king ([2 Kings 24:6](#)). Jehoiachin reigned for only three months. Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem in 598 BC and took Jehoiachin away to Babylon as a prisoner (verses [10-17](#)). Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, the new king. He gave him the name Zedekiah ([2 Kings 24:17](#); [2 Chronicles 36:10](#)).

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon ([2 Kings 24:20](#)). Nebuchadnezzar's armies surrounded the city of Jerusalem and attacked it. The army captured Zedekiah. He was brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, where Zedekiah's sons were killed in front of him. He was then blinded, bound, and taken away to Babylon as a prisoner.

([25:6-7](#)). Nebuchadnezzar's army stole things from the temple and then burned it. They destroyed the city walls. They stole goods from the city and burned it to the ground (verses [9-17](#)). The most important people in Judah were either killed or forced to leave and live as prisoners in Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar put the small group of people who were left in Judah under the leadership of a governor named Gedaliah. However, someone killed Gedaliah. After this, the Jewish people ran away to Egypt for safety. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would invade Egypt ([Jeremiah 43:8-13](#); [46:13-24](#); [Ezekiel 29-32](#)). An ancient Jewish historian named Josephus wrote that this attack on Egypt happened in Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year as king (around 582/581 BC). However, historians have found an old broken inscription that tells a different story. This inscription is from Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year as king (around 568/567 BC) and says he defeated Egypt during the rule of an Egyptian king named Amasis.

### *Building Projects in Babylon*

Though Nebuchadnezzar won many battles, he is also famous for the great buildings he constructed in the city of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar once boasted, "Is this not Babylon the Great, which I myself have built by the might of my power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" ([Daniel 4:30](#)). One of his most famous projects was called the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Ancient writers considered these gardens to be one of the seven most amazing structures in the world at that time. Nebuchadnezzar built them for his queen, who came from a country called Media where there were many mountains. The gardens were built on raised platforms, like steps going up, to help his queen feel less homesick for her mountain homeland.

### *Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel*

The events of the book of Daniel center on Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was among the prisoners taken to Babylon in 605 BC. Daniel became known to Nebuchadnezzar because of a special dream the king had. None of the king's wise men or fortune-tellers could explain what the dream meant (chapter [2](#)). But God showed Daniel the meaning of the dream. In this dream, the king had seen a statue of a human. This statue represented different kingdoms that would rule, starting with Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian

Empire and continuing until the time when the Messiah (God's chosen leader) would come to rule.

Nebuchadnezzar set up a large human statue that was 27.4 meters (90 feet) high and 2.7 meters (9 feet) wide. Anyone who did not worship the image would be punished with death by fire. Daniel's three friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) refused to bow down to a statue, so Nebuchadnezzar had them thrown into a blazing fire. But God saved them, and they came out of the fire completely unharmed (chapter [3](#)).

The king had another dream about a great tree that was cut down but later sprouted from the stump ([4:4-27](#)). Again, the "wise men of Babylon" did not know what the dream meant. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar what his dream meant. Because of Nebuchadnezzar's pride, God would humble him for seven years (verses [28-33](#)).

*See also* Babylon, Babylonia; Daniel, Book of.

## **Nebushasban, Nebushazban**

Babylonian officer among those ordered to provide safety for Jeremiah after the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem ([Jer 39:13](#)).

## **Nebuzaradan**

Chief Babylonian official and captain of the bodyguard during Nebuchadnezzar's reign (605-562 BC). Nebuzaradan was one of the officials whom Nebuchadnezzar authorized to oversee Jerusalem and Judah and the deportations of Jewish exiles to Babylon ([2 Kgs 25:8-20](#); [Jer 39:9-10](#); [52:12-30](#)). On the king's orders, he appointed Gedaliah governor of Judah and Jeremiah's guardian ([Jer 39:11-13](#); [41:10](#); [43:6](#)).

## **Necho, Nechoh, Neco, Necoh**

Pharaoh of the 26th dynasty of the Saite kings, who succeeded his father, Psammetichus, in 610 BC. Psammetichus had ruled 54 years over Egypt and was instrumental in the renewal of archaic art forms and in the revival of religious fervor. In addition to this, Psammetichus had fortified the borders with garrisons and driven the Assyrians beyond the northeast border into Canaan. The alliance of the Babylonians and Medes made Psammetichus realize the potential threat to

Egypt's independence, and he allied himself with Assyria, his former enemy.

Neco fell heir to the accomplishments of his father and to an international political scene out of which he could not easily withdraw. He was allied with a losing power, as Nineveh, Assyria's capital, fell in 612 BC. Neco was called upon to assist the king of Assyria, who had retreated to Harran from the Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar. Neco moved his troops through Judah on his way to Carchemish to engage in battle with the Babylonians. As the troops moved through the Megiddo pass, they were ambushed by Judean troops under King Josiah. Neco had requested safe passage, but Josiah foolishly refused. Josiah was killed in the field ([2 Kgs 23:29-30](#); cf. [2 Chr 35:20-25](#)). Neco continued onward to Carchemish. The battle (605 BC) turned out to be a great victory for the young Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar recorded it in glowing terms: "As for the rest of the Egyptian army which had escaped from the defeat. . . the Babylonian troops overtook and defeated them; so that not a single man escaped to that country." The OT briefly observes: "The king of Egypt never returned after that" ([2 Kgs 24:7](#), nlt).

Neco strengthened Egypt by a policy of isolation. He made Judah a buffer zone and fortified the borders successfully in order to keep the Babylonians from penetrating into Egypt. He had deposed Jehoahaz, the newly enthroned king of three months, brought him to Riblah in Syria, and later to Egypt ([2 Kgs 23:33-34](#)). Jehoiakim succeeded to the Davidic throne in Jerusalem, and Judah was forced to pay a tribute of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold (vv [33-36](#)). When Judah fell to Babylon, the Judeans considered the Egyptian interest in their survival as vital to Egypt's independence and requested help against Babylonia. The prophet Jeremiah strongly spoke against this dependence on Egypt ([Jer 46:17-24](#)). Whether Neco risked his forces to penetrate into Judah, a Babylonian province, is not certain. Nebuchadnezzar quickly moved his forces to Judah, exiled Jehoiakim to Babylon, and enthroned Zedekiah (597 BC). Shortly thereafter, Neco died (595 BC). His son, Psammetichus II, succeeded him.

See also Egypt, Egyptian; Israel, History of; Josiah #1.

## Necklace

See Jewelry, Jewels.

## Necromancer, Necromancy

A necromancer is someone who tries to talk with dead people. Necromancy is the practice of trying to communicate with the dead to learn secrets or predict the future. God's law strictly forbade the Israelites from doing this ([Deuteronomy 18:11](#)).

See Magic; Medium; Psychics.

## Nedabiah

Son of Jeconiah (nlt "Jehoiachin"), king of Judah ([1 Chr 3:18](#)).

## Needle

The needle was a common household object for sewing and mending. Jesus used the metaphor of the needle to illustrate his lesson about the rich man and entrance into God's kingdom. After talking with the rich young ruler, Jesus told his disciples that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" ([Matthew 19:24](#); [Mark 10:25](#); [Luke 18:25](#)).

Jesus was not condemning riches or wealth. Rather, he condemned the change of will and the false security riches can create. This was the case with the rich young ruler (compare [Matthew 19:21-22](#); [Mark 10:21-22](#); [Luke 18:22-23](#)). Entrance into God's kingdom is an act of God, not of man. By using the metaphor of the largest land animal in Palestine, Jesus created the absurd image of a camel passing through a needle's eye. He compared this picture with a rich man's attempt to use his position and possessions to gain entrance into heaven. Rabbinic literature contains a similar expression, where the elephant is pictured passing through the eye of a needle.

## Negeb, Negev

Southernmost region of Palestine. The name comes from the root "to be dry, parched," although its basic meaning is "south country, south." It is an area with no precise geographical boundaries. From north to south, the Negev covers the area between Beersheba and Kadesh-barnea. From

west to east it extends from near the Mediterranean to the Arabah, a distance of some 70 miles (112.6 kilometers).

This is an arid section of the country, with infrequent and limited rainfall. With limited water resources, there was restricted opportunity for agriculture, although in the northern area some grain farming was done on a small scale, with possibly one crop failure every three years. A pastoral economy existed based primarily on the raising of sheep, goats, and camels. Simeon received this territory, including the cities, such as Arad and Rehoboth, in the tribal division of the Promised Land. Later, Judah absorbed this tribe. During the monarchy, the Israelites pushed into the Negev. During the reigns of Solomon and Jehoshaphat, there was commercial traffic to and from the port of Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba. In Greco-Roman times the Nabateans inhabited the Negev. Through careful preservation of rainwater, they developed limited agriculture and sustained a number of towns. During NT times the Idumeans controlled the Negev.

The kjv does not use the term Negev but ordinarily translates it as “the south.” On the other hand, the niv, nasb, and nlt regularly use the name for the territory. Abraham was often associated with the Negev ([Gn 12:9](#); [13:1-2](#); [20:1](#)). David told Achish, king of Gath, that he had raided “the Negev of Judah,” “the Negev of Jerahmeelites,” and “the Negev of the Kenites” ([1 Sm 27:10](#)), while the Egyptian captured by David stated that the Amalekites had made incursions against “the Negev of the Cherethites,” “the Negev of Judah,” and “the Negev of Caleb” ([1 Sm 30:14](#)).

## Neginah, Neginoth

Hebrew terms in the superscriptions of [Psalms 4, 6, 54-55, 61, 67](#) and [76](#) (kjv); musical cues, meaning “stringed instruments,” describing the kind of musical accompaniment for the performance of the designated psalms. *See* Music.

## Nehelamite

Ancestral name or the geographical designation for Shemaiah the false prophet ([Jer 29:24, 31-32](#)). Its derivation is unknown. Etymologically similar to the Hebrew word for “dream,” Nehelamite is

perhaps an epithet coined by Jeremiah to deride Shemaiah, the false prophet, as a dreamer.

## Nehemiah (Person)

Name of three men mentioned in the OT after the period of the exile. The name means “the Lord comforts” and was appropriate for this time of hope and fulfillment.

1. Leader mentioned in a list of Jewish exiles who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel sometime after 538 BC ([Ezr 2:2](#); [Neh 7:7](#)).
2. Ruler of half the district of Beth-zur who helped rebuild the Jerusalem wall in 444 BC ([Neh 3:16](#)).
3. Governor of Judah during the restoration. Originally cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes I (464-424 BC), Nehemiah pleaded to be sent to Judah to aid his fellow Jews in their difficulties and in particular to rebuild Jerusalem ([Neh 1:1-2:8](#)). He was appointed governor of Judah for 12 years.

After inspecting the walls upon his arrival, he realized that their repair was to be his prime task. This repair would guarantee the security of the city and could provide a focal point for the Jewish community scattered throughout Judah. That he was able to marshal support for this project and to complete it attests to his skills in management and administration. He also had a strong personal faith, as his prayers ([Neh 1:4-11](#); [2:4](#)) and conviction of divine guidance and help ([2:8, 18, 20](#)) attest. He had to overcome hostility and intimidation from powerful neighboring authorities in Samaria, Ammon, and Arabia ([4:1-9](#); [6:1-14](#)). He also required economic justice (ch [5](#)). A few rich Jews were exploiting a food shortage by exacting high interest from their poorer brothers.

Included in Nehemiah’s concern for Jerusalem was a strong interest in the maintenance of temple worship. He was involved in the production of a document in which the Jewish community pledged themselves to support the temple personnel and to provide offerings ([Neh 10:1, 32-39](#)). Clearly, he realized that Judah needed at its heart a religious emphasis as well as political stability. These particular religious reforms are linked with those of his second period as governor (ch [13](#)). Other reforms of that period concerned the observance of the Sabbath ([13:15-22](#)) and the problem of marriages to non-Jews ([13:23-27](#)). Nehemiah was a forceful leader (v [25](#)) who used his imperial powers to restore to the settlers a national and

religious identity in a period of political and economic weakness.

*See also* Nehemiah, Book of; Ezra (Person) #1; Ezra, Book of; Postexilic Period.

## Nehiloth

Hebrew term in the superscription of [Psalm 5](#) (kjv); musical cue, meaning “flutes,” describing the kind of musical accompaniment for the performance of the psalm. *See* Music.

## Nehum

One of the men listed in [Nehemiah 7:7](#) who returned with Zerubbabel to Palestine following the Babylonian captivity. His name is alternately spelled Rehum in [Ezra 2:2](#). *See* Rehum #1.

## Nehushta

Nehushta was the mother of Jehoiachin, who was a king of Judah. She was taken to Babylon with her son when they were forced to leave their homeland ([2 Kings 24:8-15](#)).

## Nehushtan

Name given to the bronze serpent that Moses made during the wilderness wanderings. At the time of King Hezekiah’s reforms, it was destroyed ([2 Kgs 18:4](#)). *See* Bronze Serpent, Bronze Snake.

## Neiel

Border town in Asher’s territory ([Jos 19:27](#)). Its site is perhaps identifiable with modern Khirbet Ya’nin, on the east end of the plain of Acco.

## Neighbor

Concept apparently limited in the OT period and late Judaism to one’s fellow Israelite, or member of the covenant, and extended by Jesus to include anyone encountered in life.

## *In the Old Testament*

Although it is never explicitly limited as such, the prominent connotation of “neighbor” in the OT is that of a fellow member of the covenant community; that is, another Israelite (see [Lv 6:1-7](#); [19](#); [Dt 15:2-3](#)). In [Leviticus 19:18](#), a passage often quoted in the NT, the Israelite is commanded to “love your neighbor as yourself.” In [19:34](#), it is explicitly stated that such love should also be shown to the foreigner (or “sojourner”) passing through the land. If “neighbor” (v [18](#)) implied a more encompassing notion, such as “mankind” or “fellow man,” there presumably would have been no need to include the further stipulation in verse [34](#). “Neighbor” was therefore probably taken to mean one’s immediate neighbor, the fellow Israelite.

Within the covenant community, love of neighbor involved certain responsibilities explicitly set forth in the law. The neighbor was to be treated fairly ([Ex 22:5-15](#); [Lv 6:2-7](#); [19:9-18](#)) and respected ([Ex 20:16](#)), as were his belongings ([Ex 20:17](#)). To foster such just and merciful relationships within the covenant community, the neighbor was to be thought of as a “brother” ([Lv 25:25](#); [Dt 22:1-4](#)). What one did to one’s neighbor was to be returned in kind ([Lv 24:19-23](#); [Dt 19:11-19](#)).

The grave importance attached to treatment of the neighbor is understandable when seen as part of one’s wider relationship with God and was considered something that could affect significantly the divine-human relationship ([Lv 6:1-7](#); [19](#); [25:17](#); [Dt 24:10-13](#); [Ps 12](#)). Israelites were to treat their neighbors in the same loving way they had themselves been treated by God ([Ex 22:21](#); [Lv 25:35-38](#)).

The importance of the neighbor relationship within the covenant community is also demonstrated by the fact that when such responsibilities were ignored, a societal breakdown or national turmoil followed ([Dt 28:15-68](#); [Hos 4:1-3](#); [Am 2:6-7](#)). That the Israelites often did neglect love for neighbor, particularly the neighbor in need, is a contributing cause for the divine punishment of the exile ([Jer 5:7-9](#); [7:1-15](#); [9:2-9](#); [Hos 4:1-3](#); [Am 2:6-7](#); [5:10-13](#); [8:4-6](#)). The mere fact that proper love of neighbor was also part of Israel’s hope for the messianic age to come ([Jer 31:34](#); [Zec 3:10](#)) also points to its common neglect within the OT covenant community.



### *In Late Judaism*

From the exilic experience, Israel recognized that divine blessing was conditional somewhat on justice and love exercised toward one another ([Zec 8:14–17](#)). The identity of the “neighbor” was debatable, however. Several factors suggest that “neighbor” was limited in this period to the fellow Israelite and the proselyte (gentile convert to Judaism). Evidence from rabbinic material excludes Samaritans and the Gentiles living in the land from being considered “neighbors” and thus worthy of love. Within the Jewish Essene community at Qumran, the “neighbor” to be respected and treated fairly was restricted to one’s fellow community members. Finally, when Jesus recalls, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’” ([Mt 5:43](#)), he is quoting only partially from the OT ([Lv 19:18](#)—“You shall love your neighbor”). The last phrase (“and hate your enemy”) reflects the contemporary Jewish feeling toward outsiders; that is, God did not require love toward those considered “enemies” but only toward fellow countrymen.

### *In the New Testament*

Jesus differed dramatically from his Jewish contemporaries by eradicating the limitations on the neighbor to be loved. In contrast to those who would limit love to one’s fellow countrymen, Jesus advocated extending the obligation reserved for the neighbor to the enemy as well ([Mt 5:43–48](#)), and in so doing, he destroyed the distinction between neighbor and enemy altogether.

On another occasion, a scribe asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment given by God ([Mk 12:28–31](#)). In response, Jesus cited [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) concerning the nature of God and man’s obligation to love God with his entire being: heart, soul, and mind. Of significance is that Jesus did not stop there but linked with this a second commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself” ([Lv 19:18](#)). Some scholars suggest that this dramatic and close association of love of God and love of neighbor originated with Jesus. If Jesus was the first to tie these commands together (see [Mt 22:37](#); [Mk 12:29–31](#)), it reveals our Lord’s own understanding of the relation of these two obligations; proper love for neighbor derives from love for God, and conversely, love for God is inseparable from meeting the needs of a neighbor in love.

The debate in Jesus’ time was not over how to properly treat a neighbor but who, in fact, was the neighbor. Jesus is asked this very question by an expert of the law ([Lk 10:29](#)). Jesus had complimented the lawyer for his clear understanding of what was required to inherit eternal life, namely, love of God and love of neighbor. Luke suggests that the lawyer asked the further qualifying question in order to “justify himself,” that is, justify his actual behavior of limited love toward his fellow man. Jesus chose not to respond directly but through the use of a parable, in this case, the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan (vv [30–35](#)).

In order to open the lawyer’s eyes to the tragic shortsightedness of his question, Jesus related an everyday story of a man traveling the treacherous road from Jerusalem down to Jericho, a road particularly plagued by robbers. The traveler is robbed, stripped, beaten, and left half dead. To this point, the lawyer might have assumed Jesus was offering an example of who constitutes a “neighbor”—a fellow Jew in need. Jesus proceeds, however, to introduce two figures, a priest and a Levite who, in an academic discussion, could have argued quite ably on who is the neighbor God calls one to love. The lawyer would no doubt have anticipated such experts in the law to act rightly toward the victim. In contrast, the priest and Levite, upon seeing the man in need, respond by “passing by on the other side.” Unable to determine whether the victim was dead or barely alive, and possibly not wanting to risk uncleanness, the experts of the law pass by, thus violating the greatest of the commandments just identified by the lawyer ([10:25–28](#)).

Enter a Samaritan—a figure especially despised by the Jews. Viewed as heretics by the Jewish religious authorities, the Samaritans were disqualified in rabbinic circles from being considered a “neighbor” and thus worthy of love. In fact, previous centuries had witnessed the slaughter of many Samaritans by Jewish rulers, and animosity clearly existed between the two peoples (see [Jn 4:9](#)). While the lawyer listening to the parable would have expected the priest and Levite to act justly toward the victim, he must have been surprised that a hated Samaritan would show compassion and thus fulfill the greatest commandment. Jesus intentionally spelled out the extent of the Samaritan’s compassion (immediate care in dressing wounds, transport to the inn, care for the victim there and extended care in paying for care by others while he is away, [Lk 10:34–35](#)) to such a

degree that the lawyer would have no doubt as to the genuineness of the Samaritan's love. The irony of the story is that one not considered worthy to be called "neighbor" by Jews was precisely the one who showed himself to be "neighbor" to the victim (vv [36-37](#)).

The parable, like the statement in [Matthew 5:43-48](#), reveals Jesus' own understanding of "neighbor" and what "love of neighbor" demands. Jesus sets no limitation on who qualifies as the neighbor commanded by God to be loved.

The forcefulness and power of Jesus' teachings on the love of neighbor and its relationship to one's love for God are demonstrated by a similar emphasis within the early church. Paul on two occasions called the love of neighbor the fulfillment of the entire law ([Rom 13:8-10](#); [Gal 5:14](#)), while James referred to the same commandment as "the royal law" ([Jas 2:8](#)).

## Nekeb

KJV rendering of a town defining the boundary of the territory allotted to Naphtali's tribe for an inheritance, positioned between Za-ananim and Jabneel ([Jos 19:33](#)). *See* Adami, Adami-nekeb.

## Nekoda

1. Father of a family of temple servants who returned to Jerusalem following the exile ([Ezr 2:48](#); [Neh 7:50](#)).
2. Father of a family of returned exiles who could not prove their Israelite descent ([Ezr 2:60](#); [Neh 7:62](#)).

## Nemuel

1. Reubenite and the son of Eliab ([Nm 26:9](#)).
2. One of Simeon's sons ([Nm 26:12](#); [1 Chr 4:24](#)), also called Jemuel ([Gn 46:10](#)). *See* Jemuel.

## Nemuelite

Member of Nemuel's family from Simeon's tribe ([Nm 26:12](#); alternately called Jemuel in [Gn 46:10](#)). *See* Jemuel.

## Nepheg

1. A Levite of the family of Kohath and the second of Izhar's three sons ([Exodus 6:21](#)).
2. David's son born to him during his reign in Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 5:15](#); [1 Chronicles 3:7](#); [14:6](#)).

## Nephilim

An early group of people mentioned only twice in the Old Testament ([Genesis 6:4](#); [Numbers 13:33](#)). The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Septuagint) translated "Nephilim" as "giants." Other versions, like the King James Version, followed this. Most modern translations call them Nephilim. They link them to the Anakim ([Numbers 13:33](#); [Deuteronomy 2:21](#)) and the Rephaim ([Deuteronomy 2:20](#)). These groups were known for their large size, which is why they were often called "giants."

The origin of the Nephilim is unclear. Some say the Hebrew verb *naphal*, meaning "to fall," implies the Nephilim were "fallen ones." These were fallen angels who later had children with human women. But Jesus taught that angels do not have physical relationships ([Luke 20:34-35](#)). This idea assumes that [Genesis 6:1-4](#) reflects Greek myths, where such unions happened. However, the passage in Genesis is about human history, not mythology.

The Nephilim were probably not the "sons of God" in the Bible. They seem different from the "daughters of men." To understand them, think of an ancient people group, like the Anakim and Rephaim, whose origins are unknown.

*See also* Giants.

## Nephish

KJV spelling of Naphish, Ishmael's son ([1 Chr 5:19](#)). *See* Naphish.



## Nephishesim, Nephisim

A group of people who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel after the exile, counted among the temple servants ([Ezr 2:50](#); [Neh 7:52](#)).

## Nephthalim

The King James Version spelling of the tribe of Naphtali in [Matthew 4:13, 15](#).

See Naphtali, Tribe of.

## Nephtoah, Waters of

Geographical landmark situated between Mt Ephron to the west and the valley of Hinnom to the east, defining part of the boundary separating the tribes of Judah and Benjamin ([Jos 15:9](#); [18:15](#)). Its site is generally identified with Ain Lifta, three miles (4.8 kilometers) northwest of Jerusalem.

## Nephushesim, Nephusim, Nephussim

Alternate spellings of Nephisim in [Ezra 2:50](#), [Nehemiah 7:52](#). See Nephishesim, Nephisim.

## Nepthalim

KJV rendering of Naphtali's tribe in [Revelation 7:6](#). See Naphtali, Tribe of.

## Ner

A man from the tribe of Benjamin. He was the father of Abner and brother of Kish. This would make Ner the uncle of King Saul ([1 Samuel 14:51](#); [26:5](#); [2 Samuel 2:8](#); [1 Kings 2:32](#); [1 Chronicles 26:28](#)).

However, the Bible gives different information about Ner's family relationships. In one passage, the Bible says that Ner's father was named Abiel ([1 Samuel 14:51](#)). But other passages list Ner as one of the sons of Jeiel, though these readings are difficult to interpret ([1 Chronicles 8:29–30](#); [9:35–36](#)). In other parts of the Bible, Ner is listed as the father of Kish, who was the father of Saul ([8:33](#); [9:39](#)). This would make Ner the grandfather of Saul.

One possible explanation is that there were two different men named Kish. One Kish was Ner's brother, and the other was Ner's son. Another explanation is that there were two different men named Ner.

These different explanations show that family lists in the Bible are sometimes incomplete or unclear.

## Nereus

Roman Christian to whom Paul sent greetings in the salutation of his letter to Rome ([Rom 16:15](#)).

## Nergal

Heathen deity worshiped by the men of Cuth after the fall of Israel in 722 BC ([2 Kgs 17:30](#)). Nergal, lord of the netherworld and associated with the sun god, was the city god of the northern Babylonian city of Cuthah (cf. v [24](#)). See Assyria, Assyrians.

## Nergal-Sharezer

Babylonian prince who held the title "Rabmag." Nergal-sharezer participated with Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army in conquering Jerusalem after a three-year siege from 588 to 586 BC ([Jer 39:3](#)) and later entrusted Jeremiah to Gedaliah's care (v [13](#)).

## Neri

An ancestor of Jesus, according to [Luke 3:27](#).

See Ancestry of Jesus Christ.

## Neriah

Father of Baruch the scribe ([Jer 32:12, 16](#); [36:4, 8](#)) and Seraiah the quartermaster ([51:59](#)), both of whom served Jeremiah the prophet.

## Nero

Nero was a Roman emperor known for his cruelty and for the persecution of Christians. He was born

in AD 37 and died in 68. He was emperor of Rome from AD 54 to 68.

### *Early Life*

Nero was born with the name Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. His father was a senator and consul, but he died when Nero was still a child. Nero's mother, Agrippina, was the daughter of Germanicus. She was one of the richest and most powerful women in Rome.

Later, Agrippina married the emperor Claudius. Claudius adopted Nero and gave him a new name: Nero Claudius Caesar Germanicus. Agrippina wanted to rule through her son and controlled him in his early years as emperor.

### *Rise to Power and Early Rule*

Rome was full of political plots and murders at this time. During Nero's first five years as emperor, he ordered the deaths of his stepbrother Britannicus and his own mother, Agrippina. Later, he forced his wife Octavia to leave Rome, and then he had her killed.

Even while Nero ruled with cruelty, the Christian church in Rome kept growing. In AD 57, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome. Paul had not yet visited the city, but he already knew many believers there ([Romans 16](#)).

### *Paul and Nero*

After Nero had ruled for five years, Paul was in prison at Caesarea. He asked to be judged by Caesar ([Acts 25:11](#)). Paul may have hoped this would lead to his freedom and legal protection for Christians.

When Paul asked to be judged by Caesar, this did not mean Nero would judge him personally. At the start of his rule, Nero said he would not be a judge. He allowed his top military leaders (called prefects) to decide legal cases.

But in AD 62, Nero began judging cases himself. It is not clear if Paul appeared before Nero or one of the prefects. If no one came to accuse Paul, this case might not have been judged at all. Paul was still waiting for trial when he wrote the letter to the Philippians ([Philippians 1:7-14](#)).

### *Nero's Decline*

In AD 62, Nero's adviser Afranius Burrus died. Burrus had worked closely with Seneca, a wise teacher and Nero's other adviser. Together, they

helped govern Rome while Nero focused on entertainment.

After Burrus died, Seneca was forced to kill himself in AD 65. Then Nero began doing whatever he wanted. His new advisers led to serious money problems. Nero wrongly believed that he was the savior of the world.

### *The Great Fire and Persecution of Christians*

In AD 64, a great fire broke out at the Circus Maximus in Rome. It burned for more than five days and destroyed much of the city. Nero was at his birthplace in Antium (about 53 kilometers or 33 miles south of Rome). He returned quickly to help with the crisis.

Many people believed Nero had started the fire. To stop the rumors, he blamed the Christians. He ordered many Christians to be punished. This may be the time when the apostle Peter wrote about Christian suffering ([1 Peter 4:12](#)). Nero's second wife, Poppaea, may have encouraged him to blame the church. By this time, the Christian community in Rome had grown large.

The Roman writer Tacitus said that "a huge crowd was found guilty not so much of arson as of hatred of the humanity." Many believe Peter and Paul were killed during this persecution.

Around AD 95, an early church leader named Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the church in Corinth. He named Peter and Paul as heroes of faith who died for their beliefs.

### *Nero's Final Years*

In AD 66, a Jewish revolt began in Caesarea. Nero sent his general Vespasian to stop it. Then Nero traveled to Greece and left a Roman official named Helius in charge of the empire.

While Nero was away, leaders in France, Spain, and Africa turned against him. When Nero returned in AD 68, he took his own life. He was the last Roman emperor related to Julius Caesar by blood or marriage.

*See also* Caesars, The.

## **Net**

A net is a tool made of ropes or cords tied together to form a mesh (many open squares or holes). People used nets mostly for catching fish.

In Bible times, fishermen often used two kinds of nets. One kind was thrown by hand ([Matthew 4:18](#)). The other kind was pulled between boats or dragged through the water ([John 21:6](#)).

Nets were also used as a picture of danger or judgment. For example, the Bible says evil people will be caught in their own nets ([Ecclesiastes 9:12](#); [Ezekiel 12:13](#)). This means they will be trapped by their own plans.

See Fishermen.

## Netaim

Habitation of the potters who were employed in the king's service ([1 Chr 4:23](#)).

## Nethaneel, Nethanel

A common Old Testament name spelled Nethaneel in the King James Version.

1. A son of Zuar and the leader of the tribe of Issachar at the start of the wilderness wanderings of Israel ([Numbers 1:8](#); [2:5](#); [10:15](#)). He represented his relatives at the dedication of the altar ([7:18, 23](#)).
2. A Judahite who was the fourth son of Jesse and brother of King David ([1 Chronicles 2:14](#)).
3. One of the priests assigned to blow a trumpet in front of the ark of God when King David moved it to Jerusalem ([1 Chronicles 15:24](#)).
4. A Levite and the father of Shemaiah. He was the scribe who recorded the 24 divisions of priests founded when David was king ([1 Chronicles 24:6](#)).
5. A Korahite from the tribe of Levi. He was the fifth son of Obed-edom when David was king ([1 Chronicles 26:4](#)).
6. One of the princes sent by King Jehoshaphat to teach the law in the cities of Judah ([2 Chronicles 17:7](#)).

7. One of the Levitical officers who was generous in donating animals for sacrifices. He gave these to the Levites for the celebration of the Passover feast when Josiah was king ([2 Chronicles 35:9](#)).
8. A priest and one of the six sons of Pashhur. Ezra encouraged Nethanel to divorce his foreign wife after the Israelite return from exile ([Ezra 10:22](#)).
9. The leader of the family of the priest Jedaiah. This was when Joiakim was the high priest in Jerusalem after the Israelite return from exile ([Nehemiah 12:21](#)).
10. One of the priests serving as a musician. He performed at the dedication of the Jerusalem wall during the time of Nehemiah ([Nehemiah 12:36](#)).

## Nethaniah

1. Elishama's son, father of Ishmael and a member of the royal family of Judah ([2 Kgs 25:23-25](#); [Jer 40:8-15](#); [41:1-18](#)).
2. One of Asaph's four sons and the leader of the fifth of 24 divisions of musicians trained for service in the sanctuary during David's reign ([1 Chr 25:2, 12](#)).
3. One of the Levites sent by King Jehoshaphat of Judah to teach the law in the cities of Judah ([2 Chr 17:8](#)).
4. Shelemiah's son and the father of Jehudi. Jehudi served in the court of King Jehoiakim of Judah ([Jer 36:14](#)).

## Nethinim

The Nethinim were temple assistants who helped with the work in God's temple. This term appears only in books written after the Israelites returned from exile (1 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah). The word "Nethinim" comes from the Hebrew verb "nathan," which means "to give, set apart, or

dedicate." So the term means "those given" or "those set apart for service."

The Greek translation of the Old Testament (called the Septuagint) translates this word as *dedomenoi*. Some recent translators have followed the Jewish historian Josephus by referring to them as "temple slaves" (*Antiquities* 11.5.1). The Berean Standard Bible translates it "temple servants." The New Living Translation translates it "temple assistants."

Before the exile (when many Israelites were taken to Babylon), the Nethinim worked in temple service. [First Chronicles 9:2](#) lists them with the priests and Levites who took possession of their assigned cities. The order in which they are listed—priests, Levites, and Nethinim—shows that they had a role below the Levites (see also [Nehemiah 7:73; 11:3, 20–21](#)). They returned from exile as temple servants ([Ezra 2:43, 58; 7:7, 24; 8:17, 20; Nehemiah 7:46, 60](#)). They lived in Jerusalem ([Ezra 7:7; Nehemiah 3:31; 11:21](#)). They helped repair the city walls ([Nehemiah 3:26](#)).

We cannot be completely certain about who exactly the Nethinim were. [Numbers 31:47](#) tells us that the Levites received captives who were given hard and basic tasks. When the Gibeonites were accepted into Israel as servants, they too were assigned to carry water and chop wood for the entire community and for the altar of the Lord ([Joshua 9:9–27](#)). King David increased the number of people serving at the tabernacle by assigning prisoners of war to perform these duties ([Ezra 8:20](#)). When the temple was completed, more workers were needed for temple services, and King Solomon added to their number. This new group became known as "the servants of Solomon."

Ezra records that 392 Nethinim returned from exile to Jerusalem ([2:58](#)). They performed the duties in the rebuilt temple that their ancestors did before the exile. The Israelites considered the Nethinim full members of the restored covenant community. The Nethinim devoted themselves to God ([Nehemiah 10:28](#)).

## Netophah, Netophathite

Netophah was a place near Bethlehem in the Old Testament. A Netophathite was someone who came from that place.

Two of David's thirty mighty warriors came from Netophah ([2 Samuel 23:28–29; 1 Chronicles 11:30; 27:13–15](#)). Seraiah, one of the army leaders who

met Gedaliah after Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 586 BC, was also a Netophathite ([2 Kings 25:23; Jeremiah 40:8](#)).

Later, 56 men from Netophah returned from exile in Babylon with Zerubbabel and Joshua ([Ezra 2:22](#)).

Levites also lived in the villages of the Netophathites ([1 Chronicles 9:16](#)). Temple singers came from villages around Jerusalem, including those near Netophah ([Nehemiah 12:28](#)). These verses suggest that Netophah was not just a town but part of a larger area or district.

Netophah was likely located near Bethlehem (see [1 Chronicles 2:54; Nehemiah 7:26](#)). We do not know the exact location, but many believe it was at Khirbet Bedd Faluh, about 4.8 kilometers (3 miles) southeast of Bethlehem.

## Nettle

The nettle is a plant with toothed leaves covered with tiny hairs that release a stinging liquid when touched. Four types of nettle grow in Israel and the surrounding areas:

1. The common or great nettle (*Urtica dioica*)
2. The Roman nettle (*Urtica pilulifera*)
3. The small nettle (*Urtica urens*)
4. *Urtica caudata*, which is similar to the small nettle

Some nettles can grow as tall as 1.5 to 1.8 meters (five to six feet). They are common weeds found in abandoned areas and fields. They often grow in places that were once farmed but have since been neglected ([Isaiah 34:13; Hosea 9:6](#)).

## New

Something which has just been created or come into existence. The new often replaces something which already existed, turning the old into new.

That the second part of the Bible is called the *New Testament* shows how important the idea of "new" is to biblical revelation. Many important theological ideas include the concept of new:

- new creation ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)),
- new birth ([John 3:3](#)),
- new man ([Ephesians 2:15](#); [Colossians 3:10](#)),
- new commandment ([John 13:34](#)),
- new covenant ([Jeremiah 31:31](#)),
- new life ([Romans 6:4](#)), and various others.

### *The Expectation of the New*

The totality of the expectation of the *new* is best expressed in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and the Psalms. The reference in the Psalter to the "new song" to be given to the people to sing is a central metaphor (For example, [Psalms 33:3](#); [40:3](#); [149:1](#); compare also [Isaiah 42:10](#)). Jeremiah speaks of the day when God will make a new covenant (special agreement) with the house of Israel ([Jeremiah 31:31-34](#); compare [Ezekiel 34:25-31](#); [37:26-28](#)). In contrast with the old, this new covenant will be internal, written upon the heart. Ezekiel ([Ezekiel 36:22-32](#)) also tells of the day when God will cleanse his people and will give a heart of flesh in place of the heart of stone.

This act of God's holiness will introduce the age of the Spirit. It will bring about a new existence, characterized by security and freedom, where the laws of God are followed. The supreme feature of this new time is the new spirit within people ([Ezekiel 11:19](#)). Joel speaks also of that day when the Spirit of God will be poured out on all flesh ([Joel 2:28](#)). [Isaiah 65:17](#) states the promise of "new heavens and a new earth." Isaiah's words often reflect national circumstances and hopes (for example, after the exile). However, this promise took on new significance beyond the hope of the nation Israel.

### *The Coming of the New*

The presence of the kingdom in the world through Jesus announces that the promised new age has broken into time in powerful ways. Jesus's ministry is one of fulfillment. What the prophets promised has begun to take place. John the Baptist had prepared the way for the one who would give the promised Spirit. The giving of this Spirit is the giving of new life. Through faith in Christ, one is born anew ([John 3:3-7](#)). But Jesus had to die in order for this new life to be given. The cup of wine

Jesus shared with his disciples at the Last Supper symbolized the blood of the new covenant ([Mark 14:24](#)).

The early church expressed this significance in using many metaphors:

- This "newness of life" is demonstrated through baptism ([Romans 6:4](#)).
- The eucharistic cup is the new covenant through blood ([1 Corinthians 11:25](#)).
- An extended discourse on the old and new covenants shows that by the shedding of his blood Christ has become mediator of a new covenant ([Hebrews 9:15](#)).
- By his blood, Jesus has opened up a new and living way into the Holy Place ([10:19-20](#)).
- Paul restates the promise of Ezekiel for a heart of flesh ([2 Corinthians 3:3](#)). He then gives an account of the ministry of the new covenant in contrast to the old.
- The church represents the appearance of the new age in the domain of the old.
- The one who comes to Christ by faith is declared a new person, a new creation, for whom the old has passed away ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#); [Galatians 6:15](#)).
- Jewish-gentile hostility disappears in the resulting "new humanity" ([Ephesians 2:15](#)).
- All other social distinctions (such as male-female, slave-free) pass away in the new humanity created in Christ Jesus ([Colossians 3:10-11](#)).

The newness of a person in Christ is the foundation for New Testament ethics ([Ephesians 4:24](#); [Colossians 3:12](#)). The new commandment ([John 13:34](#); [1 John 2:8](#)) is not really new ([1 John 2:7](#)), but now has new possibility and deeper meaning by the power and example of Jesus. Though this new life is a gift of God, the *process* of being made new



continues. Transformation by the renewing of the mind ([Romans 12:2](#)) realizes the will of God. Paul declares the inner self is being renewed day by day ([2 Corinthians 4:16](#)).

### *The Realization of the New*

As real as the new life of the believer is, Scripture shows a tension between the new age that is not yet realized. The time when all things are made new is a future promise ([Revelation 21:5](#)). With the end of the old, there is a new heaven and new earth. The new Jerusalem "coming down out of heaven" as the dwelling place of God (verse [2](#)). The people of God receive a new name ([3:12](#)) as the old things disappear.

The people who are the redeemed of the Lord are given a new song to sing. The song is about the Lamb slain from the beginning of creation:

The first line of the song is "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" The chorus returns, "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever!" ([Revelation 5:12-13](#)).

See also Commandment, The New; Covenant, The New; Jerusalem, New; Man, Old and New; New Creation, New Creature; New Heavens and New Earth; Regeneration.

## **New Birth**

A way of receiving "spiritual life" and becoming part of the kingdom of God.

Jesus spoke about new birth when he talked with a man named Nicodemus ([John 3:3-7](#)). Jesus said that people must be "born again" to see the kingdom of God. This new birth does not come from human parents. It comes from God's Spirit.

New birth is also called *regeneration* (a word that means being made new). It happens when God gives someone a new heart and a new spirit.

See Regeneration.

## **New Birth**

See Regeneration.

## **New Commandment**

Expression used by Jesus ([In 13:34](#)) to designate his teaching concerning the love of Christians for each other. See Commandment, The New.

## **New Covenant**

An expression used by Jesus to describe the meaning of his death ([Luke 22:20](#); compare [Jeremiah 31:31](#)).

See Covenant, The New.

## **New Creation, New Creature**

The message of redemption that unfolds through the Old and New Testaments. Christ will fulfill it at his second coming.

The Bible says God is the Creator of heaven and earth. He controls everything (see [Genesis 1](#); [Psalms 33:6-11](#); [104](#); [Matthew 6:25-32](#)). Humans are described as beings made in God's image ([Genesis 1-2](#)). Understanding God as Creator is key to understanding the Bible's message of salvation. Human sin is serious. It is due to people who "worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" ([Romans 1:25](#)). God is our Redeemer because he is our Creator. He saves his rebellious creatures. They suffer, with all creation, under a curse of futility and decay ([Genesis 3:17-18](#); [Romans 8:20-21](#)).

### *New Creation in the Old Testament*

The book of Isaiah, especially chapters [40-66](#), links creation and salvation. Here, the prophet talks about God's ultimate redemption for Israel. This future salvation often highlights God as the Creator of heaven, earth, and Israel (see [Isaiah 40:12-31](#); [44:24](#); [45:18](#); [48:13](#); [51:16](#); [64:8](#)).

Isaiah speaks of "new heavens and a new earth" ([Isaiah 65:17](#); [66:22](#)). This idea of a new creation shows that the salvation God promises is for everyone, not just Israel. God's work of recreation and restoration at the end connects to his work of creation in the beginning ([Isaiah 48:12](#)). What God will do at the end for all things is as significant as what he did when he created everything from nothing. This new creation order will lead to eternal happiness for the faithful. New Testament writers continue to develop these themes.

### *New Creation and Christ*

The New Testament strongly connects creation and redemption. Various writers link Christ's saving work to his role in creation ([John 1:3](#); [Colossians 1:15-18](#); [Hebrews 1:2-3](#); [Revelation 3:14](#)). They highlight this link. They mention what Christ did "when the time had fully come" ([Galatians 4:4](#); [Ephesians 1:10](#) and "in these last days" ([Hebrews 1:2](#)). This work is tied to his actions at the beginning. Christ's work of redemption is seen as a new creation.

This link between new creation and Christ's work is clear. Paul calls Christ the "last Adam" and "second man" ([1 Corinthians 15:45-47](#); compare verse [22](#); [Romans 5:14](#)). This description is closely related to the title "Son of Man," which Jesus used for himself. Paul uses the term "last Adam" to highlight the contrast between Adam and Christ ([Romans 1](#); [1 Corinthians 15](#)). Adam brought sin and death because he was disobedient. But Christ was obedient and so brought righteousness. This leads to justification and life.

Paul explains the full scope of this Adam-Christ contrast in [1 Corinthians 15:42-49](#). He compares the believer's weak, mortal body with the glorious, powerful one that they will receive at the resurrection. He summarizes this contrast by saying that one body is "natural," and the other is "spiritual." Adam and Christ represent these two kinds of bodies—the natural and the spiritual. But Paul also presents Adam and Christ as whole persons, representing others and leading two different orders of life. Adam, the first man, is the head of the natural world. It is now corrupt and mortal due to sin ([Romans 5:12-19](#)). Christ, the second and last Adam, is the representative head of the spiritual, heavenly order characterized by life, power, and glory. The passage contrasts two world orders: the original creation and its fulfillment in a new creation. Each began with an Adam.

Two more points are important for understanding the new creation message in Paul's writings and the rest of the New Testament.

1. Christ's resurrection forms the foundation of the believer's resurrection. As the last Adam, he became a life-giving Spirit through his resurrection ([1 Corinthians 15:45](#)). The focus is on the unity between Christ's resurrection and that of believers (compare with [1 Corinthians 15:12-20](#); [Colossians 1:18](#)). According to the New Testament, the new creation is a present reality that started with Christ's resurrection.
2. [1 Corinthians 15:45](#) shows the unity of the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit in giving life. It says the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power behind the new creation (see [Hebrews 6:5](#)). Wherever the Spirit works as the gift of the glorified Christ, the new creation is present.

The new creation fulfills what the Old Testament promised and anticipated. It has already begun through the work of Christ (the last Adam), especially through his death and resurrection. It will be completed upon his return. Meanwhile, we live in a time where the two creations coexist—the new has started, while the old continues to fade away ([1 Corinthians 7:31](#)). The concept of new creation ties in with God's kingdom, a theme central to Jesus's teachings in the Synoptic Gospels. The kingdom, tied to Jesus's work, is both present ([Matthew 12:28](#); [13:11](#), [16-17](#)) and future ([Matthew 8:11](#); [25:34](#)). Judaism, Jesus, and the early church (see [Matthew 12:32](#); [Ephesians 1:21](#)) spoke of two ages: this age and the "age to come." They viewed the "age to come" as the new creation. The term "new creation" signifies a complete transformation. It suggests that redemption means renewing everything ([Revelation 21:5](#)).

### **New Creation and the Church**

In the New Testament, believers unite with Christ and enjoy his salvation. Since Christ died and rose again, joining him means becoming part of a new creation ([2 Corinthians 5:15](#)). This new creation, seen in the context of reconciliation, is both personal and cosmic ([2 Corinthians 5:17-19](#)).

In the only other New Testament occurrence of the expression "new creation" is in [Galatians 6:15](#), the



context is cosmic and personal. Believers united with Christ in his crucifixion now belong to a new creation. Here, distinctions like circumcision are irrelevant. The new creation is against the world, and the believer has been crucified with Christ ([Galatians 6:14](#); compare [Colossians 2:20](#)). "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!" ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)).

Resurrection is not only a future hope for believers but a present reality; they have already been raised with Christ ([Ephesians 2:5-6](#); compare [Colossians 2:12-13](#); [3:1](#)). Believers are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works" ([Ephesians 2:10](#)). The church is the new covenant reality, the "new man," made up of both Jews and Gentiles ([Ephesians 2:15](#)). The Holy Spirit renews its members ([2 Corinthians 4:16](#)). They start to reflect Christ's image ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#); [4:4-6](#); compare [Romans 8:29](#); [Ephesians 4:24](#); [Colossians 3:10](#)). This process will finish at Christ's return ([1 Corinthians 15:49](#)). Christ's image takes shape in believers completely. New Testament ethics stem from this new creation. Believers are urged to live according to their new identity in Christ ([Romans 12:2](#); [Colossians 2:20](#)).

### The Future of the New Creation

While the new creation is a present reality, it is also a future hope. Believers live "by faith, not by sight" ([2 Corinthians 5:7](#)). They look forward to Christ's return and to Isaiah's prophecy of "a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells" ([2 Peter 3:13](#); [Revelation 21:1-4](#)). In this new creation, sin and its effects will be no more.

This hope raises questions about the link between the final order and the original creation. [2 Peter 3:10-12](#) and [Revelation 21](#) and [22](#) describe destruction by fire. They suggest a complete end, as there is no sun, moon, or night (see [Revelation 6:12-14](#)). But, some interpret these as figurative. Natural and spiritual bodies differ before and after resurrection ([1 Corinthians 15:44](#)). But they remain connected. The body, now decayed and weak, is buried in dishonor. It will rise, incorruptible, glorious, and powerful. The same applies to creation. All creation's eager longing and groaning is not for destruction. It is for freedom from decay. It aims to share in the glory of God's children, revealed in the resurrection ([Romans 8:19-23](#)). The new creation is not just a return to the past. It is a renewal, the peak of God's plans. It was realized through Christ's redemption, despite human sin and its effects.

See Adam (Person); Creation; Eternal Life; Man, Old and New; New; New Heavens and New Earth.

## New Gate

One of the gates of the temple during Jeremiah's ministry ([Jer 26:10](#); [36:10](#)).

## New Heavens and New Earth

The concept of a new or renewed universe first found in the book of Isaiah. God declares, "For behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind... For just as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, will endure before Me...so your descendants and your name will endure" ([Isaiah 65:17](#); [66:22](#)).

Some scholars believe that, before Isaiah's time, many cultures thought the end of history would be like its beginning. This would lead to a universal restoration. The Bible describes a supernatural world renewal. It occurs in a higher, different realm.

The belief that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth is central to all biblical teachings. "In the beginning You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands" ([Psalm 102:25](#)). Since God created the heavens and the earth, it is fitting that, once they have served their purpose, God can do with them as He wishes. "They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing You will change them, and they will be passed on" ([Psalm 102:26](#)). The same metaphor is found in [Isaiah 51:6](#), where the earth is described as wearing out like a garment.

The Bible discusses the end of the old order. It speaks of a time when heaven and earth will vanish ([Isaiah 34:4](#); [51:6](#); [Matthew 24:35](#); [Revelation 21:1](#)). Several phrases express this idea:

1. "The world is passing away" ([1 John 2:17](#))
2. "The earth will wear out like a garment" ([Hebrews 1:11](#); compare [Psalm 102:26](#); [Isaiah 51:6](#))

3. “But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and its works will be laid bare” ([2 Peter 3:10](#))
4. This destruction by fire will occur at the time of final judgment. It will be “the day when God will set the heavens on fire and the elements will melt away in the flames” ([2 Peter 3:12](#))

This judgment, which brings an end to the old order, prepares the way for new heavens and a new earth. Peter continues, “But in keeping with God’s promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” ([2 Peter 3:13](#)). It will be so wonderful that no one will even remember the old ([Isaiah 65:17](#)). Peter, preaching in Solomon’s Colonnade, says that Jesus will remain in heaven until the time comes for establishing all that God spoke by his holy prophets ([Acts 3:21](#)). The created order eagerly awaits this recovery or renewal. Paul writes, “For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are” ([Romans 8:19](#)) because “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” ([Romans 8:21](#)).

The renewed heaven is not God's presence. It is the starry universe, the heaven of human existence. The book of Revelation says the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven to earth ([Revelation 21:2, 10](#)). It is the eternal home of God and his people. The new earth will be a place of perfect righteousness ([Isaiah 51:6](#)), divine kindness ([Isaiah 54:10](#)), eternal relationship to God ([Isaiah 66:22](#)), and total freedom from sin ([Romans 8:21](#)).

*See also* Eschatology; Heaven; Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven; New; New Creation, New Creature.

## New Jerusalem

*See* Jerusalem, New.

## New Man, New Person

Expression used by the apostle Paul to refer to Jesus Christ and his body, the church ([Eph 2:15](#)). *See* Man, Old and New.

## New Moon

Monthly celebration involving grain offerings, burnt sacrifices, and trumpet blasts. *See* Feasts and Festivals of Israel; Moon.

## New Testament

*See* Bible.

## New Testament Canon

*See* Bible, Canon of the.

## New Testament Chronology

*See* Timeline of the Bible (New Testament).

## Neziah

Forefather of a family of temple servants who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel following the Babylonian captivity ([Ezr 2:54](#); [Neh 7:56](#)).

## Nezib

One of the cities in the lowland allotted to Judah for an inheritance ([Jos 15:43](#)). Its site is identified with modern Khirbet Beit Nesib, east of Lachish.

## Nibhaz

The name of a god worshiped by displaced Avvites after they were forcibly resettled in Samaria by the Assyrians in 722 BC. They brought the worship of this idol, as well as that of Tartak, with them at that time ([2 Kgs 17:31](#)). Although purported to be of Mesopotamian origin, this is not likely because the worshipers were Syrian. The word Nibhaz may be a Hebrew corruption of “altar” and hence a

reference to a deified altar that was the object of worship.

## Nibshan

One of the six cities in the wilderness allotted to Judah for an inheritance ([Jos 15:62](#)).

## Nicanor

1. The son of Patroclus, “one of the king’s chief friends” ([2 Maccabees 8:9](#)). He was a Syrian general who served under two kings: Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Demetrius Soter. Nicanor may have been the supreme commander over Ptolemy and Gorgias in Lysias’s first campaign against Judas Maccabeus ([1 Maccabees 3:38ff.](#)) This was during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Nicanor died in the battle at Adasa and Beth-horon in 161 BC. According to 2 Maccabees, Judas hung the head of Nicanor from the citadel (a fortress in Jerusalem) as a clear proof of the God’s victory ([15:35](#)).
2. One of the seven men chosen by the early church to manage the daily distribution of food to the poor believers in Jerusalem ([Acts 6:5](#)). These seven men were selected to ensure that widows and others in need received fair treatment in the daily distribution of food.

## Nicodemus

Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin mentioned only in John’s Gospel ([Jn 3:1-15](#); [7:50-52](#); [19:39-41](#)). According to [John 3](#), Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and acknowledged him as a teacher sent by God. He was convinced that Jesus could not perform such things if God were not with him. Following an exchange concerning the need to be born again, Jesus asked how Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish religious court, could fail to understand such things. At that time he evidently

made no profession of faith, but later he did defend Jesus before the Sanhedrin ([7:50-52](#)). After Jesus’ death, Nicodemus openly assisted Joseph of Arimathea with the burial of his body ([19:39-42](#)).

Some scholars suggest that Nicodemus was one of the Jewish leaders who believed in Jesus but did not confess him openly for fear of excommunication ([12:42](#)). Tradition subsequently held that he belonged to the household of faith, as one persuaded to believe through the message and deeds of Jesus, but remained intimidated by the religious establishment.

*See also* John, Gospel of.

## Nicolaitans

The Nicolaitans were heretical sect in the early church (a group that taught false things). The book of Revelation mentions them by name twice. Jesus praised the church at Ephesus for hating the works of the Nicolaitans ([Revelation 2:6](#)). And Jesus criticized the church at Pergamum for having some members who followed the teaching of the Nicolaitans (verse [15](#)).

### *The Sins of the Nicolaitans*

The specific sins condemned at Pergamum were the eating of food sacrificed to idols and the practice of immorality. These were also present at Thyatira ([Revelation 2:20](#)). Many people think that the woman called Jezebel was a leader of the Nicolaitans in Thyatira. In the letter to Pergamum, Christ equates their sins with the teaching of Balaam ([Revelation 2:14](#); compare [Numbers 25:1-2](#); [31:16](#); [2 Peter 2:15](#); [Jude 1:11](#)). Balaam advised Balak, the king of the Moabites, on how to make Israel fall. Balaam told Balak to invite the Israelites to worship Moabite gods and marry Moabite women. These marriages led to sexual immorality connected with Moabite religious practices. Then the Jews would have separated themselves from God and his protection. In Jewish thought, Balaam was a symbol of all that led people to bad behavior and turning away from God. The ungodly practices at Thyatira are called the “deep things of Satan” ([Revelation 2:24](#)).

The early church faced threats from idol worship and sexual immorality that were common in the world at that time. The New Testament gives many warnings about these problems. The Jerusalem Council told Gentile believers to avoid eating food

offered to idols and to avoid sexual immorality ([Acts 15:20](#)). The apostle Paul called for a voluntary avoidance of this kind of food. This was for the sake of those who were weak or immature in the faith ([1 Corinthians 8](#)). He strongly condemned actual participation in idol feasts ([1 Corinthians 10:14-22](#)). He also condemned sexual immorality in general and temple prostitution specifically ([6:12-20](#)).

### *Who Were the Nicolaitans?*

It is more difficult to know exactly who the Nicolaitans were. The early church fathers often identified them as followers of Nicolaus of Antioch. Nicolaus was a gentile (non-Jewish person) who had converted to the Jewish faith. He then became a Christian and was chosen as one of the first seven deacons ([Acts 6:5](#)). Both Irenaeus and Hippolytus (early church leaders) believed that Nicolaus had fallen away from the faith. Clement (another church leader) claimed that the false teaching and immoral Nicolaitans were not actual followers of Nicolaus but falsely claimed him as their teacher. However, there is no direct evidence available.

many scholars have thought the name "Nicolaitans" might be a Greek translation of the Hebrew name "Balaam." This fits with the symbolic nature of Revelation and the apparent connection between the two names in the letter to Pergamum ([Revelation 2:14-15](#)).

## Nicolas, Nicolaus

Nicolas was one of the seven men named in [Acts 6:5](#) who was chosen to serve in the early Jerusalem church. His job, as specified in [Acts 6:1-4](#), was to make sure food was distributed fairly and equally among all church members. People traditionally call these seven men "deacons" (which means "servers") because [Acts 6:1](#) uses terms like "daily distribution" or "service" and [6:2](#) uses phrases like "to wait on tables" or "to serve."

Nicolas is the last name in the list. The Bible identifies him as a proselyte, which means he was a gentile (non-Jewish person) who had converted to Judaism before becoming a Christian. He had a Greek name, and his home city was Antioch. The New Testament does not give us any more information about him.

*See also* Deacon, Deaconess.

## Nicopolis

Name meaning "Victory City." Nicopolis was a popular choice in the Roman Empire when a newly founded city needed a name. Towns built to honor a military victory during times of war were often named Nicopolis.

In his letter to Titus, Paul tells him to leave Crete, where he had been ministering ([Titus 1:5](#)). Paul told Titus to make his way to Nicopolis, where the apostle was working and planned to spend the winter ([3:12](#)). Of the nine Nicopolises throughout the Roman Empire, Paul almost certainly meant the city located northwest of the Gulf of Corinth and southeast of the promontory of Epirus. A promontory is a high piece of land that sticks out into a body of water, like a peninsula or a cliff overlooking the sea.

Octavian, who would later become the first ruler of the Roman Empire, founded this city in 31 BC to celebrate his victory over Mark Antony in the great battle of Actium fought nearby. Nicopolis was Greek both in name and government. It was the center of a number of nearby towns. The new Nicopolis was a very large city with a level of independence similar to the nearby city of Athens. Temples, theaters, a stadium, and an aqueduct were built. Games were instituted for the four yearly festivals. Nicopolis's most famous citizen, Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher, lived there around AD 90. Paul shared the good news in this big city and in its smaller neighboring communities.

## Niger

A family name of Simeon, who was one of the leaders in the church at Antioch ([Acts 13:1](#)).

*See* Simeon (Person) #4.

## Night

The name Scripture gives to the time of darkness from dusk until dawn when no light of the sun is visible. For example:

- Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt by night ([Matthew 2:14](#)).
- The shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks at night ([Luke 2:8](#)).
- Nicodemus came to see Jesus at night ([John 3:2](#)).
- An angel from the Lord came and opened the prison doors at night in order to let the disciples out ([Acts 5:19](#)).

### *What Is Night in the Bible?*

According to [Genesis 1](#), God implemented the day-night cycle, and "night" was the name given to the period of darkness ([Genesis 1:5](#)). God put the lights in the heavens, appointing the sun to rule the day, and the moon to dominate the night (verses [16-18](#)). The covenant (special agreement) of the Lord is the basis of the regularity of the rotation of day and night.

### *How Was Night Measured?*

The night in the Old Testament was divided into three periods or "watches." "Watch" may have come from the practice of changing the guard or watcher at these times. Gideon's 300 men blew their trumpets and broke their pitchers at the beginning of the middle watch ([Judges 7:19](#)). Although no references in the Old Testament give the limits of these three periods, night was considered to begin at sunset. So three watches would have been something like:

- 6:00 to 10:00 pm
- 10:00 pm to 2:00 am
- 2:00 to 6:00 am

Later, Roman calculations divided the night into four watches. Some historians think they began at:

- 9:30 pm
- midnight
- 2:30 am
- 5:00 am

Others think that the nighttime period between 6:00 pm and 6:00 am was divided equally into four periods:

- the first beginning at 6:00 pm
- the second at 9:00 pm
- the third at midnight
- and the fourth at 3:00 am

[Mark 13:35](#) contains the popular designations for these four watches:

- late in the day (early evening)
- midnight
- the cock-crowing
- early in the morning

Apparently, [Matthew 14:25](#) and [Mark 6:48](#) follow the Roman calculation Jesus's walking on the water is set at about the fourth watch of the night.

### *Other Uses of "Night"*

A specialized use of the words "night" and "day" emphasizes the period of a continuing activity. For example, the man with an unclean spirit is said to have been in the mountains and in the tombs "night and day" ([Mark 5:5](#)). Paul refers to his having labored, working night and day, so not to burden to the church ([1 Thessalonians 2:9](#)). Later in the same book he refers to how he prays night and day ([3:10](#)).

Along with this literal usage of the word "night," there is also a figurative or metaphorical usage. In some references it refers to divine judgment ([Amos 5:8-9](#); [Micah 3:6](#)). Jesus uses "night" to refer to death ([John 9:4](#)). Once the night (death) comes, the time for working is over.

Paul compares this present age (soon to be over with) to the night that is almost gone ([Romans 13:12](#)). Again, Paul speaks of himself and his readers as children of the light and of the day, not the night and darkness ([1 Thessalonians 5:5](#)). In this context, Paul links night with separation from God, sin, lack of self-control, and careless living. Night is also connected with spiritual blindness and ignorance, especially about the Lord's return.

*See also Day.*

## **Night Hag**

The night hag is mentioned in some translations of the Bible as a creature living in desert areas ([Isaiah](#)



[34:14](#)). In modern Bible translations, this creature is usually understood to be a type of owl. Different translations use various names for this bird, including "night creature," "night bird," or "screech owl."

*See Scops Owl.*

## Night Hawk

The night hawk, also called the goatsucker, is a migratory bird that hunts insects at night. It is dark in color and has short legs. It is similar to the American whippoorwill.

Night hawks belong to the genus *Caprimulgus*. They look like owls, with flat heads, large eyes, and soft feathers. They fly quietly. During the day, they rest on branches. At night, they catch insects while flying.

The name "goatsucker" comes from an ancient belief that these birds drank milk from goats, which is not true.

The Bible lists the night hawk as an unclean bird in the law of Moses ([Leviticus 11:16](#); [Deuteronomy 14:15](#)). Some scholars think the text refers to an owl. The Berean Standard Bible the word is translated "screech owl." But many accept the translation "night hawk."

*See also Birds.*

## Night Monster

A term used in some Bible translations for a bird that lives in desert areas ([Isaiah 34:14](#)). Modern translations usually identify this creature as an owl. In other translations, this same creature is called a "night creature," "night hag," or "screech owl."

*See Birds (Owl, Scops).*

## Nile River

Life-giving river of Egypt in northeast Africa. Perhaps no other river has been so vital to the history of the nation through which it flows. With an attributed length of some 4,160 miles (6,693.4 kilometers), the Nile is the longest river in the world, although its drainage system is ranked third

(other sources say sixth) in area (nearly 1.3 million square miles, or 3.4 million square kilometers).

The origin and meaning of the name "Nile" are unknown. To the ancient Egyptians the Nile was simply "the river." The Egyptians found it hard to conceive of any river different from the Nile, so when they reached the Euphrates, they assumed it was running backward, since it flowed south, whereas the Nile flows north.

### Unusual Features

Among the characteristics that distinguish the Nile are its six cataracts, areas where the river has failed to erode a clear channel through hard rock formations. These are numbered from north to south, in order of their discovery by modern explorers. The first cataract is at Aswan in Egypt, near the famous islands of Elephantine and Philae. The other five cataracts lie in the Sudan, with the second just above the city of Wadi Halfa.

Another distinguishing feature of the Nile is that it flows from south to north. This was of importance to Egyptian river transport, for sailing vessels could take advantage of the prevailing north wind for going upstream, while the current propelled travelers downstream.

The Nile River determined the three seasons of about four months each: (1) inundation (mid-July to mid-November); (2) winter (mid-November to mid-March); (3) summer (mid-March to mid-July).

The inundation culminated in late October, softening the soil of the agricultural land for planting.

### Course and Tributaries

The Nile has two main streams named for their respective colors, the White Nile and the Blue Nile. These streams owe their existence to the annual rains in equatorial Africa.

The White Nile has its origin in the lake country. Lake Victoria is usually said to be its source, but some geographers pinpoint the source as a little stream that flows into the lake. The only outlet at Lake Victoria is the Victoria Nile, northeast of the lake at Ripon Falls.

The most important junction of the river is at Khartoum, where the Blue Nile and White Nile are united. At this point one can often clearly see the color difference in the waters of the two rivers.

The Blue Nile, only about 850 miles (1,367.7 kilometers) long, originates at Lake Tana in the highlands of Ethiopia. A much more precipitous stream than the White Nile, it is also dependent upon the rainy season in the high country. The White Nile begins its flooding first, but when the onrush of the Blue Nile sets in, it holds in check the water of the White Nile. During flood season, the Blue Nile has twice the volume of the White Nile and provides the greater part of the alluvium that built up the soil of Egypt.

To the north of Khartoum is the sixth cataract, the first of the natural barriers. The Atbara, the last tributary of the Nile, enters from the east. At the fourth cataract, near Napata, is a group of cemeteries and ruins associated with the Ethiopian or Kushite (25th) dynasty of Egypt. Farther downstream is the important archaeological site of Kerma, where the Egyptians maintained a trading post during the Middle Kingdom.

Downstream from the second cataract is the celebrated temple of Abu Simbel, the work of Ramses II, with the smaller temple honoring Nefertari, his wife. These temples were moved to the cliff above their original position before Lake Nasser engulfed the site.

Just above Aswan and the first cataract is the new High Dam and the older Aswan Dam. Between the two dams is the island of Philae, with its well-known temples. A short distance above the Delta lies Cairo and the Giza pyramids, and farther south are the ruins of Memphis, the first capital of Egypt.

The Delta measures some 125 by 115 miles (201.1 by 185.0 kilometers). Seven ancient streams of the Nile found their way into the sea, but there are only two modern ones: the Rosetta on the west, which gave the name to the Rosetta Stone, and the Damietta to the East.

### *Importance to Egypt*

Without the water of the river, life would be impossible in northeast Africa, and the civilizations of Egypt could not have come into being. The Greek writers, first Hecataeus and later Herodotus, commented that Egypt is the gift of the Nile. The fertile soil of Egypt, which has produced such abundant crops over so long a span of time, is the alluvium laid down by the river over the course of centuries. Not only was the river the source of the soil itself, but with the annual inundation the Nile fertilized the land by bringing down new alluvium and by depositing organic materials. At the same

time, the inundation thoroughly soaked the soil, so that it was possible to produce good crops with a minimum of effort expended on irrigation.

The Nile also satisfied many personal needs of the people, providing drinking water and a washing place for both the people and their clothing. In ancient times, even members of the royal family came to the river to bathe (see [Ex 2:5](#); [8:20](#)).

The Nile teemed with fish and waterfowl, and sport fishing (mostly spearfishing) and waterfowling were traditional diversions of the upper classes. Fish and fowl were also regular food, especially for the wealthy. A more hazardous sport, in which nobles traditionally engaged, was the hunting of hippopotami in reed watercraft with harpoons.

The Nile was the primary means of communication, with boats plying up and down its channels. Riverboats of large size moved goods from one end to the other. The building of temples, palaces, and tombs throughout the land demanded the moving of granite for hundreds of miles along the river.

The river was also a feature of the religious life of the Egyptians. The river was deified in the form of the god Hapi, a man who is shown in the various forms of art as having pendulous breasts and a somewhat corpulent body, probably to represent luxuriant overabundance, along with the fish and vegetation from the river.

### *The Nile and the Bible*

The biblical references to the Nile River are naturally found in those parts of the Bible that have to do directly with Egypt, which means that many occur in the Joseph narrative in the latter part of Genesis and in the account of the Israelite bondage in Egypt and subsequent exodus in the early chapters of Exodus.

The first reference to the Nile appears in the mysterious dream of Pharaoh ([Gn 41](#)). In his dream the king stood on the riverbank and saw seven well-fed cows, followed by seven lean cows, which came out of the river and devoured the fat cattle (cf. [41:1-4, 17-21](#)). This agrees with grazing practices of ancient Egypt and coincides with the depiction of cattle on the funerary monuments.

During the sojourn in Egypt, when the Israelites multiplied and became a possible threat to Egyptian security, Pharaoh decreed that every Israelite male child should be thrown into the river upon birth ([Ex 1:22](#)). This led to the events that marked the early life of Moses.

Moses declared the judgments of the Lord at the river ([7:15](#); [8:20](#)). The first plague, the turning of water to blood ([7:15-24](#); [17:5](#); [Ps 78:44](#)), was directed against the river and against the Nile god, Hapi. The second plague (frogs) was also associated with the river ([8:3](#), [5](#), [9](#), [11](#)), for the swarms of frogs came up out of the river and enveloped the land (cf. [Ps 78:45](#)), discrediting the frog-headed goddess Heket.

There are numerous references to the Nile in the books of prophecy. Isaiah often mentions the Nile, but not always in the same context. In [7:18](#) Isaiah writes that Israel would be invaded and humiliated by armies from the Nile. In the “oracle concerning Egypt” ([Is 19](#)), the prophet foresees both evil and good for the land of the Nile. The natural vegetation and sown crops along the river will be destroyed, while the fishermen will lament. These dire prospects are offset by the prediction of final blessing for Egypt.

In the burden of Tyre ([Is 23](#)) the revenue of the Sidonian merchants was “the harvest of the Nile” ([v 3](#)), indicating the importance of agricultural produce in the Nile valley. In verse [10](#), Tyre casts off all restraint and is told to overflow the land like the Nile, for the Lord is bringing the pride of Tyre to an end. Jeremiah also predicted a severe defeat for Egypt and speaks of Egypt rising like the Nile, like rivers whose waters surge ([Jer 46:7-8](#)).

The prophecy of Ezekiel concerning Egypt ([Ez 29](#)) singles out Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and describes him in figures of speech drawn from the Nile. He is described as the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams—a reference to the mighty crocodile. Pharaoh boasts, “My Nile is my own,” but the Lord said that he would put hooks into the king’s jaws and draw him out of the water of his streams with all of the fish sticking to his scales. The king and the fish of the streams will perish in the wilderness. Because of the proud boasts of the king, the Lord declares that he is against him and his streams and that Egypt will become a desolation and a waste.

Amos described the northern kingdom of Israel as being tossed about, and sinking again, like the Nile of Egypt ([Am 8:8](#); [9:5](#)). Finally, Zechariah spoke of an ingathering of Israel by the Lord and comments that in this process the Nile would be dried up ([Zec 10:11](#)).

Although the prophetic references to the Nile primarily deal with severe judgments, the prophets

looked forward to a time beyond judgment to eventual blessing for this land of the Nile.

*See also* Egypt, Egyptian.

## Nimrah

Another name for Beth-nimrah, a city in Moab ([Numbers 32:3](#)).

*See* Beth-nimrah.

## Nimrim, Waters of

One of the places in the southern extremity of Moab denounced by Isaiah ([Is 15:6](#)) and Jeremiah ([Jer 48:34](#)) in their oracles of judgment against the nation. The waters of Nimrim were spring-fed streams originating in the Transjordanian hills, following a northwesterly track down into the Arabah Valley, and eventually emptying into the southeast corner of the Dead Sea. The region surrounding the streams was evidently well known for its lush vegetation (see [Is 15:6](#)). This watercourse is probably identifiable with the modern Wadi en-Numeirah positioned about eight miles (12.9 kilometers) north of the Brook Zered.

## Nimrod

Cush’s son and grandson of Ham the son of Noah ([Gn 10:8](#); [1 Chr 1:10](#)). He is described as “the first man of might on earth” and “a mighty hunter” ([Gn 10:8-9](#)). Nimrod was the first to establish a great empire and was a well-known hunter. Tradition makes him ruler over Babylon and Akkad in southern Mesopotamia, and over Nineveh in Assyria. The phrase “land of Nimrod” seems to be synonymous with Assyria ([Mi 5:6](#)).

The OT references to Nimrod indicate that in ancient tradition he was a man of indomitable personality, possessing extraordinary talents and powers. Some scholars identify him with a Mesopotamian king who united Assyria and Babylon in the 13th century BC. This conflicts with the statement connecting him with Cush the son of Ham and pointing to an association with the south of Egypt where Cush was located ([Gn 10:8](#)).

The name and fame of Nimrod have a secure place in Talmudic Judaism and in Islamic tradition. In the former he personifies both rebellion against God

and military might in the earth. In rabbinic tradition, the Tower of Babel ([Gn 11:1-9](#)) is “the house of Nimrod” where idolatry was practiced and divine homage offered to Nimrod. In Islam, Nimrod persecutes Abraham and has him thrown into a fiery furnace.

## Nimshi

Father of Jehoshaphat and grandfather of Jehu, who was king of Israel ([1 Kgs 19:16](#); [2 Kgs 9:2-20](#); [2 Chr 22:7](#)).

## Nineveh, Ninevite

One of the capitals of the Assyrian Empire and, at the height of that empire, one of the great cities of the world. Nineveh was situated in what is now northern Iraq and is represented today by the mounds of Kouyunjik and Nebi Yunus to the east of the Tigris River and opposite the main part of the city of Mosul.

The larger mound, Kouyunjik, to the northwest (approximately a mile by 650 yards [1.6 kilometers by 594.4 meters] in area and some 90 feet [27.4 meters] in height above the plain), is separated from Nebi Yunus by the Khosr River. A village, a cemetery, and a mosque said to contain the tomb of Jonah occupy Nebi Yunus, preventing extensive archaeological work.

Nineveh's surrounding brick wall, about 8 miles (12.9 kilometers) long with 15 gates (of which 5 have been excavated) was guarded by the colossal stone bulls that typify Assyrian city architecture of this period.

### History

The occupation of the site dates to prehistoric times (c. 4500 BC), in agreement with the record of the founding of the city in [Genesis 10](#). Materials from the various early cultures (Hassuna, Samarra, Halaf, Ubaid) have been found at Nineveh.

Sargon of Akkad (mid-24th century BC) was acquainted with Nineveh, which flourished during his time. A record from the reign of a later king, Shamsi-Adad I (c. 1800 BC), relates that a son of Sargon, Manishtusu, restored the temple of Ishtar at Nineveh.

Ishtar (Inanna), the goddess of love and war, was a fitting deity for the rapacious and warlike

Assyrians. Many other deities were worshiped at Nineveh, and gates of the city were named after them. The Assyrians worshiped at the temple of Nabu, the god of writing and of arts and sciences, who reflects the Assyrian interest in records, literature, and sculpture in relief and in the round.

Shamsi-Adad I and Hammurabi also restored the temple of Ishtar at Nineveh, Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I enlarged and strengthened the city, and other rulers built their palaces here—Tiglath-pileser I, Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC), and Sargon II (722–705 BC). But Sennacherib (705–681 BC) made Nineveh the capital and went to great lengths to beautify the city. In addition to his famous palace, he undertook many projects, rebuilding the city walls, creating parks, making botanical and zoological collections, and constructing aqueducts to bring water for the city from 30 miles (48.3 kilometers) away. To Nineveh came the tribute that the conquering Assyrians exacted from the nations, including Israel and Judah, which fell victim to their awesome armies.

After the assassination of Sennacherib, his son and successor, Esar-haddon (681–669 BC), captured Nineveh from the hands of rebels. He built a palace at Nineveh and had another at Calah, where he spent most of his time.

Esar-haddon's son Ashurbanipal (669–633 BC) made his residence at Nineveh, where he had been educated and trained in sports and military skills. He was something of an antiquarian and mastered the reading of Akkadian and Sumerian. In his palace was housed the famous library for the study of Assyriology. The temple of Nabu contained a library dating at least to the time of Sargon II, but the royal library of Ashurbanipal far surpassed it in size and importance. Sargon and his successors had collected many tablets, but Ashurbanipal sent scribes all over Assyria and Babylonia to gather and to copy tablets, so that tens of thousands of tablets accumulated. Like the library of Nippur, the Nineveh collection covers a great range of materials: business accounts, letters, royal records, historical documents, lexicographical lists and bilingual texts, legends, myths, and various other kinds of religious inscriptions, such as hymns, prayers, and lists of deities and temples. Among the tablets were 7 that preserved a Babylonian creation story and 12 that bore the epic of Gilgamesh, with a version of the Flood. Other writings that sometimes are cited as parallels to Bible accounts include the story of Adapa, with the lost opportunity to achieve immortality, and the



legend of Etana, a shepherd who ascended to heaven.

Ashurbanipal was also well known for his wars and for his cruelty. The palace relief showing a peaceful banquet scene also displays the severed head of an Elamite leader hanging in a tree.

In the later years of the aging king, and after his demise, the vassal kingdoms rebelled. Babylon became independent and joined with the Medes to take Ashur and Calah in 614 BC. Cyaxares the Mede, Nabopolassar of Babylon, and a Scythian force laid siege to Nineveh in 612 BC; the city fell and King Sinshariskum (Sardanapalus) perished in its flames.

Although a Ninevite remnant under Ashuruballit held out at Harran until 609 BC, Nineveh had been destroyed: the divine predictions of the Hebrew prophets had their complete fulfillment.

### *Nineveh and the Bible*

Six books of the OT refer to the city of Nineveh. In Genesis the only mention of Nineveh appears in the table of nations ([Gn 10](#)), which states that Nimrod went out from the land of Shinar to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (vv [11-12](#); the kjv attributes this building to Asshur).

The tribute paid by Menahem ([2 Kgs 15:19-20](#)) and the spoil taken at the fall of Samaria ([Is 8:4](#)) were brought to Nineveh. To this city also came the tribute that Sennacherib received from Hezekiah ([2 Kgs 14-16](#)).

Among the scenes commemorated in the reliefs found in Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh is the depiction of the siege and capture of Lachish (cf. [2 Kgs 19:8](#)). Sennacherib is shown on a throne, with suppliant captives before him. The siege itself is shown in progress, with archers and battering rams on the attack, while defenders on the walls use bows and arrows and firebrands to repulse the onslaught. From one gate people are emerging with bundles on their backs as if in surrender or flight. At the lower right three naked men have been impaled on poles.

On the prism at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and on the Taylor Prism at the British Museum there is Sennacherib's account of this invasion of Judah. Since the Assyrians did not take Jerusalem, Sennacherib had to be content with boasting: "As to Hezekiah the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke. I laid siege to 46 of his strong

cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered them. . . . Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage."

The Assyrian kings associated with Nineveh played an important part in the history of Israel, but the name Nineveh occurs only once in the historical books of the Bible. [Second Kings 19:36](#) states that after the loss of 185,000 soldiers at the hand of the angel of the Lord, Sennacherib went home and stayed in Nineveh. There, in 681 BC, he was murdered by his sons (cf. [2 Kgs 19:37](#); [2 Chr 32:21](#); [Is 37:38](#)).

There are many references to Nineveh in the book of Jonah, for the prophet was expressly sent to that city to warn it of impending judgment. Nineveh is called "that great city" ([Jon 1:2](#); [3:2](#)) and it is described as "a city so large, that it took three days to see it" ([3:3](#)). Nineveh must have included more than the area represented by the mounds of Kouyunjik and Nebi Yunus. Some commentators believe that Nineveh encompassed other cities associated with it, including the "Assyrian triangle," the angle of land between the Tigris and the Great Zab rivers, reaching from Khorsabad in the north to Nimrud in the south.

The Lord speaks of "that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left" ([Jon 4:11](#), rsv). Some writers interpret this statement as indicating the number of innocent children in the city and therefore arrive at a total population of some 600,000 for greater Nineveh. However, it is more reasonable to conclude that the entire population is meant and that the descriptive clause relates to the utter spiritual darkness of the Ninevites—as is translated in the nlt.

Jonah preached a message of judgment and destruction, but the repentance of the city brought about its deliverance ([3:6-10](#)). Nahum declared the final downfall of the city in language that is vivid and stirring. Zephaniah also foretold the doom of Nineveh and prophesied that it would be a desolation, a place for flocks to lie down, as even the casual visitor to the site would note ([Zep 2:13-15](#)).

Nineveh was destroyed by a coalition of Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians. The devastation of the city was overwhelming and complete; within several centuries the very location of the city was forgotten. Xenophon and the Greek armies retreated past the site in 401 BC



without realizing it. In the second century AD the Greek satirist Lucian commented: "Nineveh is so completely destroyed that it is no longer possible to say where it stood. Not a single trace of it remains."

The only NT references to Nineveh in the Gospels also have to do with judgment. Jesus asserted, in response to a demand from the scribes and Pharisees, that an evil generation looks for a sign; as Jonah had been a sign to the Ninevites, so Jesus would be a sign to his generation ([Mt 12:38-40](#); [Lk 11:29-31](#)). He went on to declare that the people of Nineveh would rise at the judgment with his generation and condemn it, for the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah. Now one greater than Jonah had come ([Mt 12:41](#); [Lk 11:32](#)).

*See also* Assyria, Assyrians; Hammurabi, Law Code of.

## Nisan

Nisan is one of the months in the Jewish calendar. The name comes from the ancient language of Babylon ([Nehemiah 2:1](#); [Esther 3:7](#)). According to our modern calendar, Nisan usually occurs during parts of March and April.

*See* Calendars, Ancient and Modern.

## Nisroch

The god of King Sennacherib, in whose temple at Nineveh the king was assassinated by Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons ([2 Kgs 19:37](#); [Is 37:38](#)). Nisroch was the city god of Nineveh, the chief capital of the Assyrian Empire; he was perhaps identical with the Assyrian god Nusku.

*See also* Assyria, Assyrians.

## No

KJV form of Thebes in [Nahum 3:8](#). *See* Thebes.

## No-Amon

Alternate reading for No, the Hebrew name for Thebes, capital of upper Egypt ([Na 3:8](#), nlt mg). *See* Thebes.

## Noadiah

1. Binnui's son and one of the two Levites present when the temple treasure that was brought back to Jerusalem by Ezra was weighed and recorded ([Ezr 8:33](#)).

2. Prophetess who, along with Tobiah, Sanballat, and some false prophets, attempted to intimidate Nehemiah when he was engaged in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls after the exile ([Neh 6:14](#)).

## Noah

1. Son of Lamech and the grandson of Methuselah, a descendant of Seth, third son of Adam ([Genesis 5:3-20](#)). Lamech named his son Noah, a name that sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean "relief" or "comfort." When Lamech gave him this name, he said, "May this one comfort us in the labor and toil of our hands caused by the ground that the LORD has cursed" ([Genesis 5:29](#)).

Determined to destroy creation because of constant wickedness (compare [Matthew 24:37-39](#); [Luke 17:26-27](#)), God made an exception with Noah, a man righteous in God's sight and blameless before people ([Genesis 6:3-9](#)). Noah followed God's precise instructions. He built an ark. Only eight people went inside:

- Noah
- His wife
- His three sons
- Their wives

All kinds of creatures were brought in pairs. They were thus protected from the ensuing deluge in which all other living things perished ([Genesis 6:14-8:19](#)). After they left the ark, Noah built an altar. He sacrificed burnt offerings that pleased God. In response, God promised never to repeat the Flood or disrupt the seasons despite man's sin ([Genesis 8:20-9:17](#)).

Noah had withstood mighty temptations. But, either through carelessness or old age, he became drunk. Reactions varied among family members, prompting individual assessments. Shem and Japheth received blessings. Ham received no blessing, but his son Canaan was cursed ([Genesis 9:20-27](#)). Noah was 950 years old when he died, 350 years after the Flood.

[Ezekiel 14:12-14, 19-20](#) cites Noah, Daniel, and Job for "their righteousness." The Letter to the Hebrews commends Noah, who, by faith and holy fear, rejected the world and became the heir of righteousness ([Hebrews 11:7](#)), and [2 Peter 2:5](#) calls him "a preacher of righteousness."

*See also* Flood, The; Gilgamesh Epic.

1. Daughter of Zelophehad of Manasseh's tribe ([Numbers 26:33](#)). When their father died without a son, she and her four sisters petitioned for a law to protect their inheritance rights ([Numbers 27:1-11](#); compare [Joshua 17:3-6](#)). They were, however, restricted to marrying within their own tribe ([Numbers 36:1-12](#)).

## Noah's Ark

A large boat described in the Bible, built by Noah to save his family and animals from a great flood ([Genesis 6:14-16](#)).

*See* Noah #1.

## Nob

A city located on the eastern slopes of Mount Scopus opposite the Mount of Olives and northeast of Jerusalem. An important religious center, 86 priests lived in Nob along with the ephod ([1 Samuel 22:13-20](#)). When the Philistines destroyed the sanctuary in Shiloh, Nob became the central sanctuary for the priests who fled Shiloh.

The events of David's visit to Nob bear witness to the ancient customs of the details of the table and the bread of the presence ([Exodus 37:10-16](#); [1 Samuel 21:2-7](#)). Jesus cites David's hunger as a good reason for breaking the Sabbath ([Mark 2:23-28](#)). David, fleeing from Saul and needing food, went into the sanctuary at Nob and took the loaves laid out each Sabbath as an offering to the Lord.

Ahimelech was a descendant of Eli and leader of the priests of Nob. He gave the showbread to David, along with the sword that had killed Goliath. This made Saul angry enough to order the murder of Ahimelech and the massacre of all the priests and citizens of Nob ([1 Samuel 22:6-23](#)). This event led to the king's downfall.

Abiathar, a priest who evaded the massacre, played a prominent role in the reign of David until Solomon eventually removed him from his position ([1 Kings 2:26-27](#)). The phrase "where God was worshiped" may refer to the sanctuary at Nob ([2 Samuel 15:32](#)).

## Nobah (Person)

A man from the tribe of Manasseh. He conquered the town of Kenath, which was located east of the Jordan River. After capturing the town, he renamed it after himself, calling it Nobah ([Numbers 32:42](#)).

## Nobah (Place)

1. A town east of the Jordan river. It was previously called Kenath. The town was given to Nobah the Manassite as his inheritance, and he renamed it after himself ([Numbers 32:42](#)). Nobah might be the same place as Kanatha, which was the easternmost city of the Decapolis during the time when the Romans ruled the area.  
*See also* Decapolis; Kanatha.
2. A place near the Gadite town of Jogbehah east of the Jordan River. It was near the place the judge Gideon ambushed the Midianites ([Judges 8:11](#)).

## Nod

Land east of Eden to which Cain went after he murdered his brother Abel ([Gn 4:16](#)).

## Nodab, Nodabites

Forefather of an Arabian tribe that joined forces with the Hagarites to fight against the tribes of Israel who were living east of the Jordan ([1 Chr 5:19](#)). Though not included in the list of Ishmael's sons (cf. [Gn 25:13-15](#)), he was perhaps a distant relation.

## Noe

The King James Version spelling of Noah in [Matthew 24:37-38](#) and [Luke 3:36; 17:26-27](#).

See Noah #1.

## Nogah

One of 13 sons of David born in Jerusalem after David established his kingdom ([1 Chr 3:7; 14:6](#)).

## Nohah (Person)

Fourth son of Benjamin ([1 Chr 8:2](#)).

## Nohah (Place)

Place west of Gibeah in Benjamin's territory ([Jgs 20:43](#), rsv). Other translations consider Nohah (meaning "quiet") an adverb and translate it accordingly, "with ease" (kjv), because no town by that name is known.

## Non

KJV form of Nun, Joshua's father, in [1 Chronicles 7:27](#). See Nun.

## Noph

KJV translation of the Hebrew word for Memphis (Egypt). See Memphis.

## Nophah

A place marking the boundaries between Israel and the Moabites and Amorites ([Numbers 21:30](#)). Some

scholars think Nophah is the same as the Nobah of [Judges 8:11](#).

## North, North Country

Cardinal point on a compass opposite the south, often having the connotation of "dark," perhaps because the north side is often in shadow. In biblical literature, notably in the books of Joshua and Ezekiel, the term "north" is used frequently to designate direction, whether of tribal boundaries or of a temple.

An enemy from the north is mentioned at least 40 times in the prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. During the time of the exile (Jeremiah and Ezekiel), it referred to invaders who came from the East, pushed westward north of the Syrian desert, and then turned south to invade Judah from the north. Hence, they were viewed as invading from the "north country"; this latter phrase occurs at least 10 times in Jeremiah and Zechariah.

Jerusalem is vulnerable only from the north. The topography of the country is such that seldom in history has any invader conquered the Holy City from any direction except from the northern approach. The city was protected by deep valleys on each of the other three sides. In biblical times only the Egyptians and the Philistines threatened Jerusalem from the west; even the Philistines, during the time of Saul, were successful only in the areas north of Jerusalem. In Daniel the "king of the north" doubtless refers to Syrian forces in mortal combat with the "king of the south" (Egypt).

## Northeaster

A name given to the stormy wind of [Acts 27:14](#). Paul encountered the northeaster on his journey to Rome. Against Paul's advice, the ship left a harbor near Lasea. They sailed close to the coast of Crete as a gentle breeze pushed them along. Probably when they were less than 14.5 kilometers (9 miles) from shore, a sudden violent storm threatened their small boat.

Luke, who wrote Acts, calls this storm a typhoon (in the King James Version it is called a "tempestuous wind"). The name of this wind was Euroclydon, which means "the southwest wind that stirs up waves."

## Not Loved, Not Pitied

A symbolic name the prophet Hosea gave to his daughter ([Hosea 1:6-8](#)). It was a warning of the coming judgment of God upon Israel.

See Ruhamah.

## Not My People

A symbolic name given by the prophet Hosea to his third son ([Hosea 1:9](#)). It was a warning of the coming judgment of God upon Israel.

See Ammi.

## Numbers and Numerology

In the Bible, numbers often have two meanings. First, they show the actual amount of something, like counting people or measuring time. Second, they can have a special meaning that teaches us about God or his plan.

The books of Daniel and Revelation use numbers in special ways. These books often use specific numbers to share important messages.

Many Christians are cautious about seeing hidden meanings in numbers. This is because some groups overuse numerology. They try to find special meanings in every number in the Old Testament, even when the numbers may simply be factual. This view originally came from mystical, pre-Christian Jewish groups and was later taken further by the Kabbalists, who often assigned hidden meanings to numbers.

### Preview

- Expression of Numbers
- Ways of Writing Numerals
- Problems of Large Numbers
- Counting by Generations
- Approximate Use of Numbers
- Symbolic Use of Numbers
- Exact Statistics
- Numerology

### Expression of Numbers

Hebrew like other Semitic languages has a simple but working numbering system. The number one is an adjective. After that, the numerals are nouns. These nouns are used in parallel masculine and feminine forms. The masculine is used with the feminine noun and vice versa.

Ordinal numbers (first, second, third) exist together with cardinal numbers (one, two, three). As in most languages, the second set can be used instead of the first. For example, "day two" can be used instead of "second day". From ten to 19, there is one composite form formed in the same way as English "thirteen" ("three-ten"), but "twenty" is literally "tens." It is the plural of "ten." Thirty, forty, and so on are literally "threes," "fours." They are the plural of the words "three" and "four," respectively. This continues to a hundred, which is a new word.

There are also separate words for "thousand" and for "ten thousand," as in Greek, Chinese, and many other languages. Larger numbers must be expressed by multiples of these. "Ten thousand times ten thousand" and "thousands of thousands", suggests that large figures were expressed approximately. These large figures were rarely needed for small populations and tiny kingdoms.

Hebrew has a singular and plural form as well as a dual form to express two of anything (two hundred, two thousand). Fractions (a half, a third, a tenth) can be expressed. Multiplication, division, addition, and subtraction were used. Instances of all four operations can be found in the Bible. The Hebrew mathematical system was basically part of the larger western Asian mathematical system. We know a lot about this system from Mesopotamia.

and Egypt. These countries, however, used a more highly developed mathematical system than Israel.

### *Ways of Writing Numerals*

In the Bible, numbers are always written out in words. This is also seen on the famous Moabite Stone and the Siloam Inscription. Every nation in the ancient world could also express numbers by using figures or codes of various kinds (like our 1, 2, 3). Because of this danger of error, in later days numbers were normally written out in full using words. Confusion was still possible but was not nearly so likely.

An additional way of writing numbers in Hebrews and Greek was the use of consecutive letters of the alphabet instead of consecutive numerals. This would be like using A for 1 and B for 2. This system was in wide use by New Testament times. It is the usual system in modern Hebrew. It has the advantage that numerical combinations can be pronounced by inserting arbitrary vowels, thus making artificial words. For example, if the number of the beast in [Revelation 13:18](#). The 666 can be expressed in alphabetical letters, with the consonants of "Nero Caesar." Other names are possible, especially if the variant reading 616 is used.

### *Problems of Large Numbers*

Even allowing for all these possibilities, there remain certain problems connected with large numbers, particularly in the Old Testament. The most obvious is that of the ten long-lived patriarchs, whose ages are recorded in [Genesis 5](#). Different figures (varying by whole centuries) are recorded for their ages in the Hebrew text, the Samaritan text, and the earliest Greek translation (known as the Septuagint). All of these ages are very large.

Some interpret these figures literally. They point out that there is a steady reduction from the ages attained by these patriarchs to the more modest 120 years allotted to humanity in Noah's time ([Genesis 6:3](#)). This is reduced to the 70 years accepted later as the human life span ([Psalms 90:10](#)). This would correspond to the progressive spiritual deterioration of mankind after the fall, from the perfect state of Adam to the present condition. Whatever the explanation of the figures, there is no doubt that this is the theological intent of the Bible.

The large number of Israelites who left Egypt is also problematic. If there were actually 600,000 fighting men ([Numbers 1:46](#)), this would correspond to a whole nation of some 2 million or more. Possibly the word translated "thousand" means "clan units." It would clearly be a much smaller total body, whatever its exact size. Of course, God could have maintained any number of people in the desert. The evidence of archaeology as to the population of Canaan both before and after the Israelite onslaught seems to support a lower number. The same principle might explain the large numbers given for the fighting men of the various Israelite tribes. It also could apply to the huge totals for Israel and Judah's military strength given at later times in the historical books of the Old Testament.

To the ordinary Bible reader or hearer, perhaps one of the biggest problems is the different numbers recorded in Chronicles and Kings. The numbers differ when the same incidents are being described. Manuscript errors, or confusion of numbers written by signs or single letters of the alphabet, may account for numerous individual inconsistencies. They do not explain all the differences. The figures in Chronicles are consistently much larger. These very large round numbers may have symbolic significance and may not be intended to be taken in their literal sense at all. The Jews had before them the book of Kings and the book of Chronicles at the same time. They can hardly have taken both sets of numbers literally themselves.

### *Counting by Generations*

One of the problems of the Old Testament is the dating of events. Even with an exact number system, there is no absolute fixed point from which to reckon. Later Jews and Christians counted from the presumed date of the creation. After the time of David and Solomon both internal references and external references are used. Internal references consist of the comparative dates of kings of Judah and Israel. External references concern kings and queens outside Israel.

This open-endedness accounts for the vague period of "forty years." It is used often in the Old Testament (for example the book of Judges) for any long but unknown period. It almost certainly corresponds to a generation (Hebrew, *dor*). Counting by generations is specific in some places in the Bible and may be implicit in others. For instance, Abraham's descendants are to return to



Canaan “in the fourth generation” ([Genesis 15:16](#)). The list of ancestors of Christ is neatly constructed on a pattern of three groups of fourteen generations ([Matthew 1:17](#)), rather than on periods of years.

Wherever people use and recite lists of ancestors, such counting by generations is natural. But Abraham’s descendants are said to have returned to Canaan approximately four centuries later ([Galatians 3:17](#)). The word “generation” sometimes stands for 100 years. The Hebrew word for “generation” may mean 120 years ([Genesis 6:3](#)). Usually, the ancient Hebrews used vague phrases like “in those days” or “after those days” or “the days are coming.” These phrases expressed past, present, and future without any specific mention of number. In other words, the Bible writers were more concerned with theology than with mathematics.

### *Approximate Use of Numbers*

In the Old Testament, Israel’s 40 years in the desert is a good example of the approximate use of numbers ([Numbers 14:33](#)). In the New Testament, Jesus was in the wilderness 40 days during the temptation ([Matthew 4:2](#)). There were 40 days between his resurrection and ascension ([Acts 1:3](#)).

Moses was 40 years old at his call ([Acts 7:23](#)). He apparently lived 40 years in Midian ([Exodus 7:7](#)). He spent 40 years leading Israel out of Egypt and through the desert ([Deuteronomy 34:7](#)). Therefore, he is said to be 120 years old at his death. However, two generations of 40 years is the normal maximum for a healthy man ([Psalms 90:10](#)). This is often shortened to 70 years by the difficulties of life. Seventy is also used at times in this approximate sense.

### *Symbolic Use of Numbers*

In Scripture, seven symbolizes completeness or perfection. On the seventh day God rested from his labors and creation was finished ([Genesis 2:2](#)). Pharaoh in his dream saw seven cattle coming from the Nile ([41:2](#)). Samson’s holy Nazirite hair was braided in seven braids ([Judges 16:13](#)). Seven devils left Mary of Magdala, signifying the totality of her previous possession by Satan ([Luke 8:2](#)). “Seven other devils” will enter the purified but vacant life of a person ([Matthew 12:45](#)). However, on the positive side, there were the seven spirits of God ([Revelation 3:1](#)).

In the seventh year the Hebrew slave was to be freed ([Ex 21:2](#)). A slave’s captivity and service was completed after seven years. Every seventh year was a sabbatical year ([Leviticus 25:4](#)). Seven times seven reiterates the sense of completeness. The Year of Jubilee was at the completion of seven times seven years or the 50th year. During the year of Jubilee, all land is freed and returns to the original owners ([Leviticus 25:10](#)). Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks is seven times seven days after Passover.

“Seventy” is literally “sevens” in Hebrew. “Seventy” strengthens the concept of perfection. There are 70 elders ([Exodus 24:1](#)) in Israel. Israel was exiled to Babylon for 70 years to complete its punishment ([Jeremiah 25:12](#)). “Seventy times seven” ([Matthew 18:22](#)) reiterates this still further. The Lord was not giving Peter a mathematical number of times that he should forgive another person. Jesus was insisting on limitless forgiveness for a brother’s sin.

“Three” may well share in this meaning of completion or perfection, although not so forcibly ([2 Kings 13:18](#)). Many things happen “on the third day” ([Hosea 6:2](#)). Jonah spent three days in the stomach of the fish ([Matthew 12:40](#)). The Lord rose again on the third day ([1 Cor 15:4](#)). David was offered a choice of divine punishments—three years, three months, three days ([2 Samuel 24:13](#)).

For the Christian, “three” takes on a far deeper significance as the number of Persons of the Trinity. The three Persons are clearly expressed in the Great Commission ([Matthew 28:19](#)). They are also found in the Pauline benediction ([2 Corinthians 13:13](#)). Many examples of this threefold expression are in the New Testament, and many anticipations of it in the Old Testament. The three times repeated “Holy” in [Isaiah 6:3](#) is the most famous example.

Some scholars see four as another symbol of completeness. For example, there are four winds of heaven in [Daniel 7:2](#), four horsemen in [Revelation 6:1–7](#), and four living creatures around the throne of God in [Revelation 4:6](#).

Five is certainly used in an indefinite sense as a small number ([Isaiah 19:18](#); [30:17](#)). Nor do eight or nine seem to have any special significance. Like other numbers, they may be used in a factual sense to describe any of God’s activities (nine plagues on Egypt, [Exodus 7–10](#)).

“Ten” does have significance because of the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20:1–17](#)). There was not any special symbolism to the number ten earlier in the Bible. If anything, “ten” is elsewhere used

vaguely. Laban changes Jacob's wages ten times ([Genesis 31:7](#)). Daniel and his friends are ten times better than all other students ([Daniel 1:20](#)). Ten times over, the Jewish settlers will be warned of impending enemy attacks ([Nehemiah 4:12](#)).

Eleven appears to have no special biblical significance. Twelve certainly has. The clearest proof of this is the existence of the 12 tribes in Israel. In [Revelation 7:4–8](#), it is mathematically important that the number of tribes be limited to 12. The tribe of Dan is altogether omitted—probably on account of Dan's sin of idolatry ([Judges 18:14–20](#)). Ishmael's descendants were also divided into 12 clans ([Genesis 17:20](#)).

The number 12 was apparently significant outside Israel as well. In the New Testament, Christ chose 12 apostles ([Matthew 10:1–4](#)). The link with the number of tribes is made specific when Christ tells the apostles that they will sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes ([Matthew 19:28](#)). Interestingly, after the election and appointment of Matthias ([Acts 1:26](#)), the Christian church made no later efforts to maintain the number of apostles. Like “seven times seven,” “twelve times twelve” increases the force of the number. When this is further multiplied by a thousand, the figure becomes the 144,000 redeemed ([Revelation 7:4](#)). The 144,000 were sealed “out of all the tribes of Israel.”

### *Exact Statistics*

Some numbers have a metaphorical use of numbers to show completion, very large amounts, and the like. Other numbers in Hebrew were often used to give exact tallies or measurements. Such usage is known to us only from clay tablets and ostraca (broken pieces of pottery engraved in ink, used for taking notes). However, determining exactly what the text was in its earliest form and what that text means is difficult.

An example is the number of the sons of Jeconiah among the residents of Beth-shemesh. They were struck down by the Lord because they failed to rejoice with the others when God's ark returned to Israel from the Philistine country ([1 Samuel 6:19](#)). The Greek text (Septuagint) reads “seventy.” The later Hebrew manuscripts add “fifty thousand.” As Beth-shemesh itself was only a small frontier town, and the “sons of Jeconiah” was presumably only one clan among several. The smaller number is obviously the original. The large addition is due to some later manuscript confusion.

There are a few ways to decide whether a number is real or metaphorical. Is it a small number? Is it an unusual number for which there is no obvious theological explanation? The men of Ai killed some 36 Israelites at the first assault on the city ([Joshua 7:5](#)). The smallness of the number is evidence that this is a vividly remembered factual detail. Similarly, Abraham's 318 men in [Genesis 14:14](#) and the catch of 153 fish after the resurrection in [John 21:11](#) are large numbers that are unusual combinations. These are obviously meant in a literal or statistical sense. Irrelevant details like this have a habit of remaining in the memory. They are the best guarantee of the trustworthiness of the narrative.

### *Numerology*

Numerology may be said to be an extended application of the metaphorical significance of numbers (7 and 40) already discussed. In the Bible, this system of numbers always goes with a strong sense of the sovereignty of God, his control over human history, and a belief in his ongoing purpose and its triumphant conclusion.

Perhaps the first clear instance of numerology in the Bible is [1 Kings 6:1](#). Solomon began to build the temple 480 years after the exodus. This can be calculated by 5 times 10 times 12. It can be reached by 4 times 120, and 120 is the ideal life span of man in the early days ([Genesis 6:3](#)).

[First Chronicles 6:3–8](#) gives 12 generations of men which is presumably 40 years each to cover the same period. “Twelve generations” is probably the real basis for the calculation. It is more likely than an exact sum. A tally would have been impossible in the days of the judges and unlikely before kings ruled Israel.

David was the first to establish an official scribe or recorder to keep daily records in Israel ([2 Samuel 8:16–17](#)). This was common in the great kingdoms from far earlier times. Such Israelite annals are later mentioned as sources of the books of the kings ([2 Kings 14:18](#)). The number 480 is probably a rough approximation rather than exact and denotes the end of one of God's epochs.

Jeremiah prophesies an exile of 70 years for Judah ([Jeremiah 25:11](#); [29:10](#)). It is not only a historical prediction that was literally fulfilled but also a symbol of completeness. Judah's punishment is complete (compare [Isaiah 40:2](#)). Isaiah ([Isaiah 23:15](#)) made a similar prophecy of a 70-year punishment for Tyre.

In [Ezekiel 29:11–13](#), the prophet foretold a 40-year “exile” for Egypt. These 70 years are regarded as sabbatical years. The land must lie untilled to compensate for the 7 times 70 years of sin before the true numerology begins ([2 Chronicles 36:21](#)). Here numerology is used only as an explanation of past and present. It can also be used to explain the future, especially in the book of Daniel.

[Daniel 9:2](#) refers to the literal 70 years of exile as foretold by Jeremiah. In [Daniel 9:24](#), this has been extended to 70 weeks of years (490 years) applied to the distant future. [Daniel 9:25](#) sees 69 of these (483 years) as passing before Messiah appears. Presumably, the last week of the 70 is therefore thought of as the time of his activity.

However this may be interpreted in terms of actual dates, it must be harmonized with [9:26](#), where the Messiah is “cut off” after 62 weeks of years (434 years). The difficulty lies in establishing the starting point for this long period. This is an example of an elaborate numerology. It embraces centuries of history, all ultimately based on the 70 years of Jeremiah. According to biblical principles, this can have both an “immediate” fulfillment in the return from exile. It can have a “prophetic” fulfillment in the far distant future in connection with the coming of Christ.

The other major example of extended numerology in Daniel is in connection with the “time, times, and half a time” ([7:25](#)). This must stand for three and a half “times,” that is, half of seven “times.” It refers either to three and a half years (half a “week” of years) or three and a half “weeks” of years (compare “seven times” in [4:16](#), where “seven years” is clearly meant).

Whatever may be its ultimate prophetic fulfillment in Christ, the “initial” or “partial” fulfillment is the roughly three and a half years of bitter persecution of God’s people by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167–164 BC. This figure of three and a half years reappears in [Revelation 11:2](#) (“forty-two months”), and [12:14](#) (“a time, and times, and half a time”), to describe the period of Rome’s persecution of the Christian church. The figure had possibly become a symbol of any bitter but limited persecution. The “two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings” of [Daniel 8:14](#) may mean 1,150 days, which is about the same length of time.

The three and a half years of [Daniel 7:25](#) reappear in [Revelation 11](#) in the form of “forty-two months.” This is the time when the heathen will trample down Jerusalem ([Revelation 11:2](#)). The 1,290 days

of [Daniel 12:11](#) reappear here in a slightly different form of 1,260 days. They are the time that God’s two witnesses will prophesy ([Revelation 11:3](#)).

The 42 months reappear in [Revelation 13:5](#) as the period that the wild beast will be allowed to blaspheme. While the “thousand years” of [20:6](#) is not taken from Daniel at all, the metaphorical use of “thousand” is familiar to the Old Testament. The closest direct parallel is in [Deuteronomy 7:9](#), where God’s covenant will be kept with a “thousand generations” to come.

## Numbers, Book of

Fourth book of the English Bible. Its title is the English translation of the Latin Vulgate title, *Numeri*. The book takes this name from the fact that several rosters of various kinds are recorded in the book, specifically, the two army musters in chapters [1](#) and [26](#), the tribal camp and march arrangements in chapter [2](#), and the Levitical censuses in chapters [3](#) and [4](#).

### Preview

- Author
- Background
- Purpose
- Content
- Theological Teaching

### Author

The question of the authorship of Numbers is part of the larger question of the authorship of the Pentateuch. Until the appearance of the higher-critical documentary theories of the 19th century, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was almost universally held by both Jews and Christians alike. This time-honored tradition is supported by the Pentateuch itself (e.g., [Ex 17:14](#); [24:4](#); [34:27](#); [Nm 33:2](#); [Dt 31:9, 24](#)), the rest of the OT (e.g., [Jos 23:6](#); [Jgs 3:4](#); [Mal 4:4](#)), as well as Jesus’ teaching (e.g., [In 5:46–47](#)), and the rest of the NT (e.g., [Acts 28:23](#); [Rom 10:19](#); [1 Cor 9:9](#)). Although discrepancies in the Pentateuch were widely and openly acknowledged, nevertheless Moses, the 15th-century BC lawgiver, was affirmed as the primary author of the Pentateuchal literature.

## Background

### Sinai Peninsula

The historical background of Numbers begins primarily in the geographical region of the Sinai Peninsula of the mid-second millennium BC.

The Sinai Peninsula is in the shape of an inverted triangle with the base on the north. It is approximately 240 miles (386.2 kilometers) long from north to south and 175 miles (281.6 kilometers) wide at the northern base, with an area of approximately 22,000 square miles (56,980 square kilometers). It is bounded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea and the southern border of Canaan, on the west by the Bitter Lakes and the Gulf of Suez, and on the east by the Arabah and the Gulf of Aqaba. Beginning in the north at the Mediterranean coast and moving south, for about 15 miles (24.1 kilometers) the soil is sandy. South of this coastal plain is a high plateau (Et-Tih) of gravel and limestone (about 2,500 feet, or 762 meters, above sea level), stretching south into the peninsula for approximately 150 miles (241.4 kilometers). Rising above the plateau at this point is a granite mountain formation with peaks up to 8,000 feet (2,438.4 meters) above sea level. In this mountainous region at the apex of the peninsular triangle, Jebel Musa (7,363 feet, or 2,244.2 meters, high), the traditional site where Israel camped before Mt Sinai and Moses received the law, rises above the plain.

The peninsula itself is comprised of five wilderness areas. In the north and immediately east of the land of Goshen is the approximately 40-mile- or 64.4-kilometer-wide wilderness of Shur, which runs past the River of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish) to the region of Kadesh-barnea and northeast to Beersheba. East of this region is the wilderness of Zin, extending east from the wilderness of Shur to the southern tip of the Dead Sea. Kadesh-barnea is located on its southern border ([Nm 20:1](#); [33:36](#)). South of the wilderness of Shur is the wilderness of Etham, and east of this wilderness in the east-central region of Sinai is the great wilderness of Paran ([Dt 1:19](#)). Kadesh-barnea is on the northern border of this territory ([Nm 13:26](#)). In this area the Israelites spent 38 of their 40 years of wandering. Southwest of the wilderness of Paran, on the western slopes of the peninsula, not far from the granite mountains standing in the southern apex of the triangle, is the wilderness of Sin.

While the region is generally desolate and barren, it is not impassable or incapable of sustaining

travelers. Wells and springs dot both the western and eastern borders at reasonable distances from each other. The water table is fairly close to ground level, making the digging of wells possible ([Nm 20:17](#); [21:16-18](#)). The limestone rocks are also capable of holding great amounts of water ([20:11](#)). Vegetation is sparse except around the more permanent streams where vegetation and date palms flourish. The rainy season in winter is approximately 20 days. Quail ([11:31-32](#)) are known to migrate across the peninsula to Europe in the spring.

### The Peoples Israel Confronted

Amalekites and Canaanites ([14:25, 43-45](#); [24:20](#))

The Amalekites were descendants of Amalek, son of Eliphaz and grandson of Esau ([Gn 36:12, 16](#)). They were generally a nomadic people. In the Sinai Peninsula they were the first to war against Israel at Rephidim (cf. [Nm 24:20](#)), perhaps the Wadi Refayid in southwest Sinai ([Ex 17:8-16](#)), before Israel reached Horeb. A year later, the Amalekites settled in the hills and valleys north of Kadesh-barnea. In league with the Canaanites, the inhabitants of Palestine, they blocked the effort of Israel to invade the land of promise from the south ([Nm 14:45](#)). Israel's will to wage war appears to have been completely broken for years to come.

Edomites ([20:14-21](#); [21:4, 10-11](#))

Edom, or Seir ([24:18](#)), is the territory south of the Dead Sea occupied by Esau's descendants. Stretching from its northern border at the Wadi Zered ([21:12](#)), which flowed into the Dead Sea at its southern tip, 100 miles (160.9 kilometers) south to the Gulf of Aqaba, it occupied both sides of the Arabah, with Kadesh-barnea again standing on the edge of its western border ([20:16](#)), giving it a land area of approximately 4,000 square miles (10,360 square kilometers). It is a rugged mountain region with peaks rising to 3,500 feet (1,066.8 meters). The "king's highway," an ancient trade route from Damascus through the Transjordan to the Gulf of Aqaba, passed through its territory and major cities, Bozrah and Leman. While Edom was not fertile, it did have cultivable areas ([20:17-19](#)).

During Israel's march to the Transjordan region, Edom refused to let Israel journey directly east from Kadesh through its territory but forced Israel to move southeast into and up the Arabah ([21:4, 11](#)). In spite of this hostility to God's people, Israel was forbidden to attack ([Dt 2:2-8](#)) or to hate the Edomites ([23:7](#)), and so Edom was spared from



destruction during the conquest of the land. The area was later conquered by David ([2 Sm 8:13-14](#)) according to Balaam's prophecy ([Nm 24:18](#)).

Arad ([21:1-3](#))

Arad was a south Canaanite settlement in the Negev. Its king, after fighting against Israel and taking some captives, was later defeated at Hormah.

Moabites ([21:11-15](#); [22:1-24:25](#))

Moab, occupied by the descendants of Lot ([Gn 19:37](#)), is the territory east of the Dead Sea lying primarily between the Wadi Arnon ([Nm 21:13](#)) and the Wadi Zered with a land area of approximately 1,400 square miles (3,626 square kilometers).

In the late middle Bronze Age, the Moabites had overflowed their main plateau and had extended well to the north of the Arnon all the way to the northern end of the Dead Sea ([21:20](#)). At the time of the events recorded in Numbers, however, the Amorites occupied the area from Arnon all the way north to the Wadi Jabbok (vv [13](#), [21-24](#)), having earlier taken this land from Moab (vv [26-30](#)). The Moabite kingdom was highly organized, with agriculture and livestock, splendid buildings, distinctive pottery, and strong fortifications around her borders. Its god was Chemosh (v [29](#)).

Balak, king of Moab during the period of the conquest, in league with Midian, hired Balaam to curse Israel (chs [22-24](#)). When this failed, the two heathen powers sought to neutralize Israel by luring the people of God into the worship of Chemosh and into idolatry ([25:1-2](#)). In the war that ensued, Israel defeated Midian ([31:1-18](#)), but by God's express command ([Dt 2:9-13](#)) spared Moab. But as Balaam had prophesied earlier ([Nm 24:17](#)), David in the 11th century warred against and defeated Moab ([2 Sm 8:2, 13-14](#)).

Amorites ([21:21-35](#))

The Amorites, the people who had occupied northern Moabite territory ([Nm 21:25-30](#)), were descendants of Canaan ([Gn 10:16](#)) who had scattered throughout the hill country on both sides of the Jordan River. Heshbon was their capital city. Both Sihon of Heshbon and Og of Bashan were Amorite kings ([Dt 3:8](#)).

As for Bashan ([Nm 21:33-35](#); cf. [Dt 1:4](#); [3:1-12](#)), it is the fertile grazing region ([Nm 32:1-5](#)) east of the Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee), whose northern border extended to Mt Hermon and whose southern border, while normally the river Yarmuk, in the

Mosaic age was the Wadi Jabbok ([Jos 12:4-5](#)). Its land area covered approximately 5,000 square miles (12,950 square kilometers). Its major cities were Ashtaroth, Edrei, and Golan. After the conquest of the land, this territory fell to the half-tribe of Manasseh, with Gad occupying southern Gilead, and Reuben the region south to the Wadi Arnon.

Midianites ([25:16-18](#); [31:1-54](#))

The Midianites, descendants of Abraham through the concubine Keturah ([Gn 25:2](#)), were desert dwellers in Transjordan from Moab to the region south of Edom. The elders of Moab and Midian cooperated in hiring Balaam to curse Israel ([Nm 22:4-7](#)). Later, when that effort proved fruitless, the Midianites, again with Moab, led Israel into idolatry and immorality ([25:1-6, 14-15](#)). Cozbi, the Midianite woman who was executed for her wickedness ([25:8](#)), was the daughter of Zur, one of the five Midianite kings confederate with the Amorite king Sihon ([Jos 13:21](#)) who were later killed in Israel's holy war against Midian ([Nm 31:8](#)). This war with Midian apparently broke the back of any remaining Amorite resistance, for [Joshua 13:15-23](#) clearly intimates that as a result the tribe of Reuben occupied this territory.

### Purpose

Numbers serves a twofold purpose. First, as a historical book, it contains the account of Israel's fortunes from Mt Sinai to the plains of Moab on the eve of the conquest of Canaan—that almost-40-year period spent in the wilderness of Sinai and in Transjordan (1447-1407 BC). While recounting Israel's many failures and God's many faithful acts, it depicts Moses, Israel's leader, in all of his greatness and in all of his weakness. The two army rolls (chs [2](#) and [26](#)) introduce the "acts" of the main drama of its history: the first in preparation for entering the land, which failed due to Israel's unbelief; the second, after the death of the entire generation that left Egypt, in preparation for the successful invasion of Canaan under Joshua's leadership.

Second, in line with Paul's general belief that "whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" ([Rom 15:4](#), rsv), and in keeping with his specific teaching that "these things [that befell Israel in the wilderness] happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has



come” ([1 Cor 10:11](#), rsv), Numbers serves a doctrinal, typical, and hortatory purpose (cf. [v 12](#)). Historical events are divinely invested with spiritual truths, thereby becoming object lessons for the Christian.

## Content

### Chapter 1

The Lord commanded Moses to register ([Nm 1:18](#)) the men able to go to war (vv [2-3](#)). The total number of soldiers in Israel was 603,550 ([v 46](#)). The Levites were not numbered in this roll (vv [47-54](#)), since they were to be set apart for special service pertaining to the tabernacle.

### Chapter 2

The Lord instructed Moses concerning the arrangement of the tribes while encamped and on the march. With the tabernacle in the center of the camp, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, totaling 186,400 ([v 9](#)), were to camp on the east; Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, totaling 151,450 ([v 16](#)), were to camp on the south; Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, totaling 108,100 ([v 24](#)), were to camp on the west; and Dan, Asher, and Naphtali, totaling 157,600 ([v 31](#)), were to camp on the north.

On the march, Judah’s east group ([v 9](#)) was to set out first, followed by Reuben’s south group ([v 16](#)). The Levites with the tabernacle were to follow ([v 17](#)). Then Ephraim’s west group ([v 24](#)) was to follow the Levites, with Dan’s north group ([v 31](#)) bringing up the rear. This means that the Levites were flanked by two groups, before and behind.

### Chapter 3

Aaron, the great-grandson of Levi through Kohath ([Ex 6:16-20](#)), and his descendants were designated to serve as priests at the tabernacle ([Nm 3:2-3](#)). The remaining descendants of Levi, from the families of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, were to serve the Aaronic line at the tabernacle (vv [5-10](#)). The Gershonites were responsible for the tabernacle coverings, hangings, and screens (vv [25-26](#)); the Kohathites were responsible for the “furniture” in the tabernacle ([v 31](#)); and the Merarites were responsible for the frames, bars, and foundations for the tabernacle (vv [36-37](#)).

God instructed Moses to number the three Levitical families. Gershon’s descendants, totaling 7,500 ([v 22](#)), were to camp on the west, between the western group of tribes and the tabernacle.

Kohath’s descendants, totaling 8,600 ([v 28](#)), were to camp on the south, between the southern group of tribes and the tabernacle. Merari’s descendants, totaling 6,200 ([v 34](#)), were to camp on the north, between the northern group of tribes and the tabernacle. Moses and the Aaronic family were to camp on the east, between the eastern group of tribes and the tabernacle ([v 38](#)). Both in camp and on the march, then, the tabernacle was in the midst of Israel.

The census of Israel’s firstborn males disclosed 273 more male babies than Levites (vv [40-46](#)), and since the Levites were a ransom for Israelite males on a one-to-one basis, the 273 additional male children had to be ransomed by atonement money (vv [46-51](#)).

### Chapter 4

God instructed Moses that only Levites between the ages of 30 and 50 were to serve at the tabernacle. A census disclosed that there were 2,750 Kohathites ([v 36](#)), 2,630 Gershonites ([v 40](#)), and 3,200 Merarites ([v 44](#)), making a total of 8,580 ([v 48](#)) who were eligible to serve the Aaronic priests.

God further ordered the Aaronic priests, when the tabernacle was being dismantled for the march, to cover all the tabernacle “furniture” before the Kohathites even looked at them ([v 20](#)) lest the Kohathites, either looking at or touching them ([v 15](#)), should die (vv [15,20](#)).

### Chapter 5

For ceremonial purposes, God demanded that lepers, those with a bodily discharge, and those who had touched the dead, must be put outside the camp until they were purified (vv [1-4](#)). Furthermore, God instructed those making restitution for a wrongdoing, if the wronged person was no longer alive, to give the restitution price to a priest (vv [5-10](#)).

Finally, if a woman was suspected by her husband of infidelity but there was no evidence of such, the woman was to undergo a trial by water ordeal to relieve the man of his suspicions. The priest was to give her holy water with dust from the floor of the tabernacle in it to drink. If she was guilty, the water by divine direction would cause her pain, make her abdomen swell, and her thigh waste away (vv [11-31](#)).

## Chapter 6

Laws pertaining to the Nazirite were given next. A Nazirite was a person who determined to take a vow to separate himself wholly to the Lord. To dramatize this separation, the Nazirite was to drink no intoxicating beverage, let the hair grow long, and touch no dead body (vv [3-6](#)). Should he defile himself, he was to follow prescribed rules for ceremonial cleansing (vv [9-12](#)). When his vow had run its course, he was to follow prescribed rules for terminating his vow (vv [13-21](#)). Finally, God instructed the Aaronic priesthood concerning the blessing they were to pronounce upon the Israelite worshiper (vv [22-27](#)).

## Chapter 7

The leaders in Israel brought six wagons and twelve oxen for use in the transfer of the tabernacle ([7:3](#)). Moses gave two wagons and four oxen to the Gershonites (v [7](#)), and four wagons and eight oxen to the Merarites (v [8](#)). (The Kohathites were to carry the “furniture” of the tabernacle on their shoulders, v [9](#).) For twelve consecutive days, to consecrate the altar after it was anointed (vv [10, 88](#)), the tribal leaders, in the order of march (cf. ch [2](#)), brought similar offerings. God demonstrated his pleasure with this gesture by speaking to Moses from the mercy seat (v [89](#)).

## Chapter 8

God granted the prerogative to light the seven-branched lampstand to the Aaronic priests (vv [1-4](#)). Following divine instructions, Moses and Aaron consecrated the Levites to the service of the tabernacle by means of a purification ceremony (vv [5-22](#)).

## Chapters 9:1-10:10

For the benefit of the worshiper who was ceremonially unclean or away on a journey at the time of the Passover, God granted permission to observe the Passover a month later (vv [6-12](#); see also ch [27](#)).

God gave final instructions to the people before their departure from Sinai. They were to prepare for marching when they saw the cloud ascending from the tabernacle, and they were to stop at the place where the cloud settled down ([9:15-23](#)). The people were to assemble at the tabernacle if two silver trumpets were blown; only the leaders were to come if one was blown; and at the blast of a

military alarm, the several groups of tribes were to prepare for an immediate march ([10:1-10](#)).

## Chapters 10:11-14:45

The next section recounts the march from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea, a period of time approximately one and a half to two months in length (cf. [10:11; 13:20](#)). Almost immediately the people began to complain as they passed through the terrible wilderness of Paran ([Dt 1:19](#)), angering the Lord at Taberah ([Nm 11:1-3](#)) and at Kibroth-hattaavah ([Nm 11:4-35](#); [Pss 78:26-31](#); [106:13-15](#)). Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses' sole right to speak for God to the people, which resulted in temporary leprosy as punishment for Miriam (doubtless the leader in the provocation). Through Moses' intercession, the two were forgiven ([Nm 12](#)). Out of this event, however, came the remarkable description of Moses' relationship to God as a unique means of revelation (vv [6-8](#)).

From Paran (Kadesh-barnea) Moses dispatched the spies to survey the land (ch [13](#)). [Deuteronomy 1:22](#) suggests that the plan to spy out the land originated with the people, with Moses (at God's behest) acquiescing. At the end of 40 days, they returned. Only Caleb and Joshua urged the people to advance to the conquest; the other 10 spies spoke of foes too formidable for them to defeat. The people, greatly discouraged, attempted to stone Caleb and Joshua ([Nm 14:10](#)), and were prevented from doing so only by the sudden appearance of the glory cloud at the tabernacle. God swore in his wrath ([Nm 14:21](#); cf. [Heb 3:7-4:10](#)) that, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, none of that generation would enter the land of promise ([Nm 14:21-35](#)). He then struck down the 10 unbelieving spies (v [37](#)). Presumptuously, and in spite of God's express command to the contrary ([Dt 1:42](#)), Israel attempted to advance on the land, leaving Moses and the ark of the covenant in the camp. They were challenged by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

Israel remained in this general area with tribal families fanning out over the wilderness and settling around springs and oases ([Dt 1:46](#)). [Numbers 15:1-21:20](#) relates the account of the 38 years of wilderness wandering. Much of this time was probably spent around Kadesh-barnea ([Dt 1:46](#)).

## Chapter 15

Further priestly legislation was given ([Nm 15:1-21](#)). Also, the procedure to be followed when an Israelite committed a sin deliberately and defiantly

was spelled out in terms of excommunication: there was no atonement for such an attitude (vv [22-31](#)). A Sabbath violator was executed (vv [32-36](#)), perhaps as an illustration of the foregoing legislation. Finally, to assist them in obeying God's laws, the Israelites were instructed to tie blue tassels to their outer garments as reminders (vv [37-41](#)).

## Chapter 16

Korah challenged Aaron's high priesthood, and Dathan, Abiram, and On challenged Moses' leadership (vv [1-14](#)). God, at Moses' word, opened up the earth and swallowed the offenders ([Nm 16:32](#); cf. [Dt 9:6](#); [Ps 106:16-18](#)). Korah is regarded in the NT ([Jude 1:11](#)) as a classic example of a rebellious malcontent.

[Numbers 26:11](#) states that Korah's young children did not perish with him. Perhaps they became the ancestors of the "sons of Korah," the sacred musicians of the temple who composed 12 Korahite psalms ([Pss 42-49, 84-85, 87-88](#)).

## Chapter 17

God then instructed the leaders of each tribe to bring rods, 12 in all, to write the names of the tribes upon them (with Aaron's name on Levi's rod), and to deposit them in the tabernacle. The following day, Aaron's rod had sprouted with blossoms and ripe almonds, thus vindicating Aaron's special high-priestly status.

## Chapters 18-19

Further priestly legislation was given. In [18:1-7](#), the full responsibility for the priestly service was given to the Aaronic priests—a very natural consequence of the preceding chapter. The Levites were to assist the Aaronic order (v [6](#)). Since the tribe of Levi received no land inheritance, they were to be supported from the offerings of the people (vv [8-20](#)).

In [19:1-22](#) instructions concerning ceremonial impurity were given. When an Israelite became ceremonially unclean through contact with death (vv [11-16](#)), God required that he be purified from his sin (vv [9, 17](#)) by the sprinkling of specially prepared water upon him.

## Chapter 20

With Israel once again at Kadesh on the southern border of the wilderness of Zin in the first month of the 40th year of wandering, Miriam died and was

buried (v [1](#)). According to the encampment list in chapter [33](#), 18 encampments may have occurred for Israel since the nation had last been at this site (cf. [33:18-36](#)).

At this time the nation complained once again because there was little water ([20:2](#)). Moses, at God's instruction, brought forth water from a rock (vv [8-11](#)), but because of a gross infraction by Moses and Aaron on this occasion, God announced that they would not be permitted to lead Israel in the conquest of the land (vv [12, 23-24](#)).

The chapter closes with Edom refusing Israel passage across its territory (vv [14-21](#)) and Aaron dying on Mt Hor on the border of Edom (vv [22-29](#)) in the fifth month of the 40th year ([33:38](#)). Eleazar, Aaron's son, assumed the office of high priest.

## Chapter 21

After a quick victory over Arad (vv [1-3](#)), Israel started south to encircle Edom. Becoming impatient with God and with Moses, the people expressed their disgust with God's provision of manna. The Lord sent poisonous snakes to the camp, causing many to die. But at God's command Moses fashioned a snake out of bronze and placed it atop a standard. All who looked to the bronze snake survived (vv [4-10](#)). The bronze snake was preserved and later was destroyed by Hezekiah, the symbol having become by his time an idol ([2 Kgs 18:4](#)). Later still, Jesus drew an analogy between these wicked sinners looking to the bronze snake and being delivered and men looking to him by faith and being saved ([Jn 3:14-15](#)).

Leaving that fateful place, Israel journeyed into and up the Arabah, crossed the Wadi Zered in an eastern swing around Moab, finally crossing the Arnon into Amorite territory. Journeying north, they camped at Pisgah ([Nm 21:10-20](#)).

At this point the conquest of the Transjordan begins. In quick succession Israel defeated Sihon of Heshbon (vv [21-31](#)) and Og of Bashan (vv [33-35](#)) and settled in the plains of Moab ([22:1](#)). This encampment was the scene for the remainder of the activities of Numbers, Deuteronomy, and [Joshua 1-3](#). In a real sense, one can say the wilderness wanderings were now over.

Here is the place, then, to summarize the spiritual condition of Israel on the eve of the conquest of Canaan. Numbers makes it quite evident that the entire generation that left Egypt, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, was to die in the wilderness because of its apostasy (cf. [Am 5:25](#)),

unbelief, and general failure to keep covenant with God. None of the generation of male children born in the wilderness had been circumcised ([Jos 5:2-9](#)). [Psalm 90](#) underscores Israel as the recipient of God's wrath in the wilderness. It is in this pitiable spiritual condition that Israel arrived on the plains of Moab.

### Chapters [22-24](#)

Balak, king of Moab, frightened by Israel's presence, joined with Midian to hire Balaam, the false prophet, to curse Israel. For gain, Balaam agreed ([2 Pt 2:15](#); [Jude 1:11](#)), but God prevented him, causing him rather to bless Israel in his four oracular utterances ([Nm 23:7-10, 18-24](#); [24:3-9, 15-19](#)) and to predict the destruction of Moab, Edom, Amalek ([24:20](#)), the Kenites ([24:21](#)), and Asshur ([24:24](#)). With that, Balak and Balaam separated. Balaam, in collusion with Midian, agreed to counsel Israel to commit idolatry and immorality ([31:16](#)). And so, where Balak failed to turn the Lord against Israel, Balaam succeeded (ch [25](#)).

### Chapter [25](#)

Israel sinned against God by idolatrous and immoral acts with the people of Moab (vv [1-3](#)). In carrying out the command of God to destroy the reprobate Israelites, Phinehas killed Zimri and Cozbi, the latter being a daughter of one of the five kings of Midian (vv [4-14](#)). This event provided the occasion for God to declare a holy war against Midian (vv [16-18](#); cf. ch [31](#)).

### Chapter [26](#)

The Lord commanded Moses to take a roll of the men of the second generation who were capable of warring against Israel's enemies. The total number came to 601,730 (v [51](#)), a reduction of 1,820 men from the first count. With a smaller force than the first generation, Israel conquered Canaan, clearly indicating that Israel could have spared itself the years of wandering if only the nation had obeyed God 38 years before Kadesh. The Levites totaled 23,000 males a month old and upward (vv [57-62](#)).

### Chapter [27](#)

At the request of the daughters of Zelophehad (cf. [26:33](#)) that they be granted the right to inherit their father's possessions since he had no sons, the Lord agreed that they could, using the occasion to give further laws of inheritance (vv [1-11](#)).

Reminded that he would soon die in Abarim, Moses requested that God appoint his successor. God selected Joshua, and Moses commissioned him (vv [12-23](#)).

### Chapters [28-30](#)

Further priestly legislation regarding offerings for various occasions was given. God also instructed Moses to inform the people concerning vows. When a man made a vow, it was inviolable ([30:2](#)), but if a woman made a vow, the man (father, husband) responsible for her could nullify it if he felt that it was rash (vv [1-16](#)).

### Chapter [31](#)

The account of the holy war declared against Midian in [25:16-18](#) is given. With Phinehas accompanying 12,000 warriors, Israel defeated Midian, killing Balaam along with the five kings and many male adults of Midian ([31:1-8](#)). The Midianite women and children were taken captive, but Moses commanded that all the male children and the nonvirgin women be killed (vv [9-18](#)). One must not conclude that this war meant the end of Midian as such, for Midian later proved a formidable foe of Israel in the time of the judges ([Jgs 6](#)).

After the battle, the warriors were instructed to purify themselves, their clothing, and the booty from the war before coming into the camp ([Nm 31:19-24](#)). Furthermore, they were instructed to divide the booty in half and to contribute one-fifth of one percent of their half to the high priest ("the Lord's tribute"). The other half was divided among the people who had remained in camp, after the Levites received a two percent contribution (vv [25-31](#)).

Verses [32-47](#) give the tally of the booty after its division into two parts and the amount that was given from each part to Eleazar and the Levites. The tally is said by some to be too high to be authentic, but there is no evidence that disputes the recorded figures.

In thanksgiving to God because no Israelite had been killed in the war (v [49](#)) and to make atonement for themselves (v [50](#)), the army officers brought a special offering of gold trinkets to Moses and Eleazar, which was placed in the tabernacle as a memorial (vv [48-54](#)).



## Chapter 32

At their request and on the condition that they aid the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan, Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were allotted the Transjordan region. Moses earnestly besought the Lord to change his mind about not permitting him to enter the land of promise ([Dt 3:23-27](#)). But God would not let him.

## Chapters 33-34

At God's command, Moses kept a written record of Israel's itinerary from Egypt to the plains of Moab. Here is biblical evidence of the Mosaic authorship of Numbers.

The boundaries of the Promised Land were now given. The southern boundary would run from the southern tip of the Dead Sea, south of Kadesh-barnea up to the River of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish), and on to the Mediterranean Sea ([34:3-5](#)). The western boundary would be the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea itself (v [6](#)). The northern boundary, not realized until the times of David and Solomon ([2 Sm 8:3-12](#); [1 Kgs 8:65](#)), was to extend from the Mediterranean Sea east to Hamath, at the head of the Orontes River ([Nm 34:7-9](#)). The eastern boundary was to be practically on a vertical line, with the Jordan Valley running north to the northern boundary (vv [10-12](#)). The nine and a half tribes were to divide this area among themselves (vv [13-15](#)).

The Lord then selected the men who were to bear the responsibility of dividing the land of Canaan among the western tribes after the conquest (vv [16-29](#)).

## Chapter 35

God instructed Israel to give 48 cities throughout the land on both sides of the Jordan to the Levites for a permanent possession (vv [1-8](#)), since that tribe was not included in the land allotments to the other tribes. The number of cities each tribe was to give was to be determined by its size (v [8](#)). Six of the Levitical cities, three on each side of the Jordan, were to be designated "cities of refuge" for the manslayer (v [6](#); cf. [Jos 20](#)).

Legislation concerning the manslayer follows (vv [9-34](#)). If the slayer committed murder, the kinsman avenger had the right to fulfill his role as executioner (vv [16-21](#)). If, however, the killing was unintentional, the manslayer was to flee to the nearest city of refuge for a trial. If found innocent of murder, he was assigned to remain within the

city of refuge until the death of the high priest. If he left the city before then, the kinsman avenger was permitted to execute him (vv [22-34](#)).

## Chapter 36

Basing their question on the earlier law established in chapter [27](#), the leaders from Manasseh asked whether an heiress should be allowed to marry outside her tribe, with the accompanying transfer of property from one tribe to another that would ensue. God directed that an heiress would have to marry within her tribe (vv [1-12](#)).

The last verse of the book refers to all the laws given in the plains of Moab ([26:1-36:12](#); cf. [Lv 27:34](#)).

## Theological Teaching

In the book of Numbers God is revealed as the unchangingly faithful God of the covenant ([Nm 23:19](#)). This faithfulness to his covenant required that he both guide and care for his people and punish their sins against him. But no impediment was so great that God's design to bring his people to the land of promise was thwarted ([11:23](#)).

Both by his wrathful reaction to Israel's sin and by the numerous priestly laws, God highlights his awesome holiness. The legislation expressly teaches that the person who approaches God must be clean. Even to look with unholy eyes upon the holiness of God meant death ([4:20](#)).

His sovereignty over all of life is evident from the attention he displays over even the minutest aspects of life. The phrase "And the Lord said unto Moses" occurs over 50 times, and the words that follow in each case deal with all kinds of matters.

As the God of the covenant, God's "christological" character is also apparent. God's blessing and faithfulness reflect the christological motif. Finally, Moses' prophetic leadership ([Acts 7:37-38](#)) and intercessory ministry (e.g., [Nm 11:2](#); [12:13](#); [14:19](#)), in the Aaronic priesthood (e.g., ch [16](#)), in the animal sacrifices (cf. [19:9](#); [Heb 9:13](#)), and in the symbols (the manna, the water, the bronze snake) foreshadow the future Christ.

In Israel's responses to God, the people depict all of human sinfulness and faithlessness. Israel's wanderings illustrate the results of unbelief. The punishments of Israel prove the maxim of [Numbers 32:23](#): "But if you fail to keep your word, then you will have sinned against the Lord, and you may be sure that your sin will find you out" (nlt). Numbers



forcefully teaches that safety and blessing are to be found only in trust in the Lord. Only he is capable of bringing men and women to the place of rest ([Heb 4:9](#)).

See also Deuteronomy, Book of; Exodus, Book of; Genesis, Book of; Leviticus, Book of; Moses; Wilderness Wanderings.

## Numenius

Son of Antiochus, a Jewish diplomat sent first by Jonathan, and later by Simon the Hasmonean to Rome and Sparta to strengthen alliances. Numenius and Antipater, son of Jason, were warmly received in Sparta, and according to Josephus, a friendly alliance with the Jews was decreed (*Antiquities* 13:169–170). The writer of Maccabees said, “What they said we have recorded in our public decrees, as follows, ‘Numenius the son of Antiochus and Antipater the son of Jason, envoys of the Jews, have come to us to renew their friendship with us. It has pleased our people to receive these men with honor and to put a copy of their words in the public archives, so that the people of the Spartans may have a record of them. And they have sent a copy of this to Simon the high priest’ ” ([1 Macc 14:22–23](#), rsv). Since Jonathan probably died during the mission, the correspondence from Sparta was sent to Simon, his successor ([1 Macc 14:20ff.](#)). Simon sent Numenius to Rome in 141 BC with a special gift, a gold shield weighing 1,000 pounds (453.6 kilograms) in honor of the new pact. When Numenius returned two years later, he brought with him copies of Lucius’s letters to the surrounding states, in which the Roman council declared friendship for the Jews and forbade the surrounding nations to hurt the Jewish people: “We therefore have decided to write to the kings and countries that they should not seek their harm or make war against them and their cities and their country, or make alliance with those who war against them” ([1 Macc 15:19](#), rsv). Moreover, the rulers of the surrounding nations were requested to hand over any traitors who had left Judah to seek asylum in another country. The traitors were to be punished in accordance with the Jewish laws. According to Josephus, Numenius made another journey to Rome to strengthen the diplomatic ties during the priesthood of Hyrcanus II.

## Nun

Nun was the father of Joshua, who became one of the most important leaders of the Israelite people. Nun belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, one of the twelve family groups of Israel. His father was Elishama. Joshua, Nun's son, led the Israelites into the promised land after Moses died ([Exodus 33:11](#); [Numbers 11:28](#); [Deuteronomy 1:38](#); [Joshua 1:1](#); [Judges 2:8](#)).

## Nurse

A nurse was a woman who took care of an infant that was not her own, or a man who took care of young children. The work focused on feeding and caring for an infant. Most women took care of their own children, like Sarah and Hannah ([Genesis 21:7](#); [1 Samuel 1:23](#)).

A wet nurse (a woman who breastfeeds another woman's child) often became part of the family and had a special position. Rebekah had a nurse, and when this woman died, she was even mentioned in the Bible: “Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried under the oak below Bethel. So Jacob named it Allon-bachuth” ([Genesis 35:8](#)).

Moses's mother became his nurse when Pharaoh's daughter paid her to care for him ([Exodus 2:7](#)). Royal sons were cared for by nurses, as in the case of Joash. His aunt Jehosheba hid him with his nurse ([2 Kings 11:2](#)). Since Joash was hidden for six years and was seven when he became king, he was about one year old when he was hidden. His nurse must have been a wet nurse.

Royal sons received special care and were supervised by a nurse after they finished breastfeeding. Children were nursed until about three years old, and when they were weaned (stopped breastfeeding), there was a feast ([Genesis 21:8](#); [1 Samuel 1:23–24](#)). After weaning, a nurse-teacher took charge of the child. Mephibosheth was five years old when his nurse fell while carrying him. This caused him to be unable to walk properly ([2 Samuel 4:4](#)). Naomi took care of her grandson as a nurse ([Ruth 4:16](#)).

It is likely that male nurses worked as teachers for young nobles. For example, [2 Kings 10:1](#) says that Ahab's children had tutors (compare [2 Kings 10:5](#)). In this way, we should understand Moses's reference to himself as a “nurse”: “Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth, so that You should tell me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a

nurse carries an infant,' to the land that You swore to give their fathers?" ([Numbers 11:12](#)). Paul also saw himself as a "nurse" to the church ([1 Thessalonians 2:7](#)).

## Nurture

The King James Version translation of a Greek word, *paideia*, in [Ephesians 6:4](#). It is better translated as "discipline."

See Discipline.

## Nut

See Food and Food Preparation; Plants (Almond; Pistachio).

## Nuzi, Nuzi Tablets

A town in northeastern Mesopotamia, about nine miles (14.5 kilometers) southwest of present-day Kirkuk. It was originally called Gasur but is now known as Yorgan Tepe. Archaeological digs took place from 1925 to 1931 and revealed many interesting finds. Yorgan Tepe is famous for its clay tablets, which mainly deal with business transactions.

In the third millennium BC, Gasur was mostly inhabited by Semitic people. By the middle of the second millennium, the residents were Hurrians, and the city's name changed to Nuzi. The Hurrians are identified as the Horites in the Bible (compare [Genesis 14:6](#); [36:20–21](#); [Deuteronomy 2:12, 22](#)).

Many clay tablets from the third millennium BC were found, including the oldest known map. The records show that buying items through paying in installments was already practiced.

In the 15th to 14th centuries BC, Hurrian scribes wrote thousands of clay tablets, mostly in Babylonian. These records provide much information about Near Eastern customs and legal practices, shedding light on the patriarchal period of the Bible.

Here are some examples of possible connections between Nuzi and the Bible:

- In Nuzi, a childless wife could give her maid to her husband to bear children in her name. This practice was followed by Sarai, Rachel, and Leah ([Genesis 16:1-4](#); [Genesis 30:1-8](#); [Genesis 30:9-13](#)). The father had to raise the child as the offspring of his legal wife, and the wife could not drive the child away. Thus, Sarai had no right to drive out Hagar's son, Ishmael ([Genesis 16:4-6](#)).
- In Nuzi, selling property outside one's family was prohibited. To get around this, people used adoption or property exchange. For lifelong care and burial costs, a wealthy landowner might be "adopted" by peasants and receive their property. The same man could be adopted by 300 or 400 peasants. A couple without children could adopt someone to care for them and inherit their property, similar to the relationship between Abram and his servant Eliezer ([Genesis 15:2](#)). Property of little value could be exchanged for valuable property, sometimes with money to cover the difference. In Nuzi, a man named Tehip-tilla sold his inheritance rights to his brother Kurpazah for three sheep, similar to Esau selling his birthright to Jacob for stew ([Genesis 25:27-34](#)).
- In Nuzi, an oral will or blessing given on a deathbed was legally binding. A man named Huya, on his deathbed, gave his son Tarmiya a wife, Sululi-Ishtar. Tarmiya's two brothers challenged this in court, but the court upheld Tarmiya's claim. Similarly, Isaac had to honor the blessing he gave Jacob, even though it was obtained by deception ([Genesis 27:33](#)).

- In Nuzi, the person who possessed the household gods (*teraphim*) inherited the owner's property. This is why Rachel took her father Laban's *teraphim* ([Genesis 31:19](#)). Laban was very upset about their disappearance ([Genesis 31:30–35](#)).
- Another example of adoption is similar to a case in the Bible. Nashwi adopted Wullu and gave his daughter Nuhuya to him in marriage. If Wullu married another wife, he would forfeit Nashwi's property. Similarly, Laban made Jacob promise not to take another wife besides Leah and Rachel ([Genesis 31:50](#)).

*See also* Inscriptions.

## Nympha

Christian woman living in Laodicea (or perhaps Colossae), in whose house believers gathered for worship. Paul sent greetings to her and the church ([Col 4:15](#), kjv uses the masculine form “Nymphas”).