

Resource: Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

Aquifer Open Bible Dictionary

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Bible Dictionary (Tyndale)

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Dabareh, Dabbesheth, Daberath, Dagger, Dagon, Dalaiah, Dalmanutha, Dalmatia, Dalphon, Damaris, Damascus, Damnation, Dan (Person), Dan (Place), Dan-jaan, Dan, Tribe of, Dance, Dandelion, Daniel (Person), Daniel, Additions to, Danite, Dannah, Daphne, Dara, Darda, Daric, Darius, Darkness, Darkon, Darnel Grass, Dart, Date, Date Palm, Dathan, Dathema, Daughter, Daughter-in-Law, David, David, City of, David, Root of, David, Tower of, Day, Day of Atonement, Day of Atonement, Day of Christ, Day of the Lord, Day's Journey, Dayspring, Day Star, Deacon, Deaconess, Dead Sea, Dead Sea Scrolls, Deaf, Deafness, Death, Death of Christ, Death, the Second, Debir (Person), Debir (Place), Deborah, Debt, Decalogue, Decapolis, Decrees of God, Dedan (Person), Dedan (Place), Dedication, Feast of, Deer, Defile, Deformity, Degrees, Song of, Dehavites, Dekar, Delaiah, Delilah, Deliverance, Deliverer, Deluge, the, Demas, Demetrius, Demon, Demon-Possession, Demophon, Denarius, Deputy, Derbe, Descent into Hell, Desert, Desert of Sin, Desire, Dessau, Destiny, Deuel, Deutero-Isaiah, Deuteronomy, Book of, Devil, the, Devoted Things, Dew, Di-Zahab, Diadem, Dialogue of the Redeemer, Diamond, Diana, Diaspora of the Jews, Diblah, Diblaim, Diblath, Dibon, Dibon-Gad, Dibri, Didache (Teaching), Didrachma, Didymus, Dietary Laws, Diklah, Dilean, Dill, Dimnah, Dimon, Dimonah, Dinah, Dinaites, Dinhabah, Diocletian, Dion, Dionysius, Dioscorinthus, Dioscuri, Diotrefes, Diphath, Discerning of Spirits, Disciple, Discipline, Discourse of Theodosius, Disease, Disease of Bowels, Dish, Dishan, Dishon, Dispersion of the Jews, Dives, Divination, Divine Presence, Diviners' Oak, Division of the Land, Divorce, Doctor of the Law, Doctrina Addaei, Dodai, Dodanim, Dodavah, Dodavahu, Dodo, Doe, Doeg, Dog, Doleful Creature, Domestic Fowl, Poultry, Domitian, Donkey, Doorkeeper, Dophkah, Dor, Dorcas, Dositheus, Dothan, Dove, Dove's Dung, Dowry, Drachma, Dragon, Dragon's Well, Dram, Dreams, Drink Offering, Dromedary, Dropsy, Drusilla, Dulcimer, Dumah (Person), Dumah (Place), Dumbness, Dung Gate, Dura, Plain of, Dye, Dyeing, Dyer, Dysentery, Dysmas

Dabareh

KJV spelling of the town Daberath in [Joshua 21:28](#).
See Daberath.

Dabbesheth

Designation for a camel's hump ([Is 30:6](#)). The name also refers to a town ("camel's hump hill") situated on the western border of the land allotted to Zebulun's tribe for an inheritance ([Jos 19:11](#)).

Daberath

Town in Issachar's territory given to the Levite family of Gershon ([Jos 21:28](#); [1 Chr 6:72](#)). It was located west of Mt Tabor on the Issachar-Zebulun border, and has been identified with the modern Deburiyeh.

See also Levitical Cities.

Dagger

Short sword. See Armor and Weapons.

Dagon

Deity worshiped throughout the Mesopotamian world. In the OT, Dagon is the principal god of the Philistines ([Jgs 16:23](#); [1 Sm 5:2-7](#); [1 Chr 10:10](#)). Shrines to Dagon were found in Israel's territories (Beth-dagon, [Jos 15:41](#); [19:27](#)). See Canaanite Deities and Religion.

Dalaiah

KJV spelling of Delaiah, Elioenai's son, in [1 Chronicles 3:24](#). See Delaiah #1.

Dalmanutha

An area on the west side of the Sea of Galilee near the southern end of the land of Gennesaret. Its exact location is not certain. Jesus and his disciples stayed there for a short time after the feeding of the 4,000 ([Mark 8:10](#)). The Pharisees came to him seeking a sign from heaven to test Jesus. After his answer that no sign would be given to this generation ([Mark 8:12](#)), he departed from there.

The word “Dalmanutha” is present in the best and oldest copies of the Bible. Some other sources use the names Magadan or Magdala. Matthew’s version of this story in [Matthew 15:39](#) uses the name Magadan. Because of this, the exact name and location have been difficult to identify. Probably the different names are meant to identify the same location or at least two places in the same area.

See also Magadan; Magdala.

Dalmatia

Dalmatia was a mountainous region on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, across from Italy. The Dalmatians were an Illyrian (Greek) tribe, or a group of tribes that banded together. They came from the area around the town of Delmion (or Delminium). Their attacks on ships at sea caused the Romans much difficulty until the emperor Octavian (also known as Caesar Augustus) brought them under control in 33 BC.

At the time of the apostle Paul, Dalmatia was the name of the Roman province. Its southern boundary was Macedonia, but its northern boundary is uncertain. The New Testament gives one reference to this province. In [2 Timothy 4:10](#), Titus is mentioned as having traveled there. We are not told why he went. It may be that Paul had organized some churches there. It is also possible that Titus went there to teach about Christianity in a new area.

Dalphon

Haman’s son killed by the Jews after the plot against Mordecai ([Esther 9:7](#)).

Damaris

A woman who became a follower of Jesus in the city of Athens after hearing Paul teach there ([Acts 17:34](#)). Because Luke mentions her by name in the Bible, she might have been an important person in Athens (see [Acts 13:50](#); [17:12](#)).

Damascus

Syrian oasis city protected on three sides by mountains and situated on trade routes about 160 miles (257 kilometers) northeast of Jerusalem. The name Damascus can also refer to the surrounding area and to the southern Syrian state. Though close to the desert, the district is rich in almonds, apricots, cotton, flax, grains, hemp, olives, pistachios, pomegranates, tobacco, vineyards, and walnuts. These crops grow well because the land is watered by two rivers: the Nahr Barada, “the Cool” (biblical Abana), which runs from the northwest mountains through a deep ravine to the city; and the Nahr el-A waj, “the Crooked” (biblical Pharpar), which flows west to east. Together the two rivers irrigate 400 square miles (643.6 square kilometers) of land. Their beauty and importance in biblical times is conveyed by the haughty words of Naaman, a resident of the area, who almost refused to wash his leprosy away in the Jordan, as Elisha had prescribed, because it was such a poor river in comparison with the Abana and Pharpar ([2 Kgs 5](#)).

Of the several trade routes that converged in the area, one led to Tyre and down the Mediterranean coastline, another to Megiddo and eventually to Memphis and Egypt, and a third to the Gulf of Aqaba.

The first biblical mention of Damascus ([Gn 14:15](#)) refers to the city in connection with Abraham’s successful attack upon the confederation of kings who kidnapped Lot and his family. The Bible does not refer to the city again until the time of David (c. 1000 BC).

Israel occupied a strategic position along the trade routes between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Although in the time of Joshua and the judges Israel was in conflict with its immediate neighbors, the Amorites, Moabites, Philistines, Ammonites, and Midianites, there was relatively little opposition from Syria.

By the time of Saul, Zobah, an Aramean kingdom to the north of Damascus, was menacing the

Israelites. Damascus was possibly in alliance with Zobah at this time, and the Israelites fought a defensive action ([1 Sm 14:47](#)). David subsequently defeated Hadadezer of Zobah and gained control over southern Syria and Damascus, where he garrisoned his troops. David's forces under Joab continued to be successful, and tribute was sent from Damascus to Israel. One of Hadadezer's officers, Rezon, deserted and formed a guerilla band in the Damascus area. Subsequently, in Solomon's reign he eroded even the Israelites' economic control of the region and set himself up as king in Damascus around 940 BC ([1 Kgs 11:23-25](#)).

In the reign of Ben-hadad I, about 883-843 BC, soldiers from Damascus besieged Samaria and sent reasonable terms to Ahab, which were accepted swiftly. Damascus was at the height of its power when Ben-hadad was campaigning successfully against the Assyrians. At this time, when Jehoram, Ahab's son, was king of Israel, Naaman the leper, a Syrian captain, was healed by the prophet Elisha when he accepted humbly the prescribed cure.

The strategy of overcoming the kingdom by killing the king had been successful for Ben-hadad in his fight with Ahab, and he continued to follow the same policy. Shortly afterward, in a further effort to subdue Samaria, he sent assassination squads to murder either Jehoram or the prophet Elisha. The Lord preserved the lives of the pursued, and the Syrian attacked without success. Several years later, Elisha, who had gained the respect of the Syrians, entered Damascus boldly and announced that Ben-hadad's illness was not fatal but that his death was imminent. Ben-hadad was thereafter murdered by Hazael, who then succeeded him. Although Damascus was soundly defeated by Assyria about 838 BC, Hazael rebounded quickly, and by 830 BC other predictions of Elisha were fulfilled. Damascene troops then controlled large areas of Palestinian territory, and the temple treasure was used to bribe the Syrians and save Jerusalem ([2 Kgs 12:17-18](#)).

Planning to continue the subjection of Israel, Ben-hadad II found himself having to contend instead with resumed attacks from Assyria. In 803 BC Damascus became a tributary of Assyria, but the northern forces were unable to hold the area. After a further campaign in which Assyria again proved dominant, a weakened Damascus was unable to quash an Israelite rebellion in 795 BC. By the time of Jeroboam II, the Damascenes were forced to pay tribute to Samaria ([2 Kgs 14:28](#)).

About 738 BC the Syrians, led by their new leader Rezin, joined forces with Pekah, king of Israel, to subjugate Judah. Much land was captured, although their siege of Jerusalem was unsuccessful ([2 Kgs 16:5-6](#); [2 Chr 28:5](#)). At this time of seeming success for Damascus, the city's doom was predicted by Isaiah ([Is 8:4](#); [17:1](#)), Amos ([Am 1:3-5](#)), and Jeremiah ([Jer 49:23-27](#)). Rejecting God, Ahaz of Judah turned for protection to an alliance with the Assyrians, whom he bribed with the temple treasure. The Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III ("Pul") agreed and marched against the Syro-Israelite confederation. After defeating Israel, he attacked Damascus, plundered the city, deported the population, and replaced them with foreigners from other captured lands. Damascus was no longer an independent city-state.

Due to its key location, Damascus remained important, and the Assyrians used the city as a provincial capital. Their records mention it in 727, 720, and 694 BC, and also in the days of Ashurbanipal (669-663 BC). Assyrian world dominance succumbed to that of Neo-Babylon, which was later replaced by that of Medo-Persia. During the period of Persian control, Damascus was a noted administrative center. Under the regime of Alexander the Great, the importance of Damascus was diminished by the rise in commercial significance of Antioch.

During intertestamental times, Damascus passed from one ruler to another. Following the death of Alexander, the city was controlled by the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Babylon. Somewhat before 100 BC, Syria was divided, with Damascus becoming the capital of Coele-Syria. Its non-Syrian kings were constantly in trouble at home with the economy and abroad with the Parthians, Hasmoneans, and Nabateans, who under Aretas controlled Damascus from 84 to 72 BC. Subsequently, authority passed to the Hasmoneans, descendants of the Maccabees, and then the Idumeans (the Herods). The area was subjected to Roman dominance after the defeat of Syria by the Romans in 65 BC.

Shortly after the death of Christ, the Nabateans regained control of the area, ruling Damascus from Petra through an ethnarch. It was under the control of an Arab appointee, probably Aretas IV, when Saul of Tarsus sought Jewish authority to purge Damascus of its Christians ([2 Cor 11:32](#)). Luke's report in [Acts 9](#), corroborated by Paul's own confession ([Acts 22:5-21](#); [26:11-23](#)), relates Saul's vision, blinding, and subsequent conversion on the

road to Damascus. This may have been close to the place where Syrian soldiers were blinded when planning to assassinate Elisha ([2 Kgs 6:18–23](#)). After Saul's sight was restored in a house on the street called "Straight," he preached Christianity. Apparently the uproar in the Jewish quarter concerning his preaching was so great that the ethnarch was willing to condone Saul's murder by orthodox Jews. [Acts 9:23–25](#) describes his escape to Jerusalem. Damascus is not mentioned thereafter in biblical history.

See also Syria, Syrians.

See also Dan (Place); Dan, Tribe of.

Damnation

See Hell; Judgment.

Dan (Person)

The fifth son of the Jewish patriarch Jacob. Dan's mother was Bilhah, who was the servant of Jacob's wife Rachel ([Genesis 30:1–6](#)). Dan's descendants settled in Israel, overlooking the Huleh Plain. The settled in territory that was actually assigned to Naphtali, Dan's full brother ([Genesis 30:7–8](#); [35:25](#); [Joshua 19:32–48](#)). The two brothers are mentioned together in many references in the Bible (for example, [Exodus 1:4](#)).

Dan's name was given to him not by his mother Bilhah but by Rachel, who considered the child her own. Rachel had been unable to have children for a long time (which was considered shameful for women in ancient cultures). She was jealous of Jacob's other wife, Leah, who had already given birth to four sons. Rachel saw the birth of Bilhah's son as taking away her shame and as God's approval of her position as wife. The name Dan (which means "he judged") meant that God had judged her situation and had supported her through the child's birth ([Genesis 30:6](#)).

Dan had only one son to continue his line, Hushim ([Genesis 46:23](#); also called "Shuham" in [Numbers 26:42–43](#)). In Jacob's blessing to his sons, Dan was promised the role of "judge" among his people but was also described as one who would be secretive and dangerous, like a serpent ([Genesis 49:16–17](#)). How that blessing was fulfilled in the life of his descendants is unknown. The small amount of information given about Dan himself matches the minor importance of his tribe in later times.

Dan (Place)

1. A Phoenician city, first called Laish or Leshem ([Joshua 18:7](#); [19:47](#)). The tribe of Dan conquered this place when they moved northward. The city was located one day's journey from the city of Sidon. It was in a valley near Beth-rehob (verse [28](#)). It was at the southern base of Mount Hermon. Dan was the most northern point of the ancient kingdom of Israel. People often used Dan as a reference point when describing the whole land of Israel with the phrase "from Dan to Beersheba" (compare [Judges 20:1](#); [2 Samuel 3:10](#)).

The city of Dan was in an important location. It protected a major trading route that connected the cities of Damascus and Tyre. This made Dan an important center for business and trade. The Nahr el-Leddán was one of the main sources of the Jordan River. This source rose in the area. It made the Huleh Valley below Dan very green and fertile even in hot summers. Because of this fertile land, the area around Dan produced many crops like grain and vegetables. The land also provided plenty of food for sheep, goats, and cattle.

In the early Iron Age, [Judges 18:7](#) indicates that Dan was a prosperous city. But by the middle of the 11th century BC, someone had destroyed it. It is probable that this was a result of occupation by the Danites. Jeroboam I became king of the separate northern kingdom of Israel. At that time, Dan was one of two shrines where Israelites worshiped the golden calves. Archaeologists have found the high place at Tell el-Qadi (another name for Tell Dan). This high place was a square platform made of stone. It measured about 18.6 by 6.1 meters (61 by 20 feet). However, no trace of the golden calf statue has been found. The worship of Baal at Dan continued even after Jehu tried to remove it ([2 Kings 10:28–31](#)). Later, during Ben-

hadad's reign, the Syrians took control of Dan (compare verse [32](#)). When the Syrians were busy defending their eastern border from Assyrian attacks during the time of Jeroboam II (793–753 BC), Israel was able to take Dan back.

However, Dan did not stay under Israelite control for long. The people living in Dan were forced to move to Assyria. This was because Tiglath-pileser III deported those people living there ([2 Kings 17:6](#)). (Tiglath-pileser III was king of Assyria from 745 to 727 BC.) Yet, people continued to live at the site (compare [Jeremiah 4:15](#); [8:16](#)). The high place, or acropolis, at the northern end of the city continued to be used for religious purposes. This religious area was made larger during both Greek and Roman times. A statue of Aphrodite (a Roman goddess) from this period has been found there. In New Testament times, the city of Caesarea, which was only a few miles away, became more important than Dan. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the Roman general Titus put down a revolt at Dan in AD 67. (*War* 4.1). See also Dan (Person); Dan, Tribe of.

2. The word "Dan" in the King James Version in [Ezekiel 27:19](#) is a translation of an unclear Hebrew word "Vedan." In the Revised Standard Version Bible, this same word is translated as "wine," which was a product from Uzal. See also Uzal (Place).

Dan-jaan

A place that marked the northern border of King David's kingdom ([2 Samuel 24:6](#)). This is where Joab stopped when he was counting the people for David's census.

Some scholars think this name might be a copying mistake, since no town with a similar name is

known to have existed in that area. Others believe it means "Dan in the wood," and is simply referring to the city of Dan (see Revised Standard Version). Still others think it might be a town within the territory of Dan, possibly called Jaan, but all traces of this town have disappeared over time.

Dan, Tribe of

The Beginning of the Tribe of Dan

An Israelite tribe, named after Jacob's fifth son, Dan, and descended from his only known son, Hushim (also referred to as "Shuham" in [Numbers 26:42–43](#)). In its early years, the tribe of Dan did not distinguish itself significantly in the biblical narratives, though a few notable Danites were mentioned during the wilderness period:

- Oholiab, a skilled craftsman involved in the building of the tabernacle ([Exodus 31:6](#); [35:34](#); [38:23](#))
- A man whose mother married an Egyptian and who blasphemed (spoke disrespectfully about) God ([Leviticus 24:11](#))
- Ahiezer, chief prince of Dan, during the exodus out of Egypt ([Numbers 1:12](#))

At the first census in the wilderness, the tribe of Dan was the second-largest tribe, with 62,700 warriors ([Numbers 1:38–39](#)). They were instructed to encamp on the north side of the Israelites' camp with Asher and Naphtali ([Numbers 2:25–31](#)). They also were in the rear in the line of march ([Numbers 2:31](#); [10:25](#)). At the second census, just before entering the promised land, the tribe had grown to 64,400 warriors, maintaining its position as the second-largest tribe ([Numbers 26:42–43](#)).

The Tribe of Dan Moves North

The tribe is not notable during the conquest narratives (stories about taking over the land, [Deuteronomy 2:16–3:29](#); [Joshua 1–24](#); [Judges 1](#)). Dan is listed among the tribes who reminded Israel of the covenant curses (warnings about breaking God's agreement) at Mount Ebal ([Deuteronomy 27:13](#); compare [Joshua 8:30–33](#)). The tribe is called a "lion's whelp" in Moses's blessing ([Deuteronomy 33:22](#)). Some believe that the reference to "Bashan"

in that blessing hinted at Dan's move to the north, where they eventually settled.

One of the most significant references to Dan's tribe is the account of its move northward ([Joshua 19:40-48](#); [Judges 18](#)). The Danites had been given a territory between Judah and Ephraim that bordered the Mediterranean seacoast ([Joshua 19:40-46](#); [Judges 5:17](#)) but were unable to remain in this land except for the valley at Zorah and Eshtaol ([Judges 13:25](#); [18:2](#)). As a result, a group of discouraged Danites marched north and captured Laish, located about 40 kilometers (25 miles) north of the Sea of Galilee and just below the north of Israel. Laish was renamed Dan at that time ([Judges 18:27-29](#)). Their northern territory led to the expression "from Dan to Beersheba" ([Judges 20:1](#); [2 Samuel 3:10](#)) as defining Israel's northern and southern borders.

The Tribe of Dan Turns Away from God

While the northern settlement of Dan became important, the southern part of the tribe continued for a time, as shown by the actions of Samson, a Danite ([Judges 13-16](#)). Over time, however, the southern Danites appear to have merged into the tribe of Judah, as there are no further historical references to the southern Danite tribe in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the Danites are mentioned during King David's reign as building a large and loyal army ([1 Chronicles 12:35](#); [27:22](#)).

The Danites were among the tribes who did not force the Canaanites to leave their territory ([Joshua 13:4-5](#); compare [Judges 1:34-35](#)). Joshua had to encourage them to take up the task during the assembly at Shiloh ([Joshua 18:1-4](#); [19:40-48](#)). Eventually, the Danites abandoned their southern territory and moved north, where conquest was easier. Their disobedience was further displayed in their setting up of a "graven image" and establishing a rival priesthood, even though their priest was a Levite ([Judges 18:30-31](#)). They remained idolatrous, and after Israel divided, King Jeroboam of the northern kingdom of Israel chose the city of Dan as one of the locations for the idol shrines where he set up golden calves ([1 Kings 12:28-29](#)). The tribe's crimes, along with those of the other northern tribes, continued ([2 Kings 10:29](#)) until their eventual captivity by the Assyrians ([2 Kings 17:1-23](#)).

Despite their earlier turning away from God, the name of the tribe of Dan is mentioned in Ezekiel's vision of the idealized restored land and Jerusalem ([Ezekiel 48:1-2](#), [32](#)). In the New Testament, the

apostle John did not include the tribe from a list of Israel's tribes ([Revelation 7:4-8](#)).

See also Israel, History of; Dan (Person); Dan (Place).

Dance

Form of artistic expression incorporated into Israel's worship, used especially during times of celebration. *See* Music.

Dandelion

A plant (*Taraxacum officinale*) that is considered one of the bitter herbs. Dandelions are common flowering plants with bright yellow flowers that turn into fluffy seed heads. The leaves have a jagged, tooth-like shape (the name "dandelion" comes from the French *dent de lion* meaning "lion's tooth").

See Bitter Herbs.

Daniel (Person)

1. David's second son, the first by his wife Abigail ([1 Chronicles 3:1](#)). He is also called Kileab ([2 Samuel 3:3](#)). *See also* Kileab.
2. A priest who came from the family line of Ithamar. After the Jewish people returned from exile (when they were forced to live in Babylon), Daniel signed a special agreement (covenant) with Ezra and Nehemiah. In this covenant, they promised to be faithful to God ([Ezra 8:2](#); [Nehemiah 10:6](#)).

3. A Jewish statesman and prophet in the Babylonian court. As a prophet, Daniel received visions from God. His career is recounted in the book of Daniel. The book of Daniel tells his story. We do not know anything about Daniel's early life, parents, or family. However, he probably came from an important Jewish family ([Daniel 1:3](#)). Daniel may have been born during the time of King Josiah's religious reforms (around 621 BC). If so, he would have been about 16 when King Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel, along with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah from Jerusalem to Babylon. The Babylonian king may have taken these young men to make sure the royal family in Judah would cooperate with Babylon. The Babylonians gave Daniel a new name, Belteshazzar (which means "may Bel [god] protect his life"). He trained for court service and quickly became known for his intelligence and faithfulness to his God. After three years of training, he began a court career that lasted nearly 70 years ([Daniel 1:21](#)). Daniel had hardly finished his training when he was asked to interpret one of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. In the dream, a great image fell down and turned to dust when struck by a stone. God revealed its meaning to Daniel, who explained it to the king. Nebuchadnezzar thanked Daniel and offered him the position of governor of Babylonia. Daniel requested that the honor be given to his three companions (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) who were also forced to live in Bablyon. Near the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life, Daniel was able to interpret a second dream ([Daniel 4](#)). That dream predicted the king would soon live like a wild animal for a time, unable to rule as king. Daniel urged the king to repent, but he did not ([4:27](#)). As a

result, for a period of time he became crazy.

King Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC. After this, Daniel was no longer as important in the royal court. He may have had a lower position. For several years, he stayed out of public view. During this time, God gave Daniel special visions in 555 and 553 BC, during the first and third years when a man named Belshazzar was ruling Babylon ([Daniel 7-8](#)).

It was not until 539 BC that Daniel made another public appearance. During a feast hosted by Belshazzar, the king disrespected holy vessels (cups and bowls) that had been stolen from the Jerusalem temple. A light appeared by itself and wrote strange words on the palace wall: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin." No one knew what these words meant. The king called for Daniel to explain the message. Daniel told him that God was warning him that the kingdom of Babylon would soon end. That very night, this came true. The Persian army attacked the city, and Belshazzar was killed ([5:30](#)).

After this, a new ruler named Darius the Mede took control. He chose Daniel as one of three top leaders to help manage the kingdom ([6:2](#)). Daniel did his work so well that other officials became very jealous. They wanted to get rid of him, but they could not find anything wrong with his work.

These officials came up with a plan. They convinced King Darius to make a new law that said people could only pray to the king. The punishment for breaking the law was being thrown into a den of lions. Daniel knew about this law, but he continued to pray to God three times each day as he had always done. When the officials caught Daniel praying, they took him to the king. Even though the king did not want to punish Daniel, he had to

follow his own law. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den. However, God protected Daniel, and the lions did not hurt him at all. The next day, when the king found Daniel alive and unharmed, he restored Daniel to his high position (verses [17-28](#)). The last part of the book of Daniel describes several visions he received of future events. The visions dealt with four beasts (chapter [7](#)), future kingdoms (chapter [8](#)), the coming of God's chosen leader, the Messiah (chapter [9](#)), and Syria and Egypt (chapters [11-12](#)). The prophet Ezekiel referred to Daniel's great wisdom ([Ezekiel 28:3](#)). He also compared him in righteousness with Noah and Job ([14:14, 20](#)).

See also Daniel, Book of; Diaspora of the Jews; Prophet, Prophetess.

Daniel, Additions to

A book that is part of the Deuterocanonical works (books that only some Christian traditions consider Scripture). It consists of three additional sections to the book of Daniel. This additional material is only found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament book of Daniel. It was not included in ancient Hebrew-Aramaic copies of Daniel.

The first addition is The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, which was placed between [Daniel 3:23](#) and [3:24](#). These 68 verses describe what occurred to Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael in the fiery furnace.

The second addition is Susanna and the Elders, a story about a woman who Daniel saved from a wrongful execution. The location of this story in the text varies. In the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate (two early translations of the Bible), it follows [Daniel 12](#). The Old Latin, Coptic, and Arabic versions place it before chapter [1](#). This is because of Daniel's apparent youth within the story.

The third addition is Bel and the Dragon. It is a story of Daniel tricking pagan priests and killing a dragon "without sword or club." The Roman Catholic Church includes the Additions to Daniel in its canon (the official list of books that are considered Scripture).

Preview

- Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men
- Susanna and the Elders
- Bel and the Dragon

Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men

This chapter is a prayer for deliverance and a song of praise by the three young Jewish men thrown into King Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. These three youths and Daniel were taken to the court of the Babylonian king during the exile of the kingdom of Judah ([Daniel 1:1-6](#)). Azariah was renamed Abednego (verse [7](#)).

He and his two friends refused to worship the king's gold statue and were condemned to death ([Daniel 3:1-23](#)). However, they were saved by God and "there was no smell of fire on them" (verses [24-27](#)). The king realized that their God saved them and commanded that no one should ever dishonor their God (verses [28-30](#)).

As said above, the Prayer and Song are only found in early Greek and Latin versions of Daniel. The additions were written between the Old and New Testaments. It is unclear what language they were written in. These two sections were possibly written in Hebrew. Yet, they first appear in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament from the second or third century BC. These extra sections were placed after [Daniel 3:23](#). Thus, Daniel contained 68 extra verses in the Septuagint between [Daniel 3:23](#) and [3:24](#). The first 22 verses are the Prayer of Azariah.

When he translated the Bible into Latin in the fourth century AD, Jeromone kept the additions even though they were not in the original texts. Jerome's "Vulgate" Bible included 14 or 15 books or portions of books that are not considered Scripture. These writings are known as the Old Testament Apocrypha. These sections are usually not included in Protestant Bibles. When Martin Luther translated the Bible into German in AD 1534, he separated these sections to the end of the Old Testament. He wrote that the Apocrypha (plural form of a Greek word meaning "hidden") was "useful and good to read" but not equal to the rest of the Bible.

Azariah's prayer is a "useful and good" example of prayer. It is similar to Daniel's prayer in [Daniel 9:3-19](#) and also to some biblical psalms (like Psalms 31

and 51). It contains confession, repentance, and a plea for help. Azariah admits that God's people deserve justice "because of our sins" but asks God to remember his promise to bless the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He offers "a contrite heart and a humble spirit" as a sacrifice and promises himself and his companions to God.

After Azariah's prayer, "the angel of the Lord" comes down and "made the midst of the furnace like a moist whistling wind." The three young men praise God "as with one mouth." Their song, like [Psalm 148](#), asks all of creation to "bless the Lord."

Susanna and the Elders

In the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, this story comes after the book of Daniel. The author was probably a Jewish person living in Palestine in the first century BC. However, the story occurs in Babylon.

Susanna was the daughter of Hilkiah. She was a very beautiful woman who was married to Joakim. Joakim was a rich and respected man. Joakim allowed the Jewish exiles to enter his beautiful garden, which made him more respected. The elders and judges would meet in the garden. Eventually, two elders who had been elected as judges became attracted to Susanna. They returned to Joakim's garden frequently because they were judges. On occasion, the two judges would stare at Susanna. They did not know each other felt the same way towards her. One day, they were forced to confess their lust for Susanna to each other. They made a plot to seduce Susanna.

Susanna would bathe in the garden pool to cool herself off when it was hot. One day, she came to the pool with her two maids to bathe. The three ladies did not know the two judges were there because they were hiding. When the two maids left to get soap and olive oil, the judges approached Susanna. They confessed their sexual desire for her and asked to sleep with her. The two judges had made a plan. If Susanna said no, they would lie and say that Susanna was committing adultery with a young man. Susanna believed that adultery was a sin punishable by death. So, she refused the judges, shouted for help, and hoped that her household would protect her. The judges then falsely accused Susanna to her servants.

Susanna was taken to court. The men were respected in the community, and they both testified against Susanna. She had no chance for a fair trial. The court judged her guilty of adultery and

sentenced her to death. But a man named Daniel intervened. He asked for the trial to be reopened. He wanted to question the witnesses separately. When spoken to again, the men's testimonies were different. One claimed that he had seen Susanna with the young man under a clove tree. The other had seen them together under an oak tree. With these differences, the court realized the judges were lying, and Susanna was innocent. The two judges were put to death because of their deceit.

There are three purposes to this story.

1. It celebrates Susanna's piety and virtue. It also condemns the judge's corruption, as they "no longer prayed to God, but let their thoughts stray from him and forgot" their morality.
2. It rejects a legal method where two witnesses could falsely accuse somebody their testimony could be accepted as true. Naboth, Jesus, and others had been accused by false witnesses and found guilty without the accusers being questioned.
3. The story introduces Daniel, a young man who is wiser than the elders.

Bel and the Dragon

The book "Bel and the Dragon" is considered an apocryphal book by the Protestant churches (and is not included in the list of books considered Scripture). However, the Roman Catholic Church confirmed it as canonical (and included it in the list of books considered Scripture) at the Council of Trent (1545–63).

The book contains two stories about Daniel:

- The story of Bel
- The story of the Dragon

The book takes place in Babylon during the reign of King Cyrus. Daniel was respected by the king and lived as his companion. But he continued to worship God and to pray. Cyrus and the Babylonians worshiped Bel, also known as Marduk (Merodach in the Old Testament).

One day, the king ordered Daniel to worship Bel, claiming he was a powerful god because of his large appetite. The king explained that every day Bel ate 12 bushels (or 432 liters) of flour, 40 sheep, and 50 gallons (or 189 liters) of wine. To the locals, Bel

was obviously a mighty god. Daniel argued that an idol is made of clay and bronze, and could not eat the food. Daniel claimed he could prove it. The king was angry and asked the priests to tell him what happened to the food. They responded that it was eaten by the god.

The next day, the food was placed in the temple. Unknown to the priests, Daniel had his servants sprinkle fine ashes on the floor. The temple was locked with the signet rings of the king and the priests. The next morning, the seals were not broken, and everyone entered the temple. The king saw that the table was empty, and he praised Bel. However, Daniel pointed to footprints in the ashes. The priests had been entering by a secret door and removing the food. Cyrus ordered the 70 priests and their families killed and allowed Daniel to destroy the temple.

The second tale is about the worship of a dragon (possibly a serpent). The Babylonians worshiped a dragon. The king argued to Daniel that it was alive because everyone had seen it eat and drink. Daniel refused the king's request to worship an idol. Daniel even asked to kill the dragon without using either a sword or a staff. This seemed impossible to the king, so he permitted Daniel to try and kill the dragon. Daniel mixed pitch, fat, and hair, boiled it together, formed it into cakes, and fed it to the dragon. The dragon burst apart and died. The Babylonians were angry their dragon-god had died and confronted the king. They believed that he had converted to Judaism. To avoid their anger, the king gave Daniel to them to be put to death.

Every day, two criminals would be thrown into a pit of seven lions. When Daniel was thrown into the pit, the lions had not been fed. But, after six days, Daniel was still alive. In a later addition to the text, the Lord sent an angel to the prophet Habakkuk and ordered him to bring food to Daniel. Habakkuk argued that he had never been to Babylon. So, the angel took him by the hair and brought him to the lions' den. Habakkuk told Daniel that the Lord had remembered him and gave him the food.

The next day, the king arrived to mourn Daniel. Instead, he found his friend alive. Daniel was released from the den, and his accusers were thrown in and eaten by the hungry lions.

Bel and the Dragon exists in Greek and Syriac but was probably written in Hebrew. We do not know who wrote the story or when it was written. The story of Bel could have been written as early as the fourth century BC. The story of the dragon was

probably written later by a different author. It was probably written around 150–100 BC, in a time of great religious and political difficulty for the Jews.

Bel and the Dragon was written to argue that worshipping idols was pointless. It also argued that followers of the Lord need to stay strong in their faith, even when facing persecution and hard times. In both stories, the Babylonian gods are disrespected. The book may also have been a warning not to trust heathen friends, who might betray their friends in times of trouble. Even though Daniel was the king's companion, the king handed Daniel over to a mob when facing pressure.

In the story of Bel, Daniel confronted a god who was worshiped in Babylon for over 2000 years. Bel is mentioned many times in cuneiform inscriptions (ancient clay tablets). For example, Nebuchadnezzar II built the temple of Bel to be one of the finest ziggurats. This temple was a tall, pyramid-shaped tower. The author of these stories would have known that the Persian king Xerxes I, who ruled from 486 to 464 BC, destroyed the temple. Xerxes I had then taken the seated golden image from the shrine. By the time of Alexander the Great around 330 BC, the temple was a ruin. The dragon was a well-known figure in Near Eastern religion and Sumerian legends.

Danite

Member of Dan's tribe ([Jos 19:47](#); [1 Chr 12:35](#)). See Dan, Tribe of.

Dannah

Town located in the hill country of Judah between Socoh and Kiriath-sannah (Debir) ([Jos 15:49](#)).

Daphne

A beautiful grove and sanctuary to Apollo located near Antioch in Syria. The Greek ruler Seleucus I lived here and built a huge statue of Apollo in addition to a temple. Here, criminals and political refugees could take asylum, as it was illegal to arrest anyone within Daphne. In [2 Maccabees 4:33](#) the high priest Onias, who had been true to Yahweh in boldly scolding King Menelaus, hid here. He was, however, brought out by trickery and murdered.

Dara, Darda

Mahol's son ([1 Kgs 4:31](#)), a Judahite of the family of Zerah ([1 Chr 2:6](#)). With Ethan the Ezrahite and Heman and Calcol, also sons of Mahol, Darda is mentioned as the proverbial example of wisdom, though he is surpassed by Solomon ([1 Kgs 4:31-32](#)). [First Chronicles 2:6](#) sometimes gives the name as Dara, probably the error of a copyist, and includes a fifth man, Zimri. That there are two different fathers (Mahol and Zerah) mentioned in the two passages may be explained by making Mahol the natural father and Zerah the Ezrahite an earlier ancestor.

Daric

Persian gold coin. *See* Coins.

Darius

Name of three emperors in the Persian dynasty of the legendary King Achaemenes. A Darius appears in the biblical books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah as a Persian king, and in the book of Daniel as a Mede who became king over the Chaldeans ([Dn 9:1](#)).

Darius I (521–486 BC)

Also known as Darius Hystaspes and Darius the Great, Darius I seized the throne of the Persian Empire after the death of Cambyses II. Although he was an Achaemenid, he was from a different branch of the royal family than Cyrus and Cambyses, and his authority was not accepted in all the provinces. After Darius quelled several revolts, however, his power was firmly established, and he turned his attention to expanding the empire. His military campaigns extended Persian borders to the Danube River in the west and to the Indus River in the east, making him ruler of the largest empire the world had known. Greco-Persian conflict, which continued until Alexander the Great conquered the empire in 330 BC, began when Darius launched two invasions of Greece after conquering Thrace and Macedonia. The first expedition was destroyed by a storm in the Aegean Sea; the second was defeated by the Athenians in the famous battle of Marathon in 490 BC.

An able administrator, Darius did much to promote trade and commerce. He instituted a uniform system of weights and measures. During his reign,

a canal from the Nile River to the Red Sea was completed, and a sea route from the Indus River to Egypt was explored.

During Darius's reign, Persian architecture developed a style that continued until the end of the Achaemenid dynasty. Darius built at Babylon, Ecbatana, and Susa, his capital. A great royal road was constructed from Susa to the Lydian capital of Sardis. His greatest architectural accomplishment was the founding of Persepolis, a new royal city to replace the emperor's residence at Pasargadae. Darius also allowed temples to be built in Egypt and in Jerusalem, continuing Cyrus's policy of respecting the religious customs of his subjects.

Darius I is the Darius, king of Persia, mentioned in the books of Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah. [Ezra 5–6](#) record that Zerubbabel and Jeshua, with the help of Haggai and Zechariah, finished rebuilding the temple during Darius's reign while Tattenai was governor of the province "Beyond the River" (Syria-Palestine). Zerubbabel and Jeshua had returned to Jerusalem under Cyrus II about 538 BC ([Ezr 2:2](#)). They completed the temple in the sixth year of Darius ([6:15](#)). That must have been the sixth year of Darius I (516 BC), since the sixth year of Darius II would certainly be too late. That identification was confirmed by discovery of a Babylonian document, dated June 5, 502 BC, which refers to Tattenai as "the governor of Beyond the River."

In chapter [4](#) of Ezra three Persian rulers are mentioned: Darius (vv [5, 24](#)); Ahasuerus (probably Xerxes I, v [6](#)); and Artaxerxes (probably Artaxerxes I, vv [7–23](#)). The chapter is a brief record of resistance to Jewish efforts to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Verse [24](#) states that work on the temple stopped until "the second year of the reign of Darius," yet the temple was completed in the sixth year of Darius I. Obviously, work on the temple could not have stopped in the second year of Artaxerxes' son Darius II (421 BC) if it had already been finished in 515 BC. Therefore, [Ezra 4:24](#) should be understood not as a chronological continuation of the first 23 verses but as an introduction to the next two chapters, which discuss the building of the temple.

Darius II (423–404 BC)

Also known as Ochus (his real name) and Darius Nothus ("Darius the bastard"), Darius II was the son of Artaxerxes I by a Babylonian concubine. Before he became emperor, Ochus was a satrap (governor) of Hyrcania, a region on the southeast

coast of the Caspian Sea. In 423 BC his half brother, Sogdianus (or Secydianus), killed Xerxes II. Ochus then seized the throne from Sogdianus, whom he executed, and adopted the name Darius II. His reign was plagued with revolution and corruption. His own full brother, Arsites, revolted soon after Darius seized the throne, and Darius had him executed.

After an alliance with Sparta was formed against Athens, Persia joined the Peloponnesian War. Several successful military campaigns succeeded in recovering the Greek coastal cities of Asia Minor and breaking Athenian power in the Aegean area. Darius II died in Babylon in 404 BC, the year the Peloponnesian War ended.

The Darius mentioned only once in the book of Nehemiah probably is Darius II. The passage states that Jewish priests were recorded “until the reign of Darius the Persian” ([Neh 12:22b](#)); descendants of Levi were recorded “until the days of Johanan son of Eliashib” ([Neh 12:23](#)). An Aramaic document found in Elephantine, Egypt, refers to Johanan the high priest in Jerusalem. The document was written in 407 BC, thus placing Johanan in the reign of Darius II.

Darius the Mede

Unknown in historical documents of the period of the Babylonian and Persian empires, this biblical Darius has been identified with several known figures. The most important efforts have identified Darius the Mede as another name for Cyrus II (“Cyrus the Persian,” [Dn 6:28](#)); for Cambyses II, Cyrus’s son; or for Gubaru, who was governor of Babylon and the province Beyond the River during the reigns of Cyrus II and Cambyses II.

According to the book of Daniel, “Darius the Mede received the kingdom” when Belshazzar, king of Babylon, was slain ([Dn 5:30–31](#)). Darius was about 62 years old (v [31](#)) and was “the son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede” ([9:1](#)). Daniel never suggested that Darius was king of Media or of the whole Persian Empire, only of the Chaldean (Babylonian) kingdom. The Babylonian Empire included Mesopotamia (Babylonia and Assyria) and Syro-Palestine (Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine). In the Persian Empire, that huge area became known as the province of Babylon (Mesopotamia) and Beyond the River (Syro-Palestine). Daniel also recorded that Darius appointed governors in the kingdom. By the third year of Cyrus the Persian (536 BC), the first year of Darius the Mede had already passed ([Dn 10:1–11:1](#)).

According to Nabonidus’s Chronicle and the Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus (two cuneiform documents from Nabonidus’s reign), Nabonidus was in Tema until Cyrus’s invasion of Babylonia. While he was away, he “entrusted the kingship” to his son Belshazzar. On October 12, 539 BC, Babylon fell to Ugbaru, general of Cyrus’s army. Cyrus entered Babylon on October 29, 539 BC, and appointed a person named Gubaru governor of Babylon. Gubaru then appointed other governors under him. General Ugbaru died on November 6, 539 BC.

Clearly there is no place for Darius the Mede between the reigns of Nabonidus/Belshazzar and Cyrus II. Thus Darius the Mede must be Cyrus, a subordinate of Cyrus, or Cambyses, crown prince under Cyrus. But Cyrus II is mentioned as a separate person ([Dn 6:28](#); [10:1–11:1](#)), and it seems unlikely that the author would name the same figure both “Cyrus the Persian” and “Darius the Mede.” Cambyses II could not have been 62 years old; also, since he was not made king of Babylon until he became king of the empire in 529 BC, Cambyses’ first year could not precede Cyrus’s third year (536 BC).

Darius the Mede was thus probably a subordinate of Cyrus who was made ruler of “the realm of the Chaldeans” after Belshazzar and who could have been considered a king by his subjects. Accordingly, the reign of Darius ([Dn 6:28](#)) should be understood as simultaneous with that of Cyrus, not as a preceding reign. Thus, Gubaru was made governor of Babylon immediately following the reign of Belshazzar, and he appointed governors, as did Darius the Mede. There is no record of Gubaru’s age, nationality, or ancestry. He may well have been a 62-year-old Mede whose father was named Ahasuerus. The Ahasuerus of the book of Esther and of [Ezra 4:6](#) should be identified with a later king, probably Xerxes I.

Many Babylonian texts record that Gubaru was governor of Babylon and the province Beyond the River for about 14 years (539–525 BC). The documents attribute much power to him. His name is a final warning to officials who might disobey the laws. In documents that mention Cyrus II or Cambyses II, crimes in Babylon are stated to be sins against Gubaru, not against Cyrus or Cambyses. The province of Babylon and Beyond the River was the richest and most populous in the Persian Empire, encompassing many nations and languages. For a powerful governor of such a

region to be called "king" by his subjects seems only natural.

The case for Gubaru is admittedly circumstantial, but it remains the best solution to the problem. Until further evidence comes to light, it is safe to assume that Darius the Mede, "king over the realm of the Chaldeans," was actually Gubaru, the known governor of that realm.

See also Medes, Media, Median; Persia, Persians.

Darkness

The absence of light or brightness. In the Bible, the word "darkness" usually has a symbolic meaning rather than just describing places without light.

Literal Darkness in the Bible

In the story of creation, God first made the world without light. Then God commanded light to appear, and he separated light from darkness. He called the darkness "night" ([Genesis 1:2, 4-5, 18](#)). Literal darkness is also mentioned during the plagues in Egypt. The ninth plague was a darkness that could be "felt" ([Exodus 10:21-23](#)). The darkness lasted three days and only affected the Egyptians. Wherever Egyptians were, it was dark, but where the Israelites were, there was light. The Israelites left Egypt accompanied by a cloud that made it light for the Israelites but dark for the Egyptians ([Exodus 14:20](#)). The Bible says that thieves and adulterers do their evil deeds in the dark or at night ([Job 24:16-17](#)).

The New Testament mentions literal darkness (not symbolic darkness) two times. The first time was when Jesus died on the cross. For three hours, from midday until 3:00 in the afternoon, the land was covered in darkness ([Matthew 27:45](#); [Mark 15:33](#); [Luke 23:44](#)). During Christ's second coming, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light" ([Matthew 24:29](#)).

God's Control of Light and Darkness

Several Bible verses describe darkness surrounding God. This starts with the idea of a simple lack of light but then grows to have a deeper meaning. God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai from a thick, dark cloud ([Exodus 20:21](#); [Deuteronomy 4:11](#)). Or, God spoke from the darkness ([Deuteronomy 5:23](#)). Darkness is described as God's shelter or cloak ([2 Samuel 22:12](#); [Psalms 18:11](#); [97:2](#)).

God has power over both light and darkness:

- God controls where light and darkness go ([Job 26:10](#)).
- God makes darkness come ([Psalms 104:20](#); [105:28](#)).
- God creates light and darkness ([Isaiah 45:7](#)).

The Bible also says that God lives in deep darkness ([1 Kings 8:12](#); [2 Chronicles 6:1](#)). Thick darkness is beneath God's feet ([2 Samuel 22:10](#); [Psalm 18:9](#)).

Darkness as a Symbol

The Bible often uses darkness as a symbol, especially in books of poetry like Job, Psalms, and Isaiah. When the Bible uses darkness this way, it usually means not knowing God's will. The Bible uses light and darkness to explain something important: when people know God, it is like having light. When people do not know God, it is like being in darkness ([Job 12:24-25](#); [Matthew 4:16](#); [John 1:5](#); [8:12](#); [12:35, 46](#); [1 John 1:5](#); [2:8-9, 11](#)).

In the book of Job, darkness sometimes means complete emptiness ([Job 3:4-6](#)). The Bible also uses darkness to talk about death. It describes the place of the dead as a dark land without light ([Job 10:21-22](#); [15:24](#); [17:12-13](#); [18:18](#); [Ecclesiastes 6:4](#); [11:8](#)).

In the Bible, darkness often represents bad feelings like fear and worry. It can also mean the troubles that sinners experience ([Genesis 15:12](#); [Job 5:14](#); [12:25](#); [15:22, 30](#); [19:8](#); [22:11](#); [Psalms 35:6](#); [107:10, 14](#); [Ecclesiastes 5:17](#); [Isaiah 5:30](#)). Sometimes the Bible uses darkness to mean evil behavior ([Proverbs 2:13](#); [4:19](#); [Isaiah 5:20](#); [60:2](#)). In the New Testament, when writers talk about darkness, they usually mean two things: people doing evil things and people not understanding God's truth ([Matthew 4:16](#); [6:23](#); [Luke 1:79](#); [11:35](#); [22:53](#); [Romans 2:19](#); [Colossians 1:13](#)).

The Old Testament prophets often wrote about a special time they called the Day of the Lord." They said this day would be very dark ([Ezra 32:8](#); [Joel 2:2, 31](#); [Amos 5:18, 20](#); [Zephaniah 1:15](#)). The New Testament also talks about darkness when describing the time when Jesus will return to judge the world ([Matthew 8:12](#); [22:13](#); [25:30](#); [2 Peter 2:17](#); [Jude 1:6, 13](#)). The Bible says that when people come to know God, it is like moving from darkness into light ([Isaiah 9:2](#); [29:18](#);

[42:7](#)). Darkness cannot be a hiding place from God ([Job 34:22](#); [Psalm 139:11–12](#); [Isaiah 29:15](#)).

See also Light.

Darkon

Ancestor of a group of people who returned to Judah with Zerubbabel after the exile ([Ezr 2:56](#); [Neh 7:58](#)).

Darnel Grass

A grass that looks very similar to wheat or rye. Scholars generally agree that the "weeds" mentioned in [Matthew 13:24–30](#) are the annual or bearded darnel grass (*Lolium temulentum*). The seeds of darnel are much smaller than wheat or rye seeds, but it is extremely difficult to tell darnel apart from wheat or rye when the plants are young.

If darnel is not removed early but is left until harvest time, it gets cut down with the wheat. After cutting, the two plants are very difficult to separate. The seeds of darnel grass are poisonous, either because of natural chemicals they contain or because of a fungus that grows inside the seeds.

Dart

Sharp, pointed weapon used as an arrow or light spear for thrusting. See Armor and Weapons.

Date, Date Palm

The fruit of the date palm tree. The Bible mentions this fruit and tree only a few times in [2 Samuel 6:19](#), [1 Chronicles 16:3](#), and [Song of Solomon 7:7](#).

See Palm, Date Palm.

Dathan

A son of Eliab and brother of Abiram from the tribe of Reuben. He was one of the leaders of Israel. Along with Korah, Dathan rebelled against Moses. This happened during the wilderness wanderings of Israel ([Numbers 16:1–27](#); [26:9](#); [Psalm 106:17](#)).

Dathema

A fortress in Bashan where Jews took refuge during the Maccabean revolt ([1 Macc 5:9](#)). Here they hid from Timothy until Judas the Maccabee rescued them by defeating the enemy (v [29](#)). The location of Dathema has not been identified by modern archeologists.

Daughter

See Family Life and Relations.

Daughter-in-Law

See Family Life and Relations.

David

Israel's most important king. David's kingdom represented the epitome of Israel's power and influence during the nation's OT history.

The two books in the OT devoted to David's reign are 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. His earlier years are recorded in 1 Samuel, beginning at chapter [16](#). Almost half of the biblical psalms are ascribed to David. His importance extends into the NT, where he is identified as an ancestor of Jesus Christ and forerunner of the messianic king.

Preview

- Early Years
- Preparation for Kingship
- David as King

David's Lasting Influence

Early Years

Family

David was the youngest son in Jesse's family, part of Judah's tribe. The family lived in Bethlehem, about six miles (10 kilometers) south of Jerusalem. His great-grandmother was Ruth, from the land of Moab ([Ru 4:18–22](#)). Genealogies in both the OT and the NT trace David's lineage back to Judah, son of the patriarch Jacob ([1 Chr 2:3–15](#); [Mt 1:3–6](#); [Lk 3:31–33](#)).

Training and Talents

Little is known about David's early life. As a boy, he took care of his father's sheep, risking his life to kill attacking bears and lions. Later, David publicly acknowledged God's help and strength in protecting the flocks under his care ([1 Sm 17:34-37](#)).

David was an accomplished musician. He had developed his ability as a harpist so well that, when a musician was needed at the royal court of King Saul, someone immediately recommended David.

In Jesse's family, David was regarded as unimportant. When the nationally known prophet Samuel visited Jesse's home, all the older sons were on hand to meet him; David was tending the sheep. Samuel had been instructed by God to anoint a king from Jesse's family, not knowing beforehand which son to anoint. Sensing divine restraint as seven brothers passed before him, he made further inquiry. When he learned that Jesse had one other son, David was immediately summoned. David was anointed by Samuel and endowed with the Spirit of the Lord ([1 Sm 16:1-13](#)). Whatever Jesse and his family understood by that anointing, it seems to have made no immediate change in David's pattern of living. He continued to tend the sheep.

Preparation for Kingship

During his youth, David was willing to serve others, even though he had been anointed king. It was his willingness to take supplies to three of his older brothers in the army that gave him his opportunity for national fame.

As a young man, David was also sensitive toward God. While greeting his brothers on the battlefield, he was disturbed by the Philistine Goliath's defiance of God's armies. Although rebuked by his brothers, David accepted the challenge to take on Goliath. He had a reasonable confidence that God, who had helped him encounter a lion and a bear, would aid him against a champion warrior. So, with faith in God and using his ability to sling stones, David killed Goliath ([1 Sm 17:12-58](#)).

National Fame

Killing Goliath made David a hero to the nation of Israel. It also brought him into close relationship with the royal family of Saul. But success and national acclaim brought on the jealousy of Saul and ultimately resulted in David's expulsion from the land of Israel.

In the Royal Court

Saul promised his oldest daughter, Merab, to David in marriage, but then Saul went back on the promise and offered David another daughter, Michal. The dowry of trophies from dead Philistines demanded by Saul was designed to bring about David's death at Philistine hands. But again David was victorious. Women sang praises of his exploits, intensifying Saul's jealousy and further endangering David's life ([1 Sm 18:6-30](#)).

In the meantime, David and Saul's son Jonathan developed a deep friendship. When they made a covenant, Jonathan gave David his choicest military equipment (sword, bow, and belt). Although Saul tried to turn Jonathan against David, the friendship deepened. Because Saul was trying to kill him, David had to flee from the court and live as a fugitive.

After Jonathan had warned David of Saul's continuing designs on his life, David went to Ramah to see the prophet Samuel. Together they went to Naioth, near Ramah. After sending several groups of men after David, Saul finally went with them himself. All his attempts to seize David were thwarted by the Spirit of God, who caused Saul and his men to prophesy all night in religious fervor ([1 Sm 19](#)).

Conferring again with Jonathan, David realized that Saul's jealousy had developed into hatred. Jonathan, aware that David would be the future king of Israel, requested assurance that his descendants would receive protection under David's rule ([1 Sm 20](#)).

Life as a Fugitive

Fleeing from Saul, David stopped at Nob. By deceiving Ahimelech, who was officiating as priest there, David obtained food supplies and Goliath's sword (kept as a trophy). An Edomite named Doeg, chief of Saul's herdsmen, saw what happened at Nob. David continued his flight, taking refuge temporarily in Gath with King Achish ([1 Sm 21](#)), then finding shelter in the cave of Adullam, located 10 miles (16.1 kilometers) southwest of Bethlehem. There his relatives and about 400 fighting men joined him. He went to Mizpeh in Moab, appealing to the Moabite king for protection, especially for his parents. When the prophet Gad warned him not to stay there, David moved back to Judah to the Hereth woods ([1 Sm 22:1-5](#)).

David's freedom of movement enraged Saul, who charged his own people with conspiracy. When

Doeg reported what he had witnessed at Nob, Saul executed Ahimelech and 84 other priests, then massacred all of Nob's inhabitants. One priest named Abiathar escaped to report Saul's atrocities to David, who assured him of protection ([1 Sm 22:6-23](#)).

The Philistines were always ready to take advantage of any weakness in Israel. David's reprisal after a Philistine raid on Keilah, 12 miles (19.3 kilometers) southwest of Bethlehem, gave Saul an opportunity to attack David, who escaped to the wilderness of Ziph, a desert area near Hebron. David and Jonathan met for the last time in that wilderness. Pursued by Saul's army, David fled still farther south. He was almost encircled in uninhabited country near Maon when Saul had to march his army off to respond to a Philistine attack ([1 Sm 23](#)).

At his next place of refuge, En-gedi, on the western shore of the Dead Sea, David was attacked by Saul with 3,000 soldiers. David had an opportunity to kill Saul but refused to harm the "Lord's anointed" king of Israel. Learning of David's loyalty, Saul confessed his sin in seeking David's life ([1 Sm 24](#)).

During the years they roamed the wilderness in the Maon/Ziph/En-gedi area, David's band provided protection for Nabal, a rich man living in Maon with large flocks of sheep at Carmel. In exchange for that protection, David proposed that Nabal share some of his wealth. Nabal's scorn angered David, but Nabal's wife, Abigail, appealed to David not to take revenge. When Abigail told Nabal of his narrow escape, he was evidently so shocked that he had a heart seizure. He died ten days later, and Abigail later became David's wife ([1 Sm 25](#)).

Once more Saul came with an army of 3,000 men into the Ziph Desert to find David, and David again passed up an opportunity to harm the king. Finally realizing the folly of seeking David's life, Saul abandoned pursuit ([1 Sm 26](#)).

Refuge in Philistia

David continued to feel unsafe in Saul's kingdom. Returning to Gath in Philistine country, he was welcomed by King Achish. His followers were allotted the city of Ziklag, where they lived for about 16 months, attracting new recruits from Judah and the rest of Israel ([1 Sm 27](#); [1 Chr 12:19-22](#)).

The Philistine army, marching up to the Megiddo Valley to fight Saul's army, was uneasy with David's guerrillas in their rear column, so the commanders

put pressure on Achish to dismiss David. When he returned to Ziklag, David found that the city had just been raided by the Amalekites. He pursued the enemy, rescued his people and goods, and divided the spoils with those who had remained behind to guard the supplies ([1 Sm 29-30](#)). Meanwhile, the Philistines routed the Israelites at Mt Gilboa, killing Jonathan and two of Saul's other sons in a fierce battle. Saul, badly wounded, killed himself with his own sword (ch [31](#)).

David as King

David ruled over Israel for about 40 years, although the accounts of his reign do not contain enough information for an exact chronology. He began his rule at Hebron and reigned over Judah's territory for seven or eight years. With the death of Saul's successor, Ishbosheth, David was recognized as king by all the tribes and made Jerusalem his capital. During the next decade, he unified Israel through military and economic expansion. Then came approximately 10 years of disruption in the royal family. The last years of David's reign seem to have been devoted to plans for the Jerusalem temple, which was built in the reign of his son Solomon.

The Years in Hebron

David was subjected to an unusually rugged period of training for his kingship. Serving under Saul, he gained experience in military exploits against the Philistines. Then, during his fugitive wanderings in the desert area of southern Judah, he ingratiated himself with the landholders and sheep raisers by giving them protection. Being recognized as an outlaw of Israel even enabled him to negotiate diplomatic relations with Moab and Philistia.

David was in Philistine country when news came to him that both Saul and Jonathan had been slain. In a beautiful elegy he paid tribute to his friend Jonathan as well as to King Saul ([2 Sm 1](#)).

Sure of God's guidance, David returned to his home, where the leaders of Judah anointed him king at Hebron. He sent a message of commendation to the men of Jabesh for providing a respectable burial for King Saul, probably also bidding for their support.

Confusion probably swept through Israel when Saul was killed, because the Philistines occupied much of the land. Various leaders gathered whatever fighting men they could find, as old tribal loyalties reasserted themselves. David had most of Judah's tribe firmly behind him.

A kind of civil war broke out between the followers of David and those of Saul, with David gaining the allegiance of more and more people. Saul's general, Abner, eventually negotiated peace with David, who requested the restoration of Michal as his wife, indicating that he held no animosity toward Saul's dynasty. With the consent of Saul's son Ishbosheth, whom Abner had enthroned as king, Abner went to Hebron and pledged Israel's support for David. But Abner was killed by Joab, one of David's captains, in a family vendetta, and soon afterward Ishbosheth was assassinated. David publicly mourned Abner's death and had Ishbosheth's two murderers executed. Thus, when Saul's dynasty ended, David was seen by the people not so much as a challenger but as a logical successor. Hence, he was recognized as king by all Israel ([2 Sm 2-4](#)).

Consolidation in Jerusalem

When the Israelites turned to David as king, the Philistines became alarmed and attacked ([2 Sm 5](#); [1 Chr 14:8-17](#)). David was strong enough to defeat them and thus unify the people of Israel.

In search of a more central location for his capital, David turned toward the city of Jerusalem, a Jebusite stronghold. Joab responded to his challenge to conquer the city and was rewarded by being made general of David's army. Jerusalem became known as the "city of David" ([1 Chr 11:4-9](#)).

In the same way that he had organized his earliest followers into an effective guerrilla band ([1 Chr 11:1-12:22](#)) at Hebron, David began organizing the whole nation ([12:23-40](#)). Once established in Jerusalem, he quickly gained recognition from the Phoenicians, contracting for their artisans to build him a magnificent palace in the new capital ([14:1-2](#)). He also made sure that Jerusalem would become Israel's religious center ([2 Sm 6](#); [1 Chr 13-16](#)). His abortive attempt to move the ark of the covenant by oxcart (cf. [Nm 4](#)) reminded the powerful king that he still had to do things God's way to be successful.

With Jerusalem well established as the nation's capital, David intended to build God a temple. He shared his plan with the prophet Nathan, whose immediate response was positive. That night, however, God sent a message via Nathan that David should not build the temple. David's throne would be established eternally, the prophet said, and unlike Saul, King David would have a son to succeed him and perpetuate the kingdom; that son would build the temple ([2 Sm 7](#); [1 Chr 17](#)).

Prosperity and Supremacy

Little is recorded about the expansion of David's rule from the tribal area of Judah to a vast empire stretching from the Nile River of Egypt to regions of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Nothing in secular history negates the biblical perspective that David had the most powerful kingdom in the heart of that "Fertile Crescent" about 1000 BC.

It is likely that skirmishes with the Philistines to the west were frequent until they finally became subservient to David and paid him tribute. In Saul's day the Philistines had enjoyed a monopoly on the use of iron ([1 Sm 13:19-21](#)). The fact that David freely used iron near the end of his reign ([1 Chr 22:3](#)) hints at profound economic changes in Israel.

David's kingdom expanded southward as he built military garrisons in Edomite territory. Beyond Edom, he controlled the Moabites and Amalekites, who paid him tribute in silver and gold. To the northeast, Israelite domination was extended over the Ammonites and the Arameans, whose capital was Damascus. David's treatment of both friends and enemies seemed to contribute to the strength of his kingdom ([2 Sm 8-10](#)). Although he was a brilliant military strategist who used all the means and resources available to bring Israel success, David was humble enough to glorify God ([2 Sm 22](#); see [Ps 18](#)).

Sin in the Royal Family

A lengthy section of the book of 2 Samuel (chs [11-20](#)) gives a remarkably frank account of sin, crime, and rebellion in David's family. The king's own imperfections are clearly portrayed; the king of Israel himself could not escape God's judgement when he did wrong.

Although polygamy was then a Near Eastern status symbol, it was forbidden for a king of Israel ([Dt 17:17](#)). David practiced polygamy, however; some of his marriages undoubtedly had political implications (such as his marriages to Saul's daughter Michal and to princess Maacah of Geshur). Flagrant sins of incest, murder, and rebellion in his family brought David much suffering and almost cost him the throne.

David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba, committed at the height of his military success and territorial expansion, led him further into evil: he planned a strategy to have Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, killed on the front line of battle. David seems to have excluded God from consideration in that segment of his personal life. Yet when the prophet Nathan

confronted the king with his sins, David acknowledged his guilt. He confessed his sin and pleaded with God for forgiveness (as in [Pss 32](#) and [51](#)). God forgave him, but for nearly ten years David endured the consequences of his lack of self-restraint and his failure to exercise discipline in his family. Although unsurpassed in military and diplomatic strategy, David lacked strength of character in his domestic affairs. Evil fermented in his own house; the father's self-indulgence was soon reflected in Amnon's crime of incest, followed by Absalom's murder of his brother.

Having incurred his father's disfavor, Absalom took refuge in Geshur with his mother's people for three years. Joab, David's general, was eventually able to reconcile David with his alienated son. Absalom, however, having taken advantage of his position in the royal family to gain a following, went to Hebron, staged a surprise rebellion, and proclaimed himself king throughout Israel. His strong following posed such a threat that David fled from Jerusalem. David, still a master strategist, gained time through a ruse to organize his forces and put down his son's rebellion. Absalom was killed while trying to flee; his death plunged David into grief.

On his return to Jerusalem, David had to work at undoing the damage caused by Absalom's revolt. His own tribe of Judah, for example, had supported Absalom. Another rebellion, fomented by Sheba of Benjamin's tribe, had to be suppressed by Joab before the nation could settle down.

David's Last Years

Although David was not permitted to build the temple in Jerusalem, he made extensive preparations for that project during the last years of his reign. He stockpiled materials and organized the kingdom for efficient use of domestic and foreign labor. He also outlined details for religious worship in the new structure ([1 Chr 21-29](#)).

The military and civic organization developed by David was probably patterned after Egyptian practice. The army, rigidly controlled by officers of proven loyalty to the king, included mercenaries. The king also appointed trusted supervisors over farms, livestock, and orchards in various parts of his empire ([1 Chr 27:25-31](#)).

David took, or at least began, a census of Israel ([2 Sm 24](#); [1 Chr 21](#)). The incompleteness of the accounts leaves unanswered such questions as the reason for God's punishment. The king overruled Joab's objection and insisted that the census be

taken. Since David later seemed keenly aware that he had sinned in taking the census, it may be that he was motivated by pride to ascertain his exact military strength (approx. 1.5 million men). God may also have been judging the people for their support of the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba.

Through the prophet Gad, David was given a choice of punishments for his sin. He chose a three-day pestilence. As David and the elders repented, they saw an angel on the threshing floor of the Jebusite Ornan (Araunah). David offered sacrifice there and prayed for his people. Later he purchased the threshing floor, located just outside the city of Jerusalem, concluding that it should be the site for the temple to be built by his son Solomon ([1 Chr 21:28-22:1](#)).

David's Lasting Influence

The Writer of Psalms

The OT book of Psalms became one of the most popular books in ancient Israel, and has remained so among countless millions of people throughout the centuries. These words of praise prepared by David were intended for use in the temple worship ([2 Chr 29:30](#)). The 73 psalms ascribed to David generally grew out of his own relationship to God and to other persons.

David probably compiled Book I of the book of Psalms ([1-41](#)) and Book IV ([90-106](#)), since most of those psalms were written by David himself. Other psalms of his ([Pss 51-71](#)) are in Book II ([42-72](#)), which was probably compiled by Solomon. As those psalms were used for worship in later generations, various people added others until the time of Ezra.

David's psalms provided much of the poetry that was set to music for Israel's worship. His organization of the priests and Levites and his provision of instruments for worship ([2 Chr 7:6; 8:14](#)) set the pattern for generations to come in the religious life of Israel.

David in the Writings of the Prophets

David, recognized as the greatest Israelite king, is often mentioned as a standard of comparison in the writings of the OT prophets. Isaiah (as in [Is 7:2, 13; 22:22](#)) and Jeremiah often referred to their contemporary kings as belonging to the "house" or "throne" of David. Contrasting David with some of his descendants who did not honor God, both Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted a messianic ruler who

would establish justice and righteousness on the throne of David forever ([Is 9:7](#); [Jer 33:15](#)). When Isaiah described the coming ruler, he identified him as being from the lineage of Jesse, David's father ([Is 11:1-10](#)). Predicting a period of universal peace, Isaiah saw the capital in "Zion," identified with the city of David ([2:1-4](#)).

Ezekiel promised the restoration of David as king in an eschatological and messianic sense ([Ez 37:24-25](#)), and of "my servant David" as Israel's shepherd ([34:23](#)). Hosea likewise identified the future ruler as King David ([Hos 3:5](#)). Amos assured the people that God would restore the "tabernacle" of David ([Am 9:11](#)) so that they could again dwell in safety. Zechariah referred five times to the "house of David" (in [Zec 12-13](#), rsv), encouraging the hope of a restoration of David's glorious dynasty. The concept of the eternal throne promised to David during his reign was delineated in the message of the prophets even while they were announcing judgments to come on the rulers and people of their time.

David in the New Testament

David is frequently mentioned by the Gospel writers, who established Jesus' identity as the "son of David." The covenant God made with David was that an eternal king would come from David's family ([Mt 1:1](#); [9:27](#); [12:23](#); [Mk 10:48](#); [12:35](#); [Lk 18:38-39](#); [20:41](#)). According to [Mark 11:10](#) and [John 7:42](#), the Jews of Jesus' day expected the Messiah (Christ) to be a descendant of David. While stating that Jesus came from the lineage of David, the Gospels also clearly teach that Jesus was the Son of God ([Mt 22:41-45](#); [Mk 12:35-37](#); [Lk 20:41-44](#)).

In the book of Acts, David is recognized as the recipient of God's promises that were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. David is also seen as a prophet whom the Holy Spirit inspired to write the psalms ([Acts 1:16](#); [2:22-36](#); [4:25](#); [13:26-39](#)).

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is designated as having the "key of David" ([Rv 3:7](#)), and as being "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" ([5:5](#)). Jesus is quoted as asserting that "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star" ([22:16](#)).

See also Christology; Chronology of the Bible (Old Testament); Israel, History of; King; Kingdom of God; Kingdom of Heaven; Messiah.

David, City of

1. The city of Jerusalem in the Old Testament. "City of David" originally referred to the old Jebusite fortress that King David captured ([2 Samuel 5:6-9](#)). David, Solomon, and many of their descendants who ruled over Judah were buried in the City of David ([1 Kings 2:10](#); [11:43](#)). Solomon considered it a holy place because the ark of the Lord was there. Because of this, he moved his non-Israelite wife, Pharaoh's daughter, out of the City of David and built her a house somewhere else ([2 Chronicles 8:11](#)). After Solomon's reign, the term "City of David" was also used more broadly to describe all of Jerusalem, including the newly built temple area. However, the older part of the city, located below the temple, was still called the "City of David" ([Nehemiah 3:15](#)). David's tomb was near the pool of Siloam and the stairway that went down from the City of David ([Nehemiah 3:15-16](#)).
See Jerusalem; Zion.

2. The town of Bethlehem in the New Testament. Bethlehem was David's birthplace and home until he went to King Saul's palace to serve as a musician ([1 Samuel 16:16-23](#)). When David became king of Judah, he made Hebron his capital, following the Lord's instructions ([2 Samuel 2:1-11](#)). Bethlehem was also the birthplace of Jesus, a descendant of David ([Micah 5:2-4](#); [Luke 2:11](#)).
See also Bethlehem #1.

David, Root of

Phrase applied to Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation ([Rv 5:5](#); [22:16](#)). Though "root" usually means "source," the metaphor depicts Jesus as David's royal descendant, as indicated by the parallel word "offspring" in [Revelation 22:16](#). That is, Jesus came from King David's family as a branch grows from a rooted tree (cf. [Is 11:1](#)).

See also Jesse, Root of.

David, Tower of

1. A fortress built by David, with a thousand shields hung on it. It is mentioned in [Song of Songs 4:4](#) but nowhere else.
2. David's Tower in Jerusalem, near the Jaffa Gate. It was built in medieval times.
See Jerusalem.

Day

A day is a period of time marked by the earth's rotation on its axis. This can mean two things:

1. the full cycle between two sunrises, or
2. only the part of that cycle when the sun is visible. The other part of the cycle is called "night."

The word *day* appears over 2,000 times in the Old Testament and over 350 times in the New Testament. The Hebrew word for "day" is used in many ways, not only in the literal sense. In Hebrew life, a day began in the evening and ended the next evening. This pattern was based on the Torah (compare [Genesis 1:14, 19](#)). A literal twenty-four-hour day is often called a civil day.

Other nations in the ancient Near East started their days at different times.

- Greek custom was the same as the Hebrews, beginning in the evening.
- Babylonians began their day at sunrise.
- Egyptians and Romans counted their day from one midnight to the next.

Days and Weeks in the Bible

People commonly recognized parts of the 12-hour day as morning, noon, and evening ([Psalms 55:17](#)). They sometimes used terms like:

- dawn ([Job 3:9](#)),
- the heat of the day ([1 Samuel 11:11](#)),
- noon ([Genesis 43:16](#)),
- the cool of the day ([3:8](#)), and
- evening ([Ruth 2:17](#)).

The Hebrew phrase "at twilight." ([Exodus 12:6](#)) likely meant dusk, the dark part of twilight ([Exodus 16:12](#)). People did not divide days into consecutive hours until the time of Christ. The closest Old Testament equivalent was dividing the day into quarters ([Nehemiah 9:3](#)). These divisions are similar to the preexilic division of the night into "watches."

The ancient Hebrews did not give names to the days of the week, except for the Sabbath. Instead, they counted them with numbers. This practice continued into New Testament times ([Luke 24:1](#)). Because the Sabbath was so important, the Jewish people needed to know the exact time when it began. The Pharisees taught that the Sabbath started when three stars could be seen in the sky after sunset.

The Days of Creation

Many people believe that the days mentioned in the Genesis creation story were twenty-four-hour periods. They use the phrase "there was evening, there was morning" to support this idea. However, this phrase is a Sumerian figure of speech. It pairs opposites—"evening" and "morning"—to show totality (completeness). In this way, "evening-morning" means a full phase of time within God's work of creation. It stresses the completeness of each stage, not the exact length of time it took.

The Sumerians considered a day to be only the visible 12-hour period. Other nations had a legal day that lasted 24 hours, or a "double day." If the early Genesis writings reflect Sumerian culture, the term "evening-morning" would not match today's idea of a civil day. Instead, it would refer to a phase or general time period.

Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

In the Old Testament, the word *day* is often used in a figurative way. For example:

- the "day of the Lord" ([Joel 1:15](#); [Amos 5:18](#)),
- the "day of trouble" ([Psalm 20:1](#)), and
- the "day of God's wrath" ([Job 20:28](#)).

The plural form sometimes describes a king's reign ([1 Kings 10:21](#)) or a person's lifespan ([Genesis 5:4](#); [1 Kings 3:14](#); [Psalm 90:12](#)). The book of Daniel calls God the "Ancient of Days" ([Daniel 7:9, 13](#)).

In addition to the Sabbath ([Genesis 2:3](#); [Exodus 20:8–11](#)), which was set apart for rest and worship, the word *day* was also used for certain holy celebrations. These included the Passover in the spring ([Exodus 12:14](#); [Leviticus 23:5](#)) and the Day of Atonement each autumn ([Leviticus 16:29–31](#)). On these special days, people did not work but instead followed the required religious practices.

The New Testament

In the New Testament, the word *day* was often used in ways similar to Hebrew and other related Semitic languages. At the same time, the division of the night into four military watches came from Greek and Roman custom. The idea of a twelve-hour day in New Testament times came from Babylonian astronomy (compare [John 11:9](#)).

Besides using *day* literally, New Testament authors sometimes used it figuratively. Examples include:

- the "day of salvation" ([2 Corinthians 6:2](#)) and
- the "day of Christ Jesus" ([Philippians 1:6](#)).

They also described specific time periods, like the "days of his service" ([Luke 1:23](#)). Special feasts mentioned include:

- the Passover ([John 12:1](#)),
- the Days of Unleavened Bread ([Acts 12:3](#)), and
- the Day of Pentecost ([2:1](#)).

In the Old Testament, a human life is described in terms of days ([John 9:4](#)). Christians are called "sons of the light and sons of the day" ([1 Thessalonians 5:5](#)). Longer periods or eras are also called days ([2 Corinthians 6:2](#); [Ephesians 5:16](#); [6:13](#); [Hebrews 5:7](#)). Hebrew prophets warned about a day of judgment. The New Testament also emphasizes a final divine judgment day when Jesus, the Son of

Man, will reveal himself as Lord ([Luke 17:30](#); [John 6:39–44](#); [1 Corinthians 5:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:2](#); [2 Peter 2:9](#); [3:7, 12](#); [1 John 4:17](#); [Revelation 16:14](#)). The "day of eternity" is when time will turn into eternity ([2 Peter 3:18](#)). The new Jerusalem, where God's people will live, is described as a place of endless day ([Revelation 21:25](#)).

See also Calendars, Ancient and Modern; Day of the Lord; Eschatology.

Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement (a time when people ask God to forgive their sins) is the most holy day in the Jewish calendar. In Hebrew, it is called Yom Kippur. This special day happens on the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Tishri, which usually falls between mid-September and mid-October.

What Is the Meaning of the Day of Atonement?

On this important day, the high priest would go into the most sacred room of the tabernacle (or temple). This room was called the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies. The high priest did this to atone for the sins of all the people of Israel. The word "atonement" means to cover sins so that people can have a good relationship with God again. In the New Testament, Yom Kippur was called "the Fast" ([Acts 27:9](#)). Jewish teachers called it the "Day" or the "Great Day."

The First Day of Atonement

[Leviticus 16](#) describes the first Day of Atonement ceremony. Although people added more traditions over many years, the main purpose always remained the same: to receive complete forgiveness through offering sacrifices to God.

First, high priest would first change his clothes. He would take off his beautiful official robes and put on simple white linen clothes. These white clothes showed that he was sorry for his sins and the sins of the people.

The high priest would then sacrifice a young bull as an offering for his own sins and the sins of all the other priests. After this, he would enter the Most Holy Place carrying hot coals from the altar where incense was burned. He would fill this special room with sweet-smelling incense smoke. Then he would sprinkle the bull's blood on the mercy seat (the

cover of the sacred chest called the ark of the covenant) and on the floor in front of it.

The people would bring two goats to the high priest. The high priest would choose between these goats by casting lots. He would sacrifice one goat as an offering for the sins of all the people. He would take this goat's blood into the Most Holy Place and sprinkle it just as he had done with the bull's blood. This act would make the Most Holy Place clean from sin.

The high priest would then place his hands on the head of the living goat and speak all the sins of the people over it. This second goat was called the scapegoat because it would be sent away into the wilderness, symbolically carrying away the people's sins.

After this, the high priest would put his regular clothes back on. He would then make two more offerings called burnt offerings, one for himself and one for the people. He would also burn the fat from the earlier sin offerings. The remaining parts of the bull and the first goat would be taken outside the camp and burned completely.

Other parts of the Old Testament that describe Yom Kippur include:

- [Exodus 30:10](#)
- [Leviticus 23:26-32](#) (this passage gives the date of Yom Kippur in a list of all the annual feasts)
- [Leviticus 25:9-16](#) (this passage says that each jubilee year began on the Day of Atonement)
- [Numbers 29:7-11](#)

The Day of Atonement in Modern Times

The Day of Atonement remains deeply important in Jewish religious life even today. When the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, the Jewish people could no longer perform the sacrifices. However, they continued to observe this holy day, which shows how central it is to their faith. Today, it remains the most important holy day in Judaism.

Fasting on the Day of Atonement

The Bible says to humble yourselves on this day ([Leviticus 23:27-32](#)). Although Moses did not explain exactly what this meant, Jewish people throughout history have understood it to mean

fasting (going without food). This understanding comes from other parts of the Bible where similar phrases appear ([Psalm 35:13](#); [Isaiah 58:3-5, 10](#)).

The Purpose of the Day of Atonement

When the ancient people of Israel celebrated the Day of Atonement, they showed they believed God would forgive their sins through these special ceremonies. They understood that God's forgiveness was a gift that allowed them to continue having a special relationship with him as his chosen people. This relationship was based on the covenant (special agreement) God made with them.

God declared the Day of Atonement to be a special sabbath, a time of complete rest ([Leviticus 16:31; 23:32](#)). Just as people rested from work every week on the regular Sabbath day, they were not allowed to do any work on the Day of Atonement.

Many people wonder why God created a special day for atonement when the Jewish people already offered sacrifices throughout the year. The Day of Atonement served two important purposes:

- It helped protect the people from God's anger over their sins.
- It ensured that God would continue to be present with them.

On this day, two important actions worked together to make everything clean from sin:

- The priests sacrificed one goat as an offering.
- Then they sent the second goat, called the scapegoat, into the wilderness.

These actions cleansed three important things:

- all the people of Israel,
- the priests who served in the temple, and
- the sacred building itself.

The purpose of the sacrificial system was fully expressed on that day. Some people call the Day of Atonement the "Good Friday of the Old Testament" because it was so important (Good Friday is the day Christians remember Jesus's death on the cross). The regular sacrifices that happened daily, weekly, and monthly throughout the year could not completely remove sin. This was shown by the fact

that the high priest could not enter the Most Holy Place in the temple on regular days.

However, on this one special day each year, God allowed the high priest to enter the Most Holy Place. He would carry the blood from the sacrifice and represent all the people before God. He would sprinkle this blood on the mercy seat, which showed that God had accepted the sacrifice and forgiven the people's sins.

The Day of Atonement served a special purpose that other sacrifices could not fulfill. Throughout the year, people would offer sacrifices for sins they knew about. However, people often sin without realizing it, and these unknown sins also needed to be forgiven. The Bible sometimes calls these "secret sins" because they remain hidden from the people who commit them.

These hidden sins made the sanctuary, land, and nation unclean in God's eyes. God made the Day of Atonement to completely forgive all sin, even the hidden ones ([Leviticus 16:33](#)). The high priest represented all the people of Israel before God. He served as a mediator (someone who helps bring two parties together) between God and the people.

See Atonement; Offerings and Sacrifices.

Day of Atonement

See Atonement, Day of.

Day of Christ

Phrase used by the apostle Paul in reference to the second advent of Christ ([Phil 1:10](#); [2:16](#)). *See* Day of the Lord.

Day of the Lord

An expression used by Old Testament prophets to describe a time when God will intervene in history, mainly for judgment. Thus, "the day of the Lord" is also called "the Day of the LORD's anger" ([Zephaniah 2:2](#)). This expression appears in the writings of the prophet Amos, who lived during the eighth century BC.

The Day of the Lord in the Old Testament

Sometimes, "the day of the Lord" is used in the Old Testament to refer to a previous judgment ([Lamentations 2:22](#)). However, it usually refers to a future judgment ([Joel 2:1-11](#)). Specifically, it refers to the final judgment of the world ([Joel 3:14-21](#); [Malachi 4:5](#)). Often, a prophecy about an event in the near future is combined with an end-time prophecy—a coming judgment is a preview of the final Day of the Lord. Isaiah's prophecy against Babylon in [Isaiah 13](#) is an example ([Isaiah 13:5-10](#)). Jesus used many prophecies to explain his second coming ([Mark 13:24-37](#)).

Another example is Joel's prophecy of the Day of the Lord ([Joel 1:15-2:11](#)). The prophet predicted a plague of locusts God would send to Israel, but his prophecy extended to the Day of the Lord after Joel's time ([Joel 2:14-17, 31](#)). The Day of the Lord was even after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which was also predicted by Joel's prophecy ([Joel 2:28-32](#); [Acts 2:16-21](#); [Revelation 6:12-13](#)). The New Testament only uses the term to mean the end times.

The Day of the Lord is described as a day of gloom, darkness, and judgment. It is connected to God's judgment and describes changes in nature, such as the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars ([Isaiah 13:10](#); [Joel 2:31](#); [3:15](#); [Matthew 24:29](#); [Revelation 6:12](#)). Nations will be judged for their rebellion against Israel ([Joel 3:19](#); compare [Psalm 2](#)). However, Israel is told not to be eager for that day because they will also be judged ([Amos 5:18-20](#)). But the prophets promise that a faithful "remnant" will be saved when they turn to the Messiah ([Joel 2:32](#); [Zechariah 12:10](#)). After the judgment is a time of prosperity, restoration, and blessing for Israel ([Joel 3:18-21](#)).

The Day of the Lord in the New Testament

There are more explicit expressions in the New Testament:

- "The day of our Lord Jesus Christ" ([1 Corinthians 1:8](#))
- "The day of the Lord Jesus" ([1 Corinthians 5:5](#); [2 Corinthians 1:14](#))
- "The day of Christ" ([Philemon 1:10](#); [2:16](#))

These are more personal and positive. They refer to final events for Christian believers, who will not experience God's wrath ([1 Thessalonians 5:9](#)).

When the Day of the Lord comes, the earth will be renewed and purified with fire ([2 Peter 3:10–13](#)). In Revelation, this final purification comes after the Millennium—that is, the 1,000-year reign of Christ ([Revelation 21:1](#)).

See also Eschatology; Last Days; Last Judgment.

Day's Journey

A way of estimating distances in Bible times. A day's journey was about 32.2 kilometers (20 miles) but depended on such things as the mode of travel, the terrain, and the weather. [Exodus 3:18](#), [Numbers 11:31](#), [1 Kings 19:4](#), and [Luke 2:44](#) all mention a day's journey.

Scripture also refers to a Sabbath day's journey ([Acts 1:12](#)). A Sabbath day's journey was probably about one kilometer (3500 feet).

See Sabbath Day's Journey.

Dayspring, Day Star

"Dayspring" and "day star" are words used in the King James Version to refer to Venus, the planet that is visible just before sunrise, or to the first light of dawn itself.

- Both [Job 38:12](#) and [Luke 1:78](#) in the King James Version use the word "dayspring" while the Berean Standard Bible uses the word "dawn."
- [2 Peter 1:19](#) in the King James Version uses the word "day star" while the Berean Standard Bible uses the word "morning star."

In [Isaiah 14:12](#), "day star" refers to the proud king of Babylon. The King James Version calls him "Lucifer." This king tried to rise too high and hurt Israel. The verse suggests God will bring him down, just as the morning star fades when the sun rises.

See Morning Star.

Deacon, Deaconess

Terms designating an officer in a local church, derived from a Greek word meaning "servant" or "minister." The term "diaconate" is used for the

office itself or for the collective body of deacons and deaconesses. As with many other biblical words used today in a technical sense, the words "deacon" and "deaconess" began as popular, nontechnical terms. Both in secular first-century AD Greek culture and in the NT, they described a variety of services.

Origins of the Concept

Greek Usage

References have been found in ancient writings where the Greek word "deacon" meant "waiter," "servant," "steward," or "messenger." In at least two instances it indicated a baker and a cook. In religious usage, the word described various attendants in pagan temples. Ancient documents show "deacons" presiding at the dedication of a statue to the Greek god Hermes. Serapis and Isis, Egyptian deities, were served by a college of "deacons" presided over by a priest.

General New Testament Usage

The same word was used by biblical writers in a general sense to describe various ministries or services. Not until later in the development of the apostolic church was the term applied to a distinct body of church officers. Among its general usages, "deacon" refers to a waiter at meals ([John 2:5, 9](#)), a king's attendant ([Matthew 22:13](#)), a servant of Satan ([2 Corinthians 11:15](#)), a servant of God ([6:4](#)), a servant of Christ ([11:23](#)), a servant of the church ([Colossians 1:24–25](#)), and a political ruler ([Romans 13:4](#)).

The NT presents servanthood as a form of ministry or service and as a mark of the whole church. That means it is considered a norm for all disciples ([Matthew 20:26–28](#); [Luke 22:26–27](#)). Jesus' teaching on the final judgment links ministry to actions like feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and imprisoned ([Matthew 25:31–46](#)). Throughout the NT, there is an emphasis on compassionate care for individuals' physical and spiritual needs as well as giving oneself to meet those needs. Such service is ultimately a ministry to Christ himself (v [45](#)).

Origin of the Office

Some biblical scholars emphasize a relationship between the *hazzan* of the Jewish synagogue and the Christian office of deacon. The *hazzan* opened and closed the synagogue doors, kept it clean, and handed out the books for reading. It was probably

to such a person that Jesus handed the scroll of Isaiah after finishing his reading ([Luke 4:20](#)).

Other NT scholars focus on the selection of the seven ([Acts 6:1–6](#)). They see that action as a historical forerunner of a more developed structure ([Philippians 1:1](#); [1 Timothy 3:8–13](#)—the two specific references to an “office” of deacon). Luke devoted considerable attention in Acts to the selection of a new set of church leaders. Overworked with a variety of responsibilities, the 12 apostles proposed a division of labor to ensure care for the Hellenist (Greek-speaking) widows in the church’s daily distribution of food and alms. Seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom ([Acts 6:3](#)), subsequently became prominent in the Jerusalem congregation, doing works of charity and caring for physical needs.

Some scholars caution that the diaconate should not be exclusively linked with charitable works, since the Greek word used in [Acts 6:2](#) is related to the word translated “ministry of the word” in verse [4](#). Those chosen to oversee the care for physical needs were people of spiritual stature. Stephen, for instance, “full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs” ([6:8](#), Revised Standard Version). Philip, appointed as one of the seven in [Acts 6](#), “preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” ([8:12](#)). Philip also baptized (v [38](#)) and is referred to as an evangelist ([21:8](#)).

Deacons in the Early Church

Those who cite [Acts 6](#) as a preliminary stage of the office of deacon refer to the spread of the practice from the church in Jerusalem to the gentile congregations sprouting elsewhere. Many churches probably took the appointment of “the Jerusalem seven” as a pattern to follow, some even adopting the number seven. In a letter of the third-century pope Cornelius, for example, the church of Rome was said to have maintained seven for the number of deacons.

By the time the church of Philippi received its instructions from the apostle Paul (c. AD 62) and Timothy had Paul’s first letter in hand, “deacon” had become a technical term referring to a specific office in the churches. In [Philippians 1:1](#) Paul addressed the church in general and then added “with bishops and deacons.” Some interpreters consider that to be a clear establishment of two distinct groups within the larger church body, though no further description is given. Possibly the deacons of that congregation were responsible for

collecting and then dispatching the offerings referred to ([Phil 4:14–18](#)).

In [1 Timothy 3:8–13](#) instructions are given about qualifications for the office of deacon. Although that is the most detailed treatment of the subject in the NT, it is actually quite sketchy. Most of the qualifications, dealing with personal character and behavior, are similar to those for a bishop. For instance, a deacon is to be truthful, monogamous, “not addicted to much wine,” and a responsible parent. Verse [11](#), requiring that “the women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things” (Revised Standard Version), may refer not to deacons’ wives but to deaconesses, as several translations note (New International Version, New English Bible). In any event, it is clear that women participated in the work of the diaconate.

In contrast to the office of bishop ([1 Timothy 3:2](#)), deacons are not described as providing teaching or hospitality. In fact, no mention is made of any functional qualifications to clarify deacons’ or deaconesses’ roles in the early church. The character qualifications listed are appropriate for those with monetary and administrative responsibilities (as [Acts 6:1–6](#) suggests). Timothy is told that good deacons will not go unrewarded; not only will their faith increase, but also their good standing among those whom they serve ([1 Timothy 3:13](#)).

The office of deacon differed from the office of elder, which was adapted from a definite Jewish pattern in the OT (see [Numbers 11:16–17](#); [Deuteronomy 29:10](#)). The diaconate, on the other hand, developed from the strong, personal, historical example of Jesus, the servant who compassionately met concrete human needs.

As the office of deacon became more firmly established, its duties could be defined as those of pastoral care. The poor and the sick received their service not only physically but also with instruction and consolation. The homes of church members became familiar territory to a deacon or deaconess. A pattern of visitation was established to discover and then meet the needs of the church body at large. Although that included the administration of funds, it went far beyond it. Those who served as deacons and deaconesses undoubtedly became symbols of loving care for the church in general.

Where the office of deacon fits into the larger pattern of church order within the NT is difficult to

determine because of the obvious variety present during the formative years. Some church historians conclude that as ecclesiastical structure developed, elders provided congregational leadership. Deacons assisted them, especially in social services and pastoral care. The late first and early second centuries witnessed a distinctive threefold ministry of deacons, elders (presbyters), and bishops. Bishops or “overseers” began to exercise authority over areas or groups of churches.

Deaconess

Where did women fit into the ministry of the early church? Paul’s inclusion of references to women in ministry is striking when compared with the role of women in general in the first century. He commended Phoebe for her service in the church at Cenchrea, using the word “deacon” to describe her ([Romans 16:1](#)). He praised her as a “helper” (v 2), a word that denotes leadership qualities (cf. [Romans 12:8](#); [1 Timothy 3:4–5](#)). Some scholars have used that reference as an example of early development of the office of deaconess. Others have interpreted it in a nontechnical sense, meaning that Phoebe functioned in a generally serving role and thus was worthy of recognition at Rome. Whether “deacon” was used technically or descriptively, ministry for both women and men in the NT was patterned after the example of Jesus, who “came not to be served but to serve” ([Mark 10:45](#)). Because of the large number of female converts ([Acts 5:14](#); [17:4](#)), women functioned in such areas of ministry as visitation, instruction in discipleship, and assistance in baptism. Deaconesses are mentioned in third-century documents as administering baptism to female converts.

See also Bishop; Elder; Pastor; Presbyter.

Dead Sea

A large saltwater lake where the Jordan River ends. Western culture has called it the “Dead Sea” since the Greek period. However, in the Old Testament, it is often called the “Salt Sea” ([Genesis 14:3](#); [Numbers 34:3, 12](#); [Deuteronomy 3:17](#); [Joshua 3:16](#); [12:3](#); [15:2, 5](#); [18:19](#)). The lake contains a large amount of salt, a valuable resource in ancient times. The Bible also calls the Dead Sea:

- The Sea of the Arabah ([Deuteronomy 3:17](#); [4:49](#); [Joshua 3:16](#); [12:3](#); [2 Kings 14:25](#))
- The Eastern Sea ([Ezekiel 47:18](#); [Joel 2:20](#); [Zechariah 14:8](#))

Other ancient writers refer to the Dead Sea as:

- The Sea of Sodom
- The Sea of Asphalt
- The Sea of Lot

The New Testament does not reference the sea.

Where Is the Dead Sea Located?

The Dead Sea lies in a deep valley called the Jordan Valley. This valley is also known as the Rift Valley because it sits in a long crack in the earth’s surface. This crack is the longest and deepest of its kind in the world. It starts in the Taurus Mountains of southern Turkey and continues through several countries: Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. It then extends through the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea, finally reaching Mozambique in East Africa, where it is called the Great African Rift Valley.

The valley varies in width from 3.2 to 24.1 kilometers (2 to 15 miles). At its deepest point, near the Dead Sea shore, the valley drops to 396 meters (1,300 feet) below sea level. This makes it the lowest place on earth that is not covered by water.

How Big Is the Dead Sea?

The Dead Sea has a rectangular shape. From north to south, it stretches about 85 kilometers (53 miles) from where the Jordan River enters to the Sebkha salt flats in the south. It is about 16 kilometers (10 miles) wide. Steep, rocky cliffs rise up on both sides of the sea.

A piece of land called the Lisan Peninsula divides the Dead Sea into two parts. This peninsula extends about 13.7 kilometers (8.5 miles) from the eastern shore. The northern part is larger and deeper. Its deepest point is in the northeast area, reaching about 396 meters (1,300 feet) deep. The southern part is more shallow, with water between 1 and 9 meters (3 and 30 feet).

Where Does the Dead Sea Get Its Water?

The Dead Sea gets its water from several sources. The Jordan River is the main source. Water also

comes from four or five streams that flow all year long and many seasonal streams (called wadis). About 6.4 million metric tons (7 million tons) of water flows into the Dead Sea each day. However, this water can only leave through evaporation, as the sea has no outlets.

The area around the Dead Sea is very dry. It gets only 5 to 13 centimeters (2 to 5 inches) of rain each year. The weather is extremely hot, especially in summer when temperatures can reach 52 degrees Celsius (125 degrees Fahrenheit). This heat causes much of the water to evaporate, often creating a thick haze that is hard to see through.

Why Is the Dead Sea So Salty?

The water that flows into the Dead Sea is already very salty. These streams flow through soil that contains minerals like nitrogen and sulfur. Underground springs beneath the sea add more minerals to the water, including bromine, magnesium, and calcium. The shores have large deposits of sulfur and oil springs.

In the southeast part of the sea, there is a huge deposit of rock salt. The visible part is 91.4 meters (300 feet) thick, but this is just the top of a much larger salt formation. The whole formation is about 1,371 meters (4,500 feet) deep and extends about 8 kilometers (5 miles). There are also salt crystals on the sea floor.

All these factors make the Dead Sea extremely salty. Its water contains about 26 percent salt, while regular ocean water has only 3.5 percent salt. This makes the Dead Sea the saltiest large body of water on Earth. The water is so salty that no fish or plants can live in it, and the salt content keeps increasing.

In ancient times, people valued the Dead Sea for two main things: its salt and a special substance called bitumen. Bitumen is a natural black substance, like tar, that forms when oil hardens after being exposed to air. People used it to make things waterproof.

During the time of the New Testament, a group of people called the Nabateans controlled the bitumen trade from the Dead Sea. They sold this bitumen to Egypt, where people used it to preserve dead bodies (a process called mummification). Some historians think that Queen Cleopatra of Egypt wanted to control the Dead Sea area so she could control this important bitumen trade.

The Dead Sea in the Bible

Sodom and Gomorrah

Today, the Dead Sea area looks empty and lifeless. This matches what we know about its history. According to [Genesis 19](#), this is where the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Mount Sedom, the large salt mountain at the southeast corner of the sea, gets its name from the city of Sodom.

An archaeologist named Nelson Glueck found evidence that around 5,000 years ago (about 3000 BC), as many as 70 towns existed in the area around Mount Sedom. Scholars have different ideas about how Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Some think it was caused by a volcano erupting. Others believe that pockets of oil-rich soil under the ground exploded on their own.

In this area, there are many tall pillars made of salt. People often call these pillars "Lot's wife" because of the Bible story where Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt.

The Dead Sea as a Hiding Place

The empty desert around the Dead Sea has been a hiding place for many people throughout history. David, who later became king of Israel, hid there from his enemies ([1 Samuel 23:29–24:22](#)). Later, a religious group called the Essenes lived in Qumran near the sea to study and pray in peace. During the second Jewish rebellion against Rome, Jewish fighters also used this area to hide.

The Dead Sea in Prophecy

The prophet Ezekiel wrote about a future time when the Dead Sea would change ([Ezekiel 47:1–12](#); compare [Zechariah 14:8](#)). He said that one day, the salty waters would become fresh, and the sea that cannot support life would be full of living things.

Dead Sea Scrolls

See Bible, Manuscripts and Text of the (Old Testament); Qumran.

Deaf, Deafness

Deafness means not being able to hear. In the Bible, it can mean not being able to hear with your ears or not being able to hear in your spirit. The spiritually

deaf were those who either refused to hear God's message or were not able to because of their lack of spirituality ([Isaiah 42:18](#)).

The prophet Isaiah speaks strongly about both types of deaf people. Isaiah talks about the spiritually deaf in [Isaiah 42:18](#); [43:8](#). Isaiah talks about the actual deaf in [Isaiah 29:18](#); [35:5](#). The Old Testament speaks of not being able to hear as the result of God's judgment ([Micah 7:16](#)). It also says it is wrong to curse a deaf person ([Leviticus 19:14](#)).

In the New Testament, Jesus healed the deaf ([Matthew 11:5](#); [Mark 7:32–37](#); [Luke 7:22](#)). In [Mark 9:25](#), Jesus healed a boy who had a “deaf and mute spirit.” These healings were evidence of Jesus's role as Messiah.

See also Medicine and Medical Practice.

Death

Cessation of life (physical death) or separation from God (spiritual death).

Old Testament View

In the OT death was accepted as the natural end of life. The goal of an Israelite was to live a long and full life, produce many descendants, and die in peace with the children and grandchildren gathered about. The OT contains many protests against an early death (e.g., Hezekiah's, [2 Kgs 20:1–11](#)). An early death might appear to be the result of God's judgment; hence, Job saw the need to vindicate his character prior to death ([Jb 19:25–26](#)). Only in [Ecclesiastes 3:19–20](#) is outright pessimism expressed in the face of death—and that book probably shows considerable non-Hebraic influence.

Death, although a natural ending to life, was never viewed as pleasant. Death cut one off from human community as well as from the presence and service of God. God may offer comfort in the face of death ([Ps 73:23–28](#)), but he is rarely portrayed as present with the dead, and that only in later biblical literature ([Ps 139:8](#)). For that reason, death was never viewed as the threshold to a better life.

The relationship of sin to death is seen in the death penalty in the law of Moses. A serious offender was put to death. The punitive phrase “he shall be cut off” implied that although the nation went on living, the criminal was separated from it by death. The Israelites were warned that to disobey God's

commandments could bring premature death as a consequence of breaking fellowship with God ([Dt 30:15–20](#); [Jer 21:8](#); [Ez 18:21–32](#)).

In the intertestamental period, as Jewish ideas of afterlife and resurrection developed more explicitly, so too did Jewish thinking about death. Death itself, not just a premature death, came to be seen as an evil result of sin ([2 Esd 3:7](#); [Ecclus 25:24](#)). Sometimes all death is depicted as the result of the “first sin” (Adam and Eve's disobedience). In other references, everyone dies as a result of his or her own sin. The first clear indication in Scripture of a resurrection of the dead and a final judgment or punishment occurs in the book of Daniel ([Dn 12:2](#)), one of the last OT books to be written. That teaching is echoed throughout the intertestamental period ([2 Esd 7:31–44](#)). During that time, it was believed that the soul survived death either in some immortal form ([Wisd of Sol 3:4](#); [4:1](#); [4 Macc 16:13](#); [17:12](#)) or awaiting the resurrection ([1 Enoch 102](#)). Some of those extrabiblical writings incorporated Greek ideas that the body was a burden to be gotten rid of—a notion foreign to Hebrew thought.

The concept of resurrection and a life redeemed from death, however, set the stage for the NT revelation focusing on Christ's resurrection and his conquest of death.

New Testament View

In the NT, death is seen more as a theological problem than as a personal event. Death goes beyond the simple ending of physical life, which the authors accept almost without difficulty. Death is seen as affecting every part of a person's life. God alone is immortal, the source of all life in the world ([Rom 4:17](#); [1 Tm 6:16](#)). Only as human beings are properly related to God's life can they live. But it has been unnatural for people to be in personal communion with the divine source of life since sin was introduced into the world ([Rom 5:12, 17–18](#); [1 Cor 15:22](#)). When Adam separated himself from God, that separation brought death. Each human being has followed in Adam's footsteps ([Rom 3:23](#); [5:12](#)), bringing death for everyone as the absolutely necessary result ([Rom 6:23](#); [Heb 9:27](#)). Death, then, is not merely something that happens to people at the end of their lives; it is also the living out of their lives apart from fellowship with God.

The extent of death's domination is vast. It affects every aspect of culture. All of human life is lived under the shadow of the fear of death ([Rom 8:15](#); [Heb 2:15](#)). Death reigns over all that is “of the flesh”

([Rom 8:6](#)). Anyone not living in relationship to Christ lives in a state of death ([Jn 3:16-18](#); [1 Jn 5:12](#)). The devil, who rules the world, is the lord of death ([Heb 2:14](#)). Death is sometimes personified as a demonic power at large in the world but finally brought to bay by Christ himself, the only one who could master it ([1 Cor 15:26-27](#); [Rv 6:8](#); [20:13-14](#)).

Christ died, was buried, and rose again on the third day ([Rom 4:25](#); [1 Cor 15:3-4](#); [1 Thes 4:14](#)). Through that historic event, the power of death was broken. The NT in various ways expresses Christ's subjection to death in payment for sin. He became obedient to death ([Phil 2:8](#)); he died as a sacrifice for the sins of all ([1 Cor 5:7](#); [2 Cor 5:15](#)); and he descended into hades, the place of the dead ([1 Pt 3:18-19](#)). The major point of all such passages is that he did not remain dead but defeated the devil, took the power (keys) of death, and ascended in victory ([Heb 2:14-15](#); [Rv 1:17-18](#)). Jesus Christ worked not for his own benefit but for those who commit themselves to him ([Mk 10:45](#); [Rom 5:6-8](#); [1 Thes 5:9-10](#)). By accepting a death he did not deserve, Christ has broken the power of death for his followers.

The Christian is thus delivered from "this body of death" ([Rom 7:24](#)) by the power of Christ. Salvation comes through being baptized into Christ's death ([6:3-4](#)), and "dying with Christ" to the world and the law ([Rom 7:6](#); [Gal 6:14](#); [Col 2:20](#)). That is, the death of Christ is counted by God as the believer's death. The rebellious world's sin ([Rom 6:6](#)) and self-idolatry (living for oneself, [2 Cor 5:14-15](#)) become things of the past. The death of Jesus for his people is the means by which his life is given to them ([4:10](#)). The result is that believers are separated from the world just as they were once separated from God. From the world's point of view, they are dead; Christ is their only life ([Col 3:3](#)).

The apostle John expressed it somewhat differently. Jesus came into the world to give life to the dead ([Jn 5:24](#)). That life-giving will not happen at the resurrection; it is already happening. All who commit themselves to Jesus pass immediately from death to life. Or, to put it another way, those who keep (obey) his words will never see death ([8:51-52](#)). The point is that all who are outside Christ are already dead, and those trusting in Christ are already enjoying life. The radical difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is a difference between life and death.

Naturally, the NT writers knew that Christians die; their problem was to find words to explain the

difference from non-Christian death. Believers who die physically are said to be "dead in Christ" ([1 Thes 4:16](#)). Or they are not dead at all, but merely "asleep" ([1 Cor 15:6, 18, 20, 51](#); [1 Thes 4:13-15](#); cf. Jesus' words, [Jn 11:11-14](#)). Although their bodies are dead, deceased believers are not separated from Christ; that is, they are not really dead. All the powers of death and hell cannot separate believers from Christ ([Rom 8:38-39](#)). For them, death is not a loss but a gain; it brings them closer to Christ ([2 Cor 5:1-10](#); [Phil 1:20-21](#)). What is more, believers will share in Christ's victory over physical death as well. Because he is the "firstfruits" of those rising from the dead ([1 Cor 15:20](#); [Col 1:18](#)), those "in Christ" will rise "on the last day" to be with him, whole and complete.

On the other hand, for those who do not belong to Christ, there is a final, total separation from God. At the last judgment, all whose names are not "written in the Book of Life" are consigned to a lake of fire, in the company of death itself and hades. That final separation from God is the "second death" ([Rv 20:14](#)). Christians, however, have been saved from death ([Jas 5:20](#); [1 Jn 3:14](#)). The second death has no power over those who are faithful to Christ ([Rv 2:11](#); [20:6](#)). Instead, they will live with God, in whose presence there can be no death, for he is life itself ([21:4](#)).

See also Dead, Place of the; Intermediate State; Wrath of God.

Death of Christ

See Crucifixion; Jesus Christ, Life and Teachings of.

Death, the Second

Term used in the NT only in the book of Revelation, to describe God's eternal judgment on sin. Originally a rabbinic expression, the second death will be experienced by those whose names are not written in the "Book of Life" ([Rv 20:15](#)). The second death is equated with the "lake of fire" ([v 14](#)), or the lake that burns with "fire and brimstone" ([21:8](#), kjv), and is described as the lot of "the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, . . . murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars" (rsv). Those who are victorious in this life have nothing to fear from the second death ([2:11](#)).

See also Death; Eschatology; Fall of Man; Last Judgment.

Debir (Person)

One of the kings of Eglon who became an ally of Adoni-zedek, the king of Jerusalem. Debir was executed by Joshua ([Jos 10:22-27](#)).

Debir (Place)

1. A Canaanite city where the Anakim lived there before the Israelites conquered it ([Joshua 11:21](#); [15:15](#)). There are two stories of the conquest of Debir ([10:38-39](#); [15:13-17](#)). In one story, Joshua leads the attack. In the other, Othniel leads the attack after Caleb asks for help. These might be two versions of the same event. Or, it could be that the Canaanites took Debir back, and Othniel helped the Israelites win it again. However, the first explanation seems more likely. The story in Joshua sounds like the final defeat of the city. Joshua later gave Debir and its pasturelands to the priests who were descendants of Aaron ([Joshua 21:15](#); [1 Chronicles 6:58](#)). This may seem appropriate because Debir had a famous pagan temple before the Israelites captured it. Debir also had other names. It was called Kiriath-sannah, which means “city of the scribes” ([Joshua 15:49](#)). It was also called Kiriath-sepher, which means “city of the books” (verse [15](#)). Scholars do not agree on its exact location. But most scholars think it was near a place called Khirbet Rabud in the southern hill country of Judah.
2. A Gadite town east of the Jordan River near the Sea of Galilee ([Joshua 13:26](#)). It might be the same place as Lo-debar ([2 Samuel 9:4-5](#); [17:27](#); [Amos 6:13](#)). Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, once lived there before King David called him to Jerusalem.

3. A town on the northern border of Judah. This was about 16 kilometers (10 miles) northeast of Jerusalem ([Joshua 15:7](#)).

Deborah

The name of two women in the Old Testament. In Hebrew, Deborah means “honeybee” ([Psalm 118:12](#); [Isaiah 7:18](#)).

1. Rebekah’s nurse ([Genesis 35:8](#)). Deborah died as she was traveling to Bethel with her master Jacob’s household. She was buried in a spot known as *Allon-bacuth* (meaning “the oak of weeping”). It showed she was very loved. She was probably Rebekah’s longtime friend (see [Genesis 24:59-61](#)).
2. A prophetess and judge ([Judges 4-5](#)). Deborah’s role as a prophetess was to deliver God’s message. As a judge, she was a leader of the Israelites. While other women acted as prophetesses in the Bible, it was not common. Other prophetesses included:
 - Miriam ([Exodus 15:20](#))
 - Huldah ([2 Kings 22:14](#))
 - Anna ([Luke 2:36](#))

Deborah was unique because she was already leading the people as a judge *before* the main events of her story happened ([Judges 4:4](#)). Her husband, Lappidoth, is otherwise unknown.

Deborah was celebrated as a “mother in Israel” ([Judges 5:7](#)). She stayed in one location, and the people came to her for guidance. Over 200 years later, when Judges was written, a giant palm tree still marked the spot. Though she lived in the land of Benjamin ([Judges 4:5](#); compare [Joshua 16:2](#); [18:13](#)), Deborah was probably from the tribe of Ephraim, the most prominent tribe of northern Israel. But, some scholars say she came from the tribe of Issachar ([Judges 5:14-15](#)). At that time, the tribes were loosely organized. They did not always occupy their assigned territory.

Under Deborah’s excellent leadership, the poorly equipped Israelites defeated the Canaanites in the

plain of Esdraelon ([Judges 4:15](#)). The flood of the Kishon River disrupted the enemy's chariots ([Judges 5:21–22](#)). The Canaanites ran to the north, perhaps to Taanach near Megiddo ([Judges 5:19](#)). They never returned as enemies within Israel. The Song of Deborah ([Judges 5](#)) is a poetic version of the prose narrative in [Judges 4](#).

See also Barak; Deborah, Song of; Judges, Book of.

Debt

Something owed to another person, such as goods, property, or money. In the Bible, righteous conduct is something one “owes” to God; hence, in theology, sin is described figuratively as being “in debt.”

In Hebrew culture, debt was usually connected with usury (the business of lending money on interest). The Hebrew verbs describing usury picture a painful situation. One word for usury means “to bite,” a vivid image for the way high interest “ate up” any kind of business transaction so that borrowers never received the full value of the money. People could be ruined financially by heartless exaction of interest ([2 Kgs 4:1–7](#)). Another verb is usually translated as “increase” or “profit” ([Lv 25:37](#)), since lenders profited from others' labor. Ancient Near Eastern interest rates on produce and goods might be as much as 30 percent of the loan per year; on money, as much as 20 percent. Clay tablets from Nuzi, an ancient town in northeastern Mesopotamia, indicate interest rates of even 50 percent.

The Law of Moses

The Mosaic covenant given to Israel immediately after the exodus sought to eliminate extortionist practices from Hebrew life. Thus God's revelation had many rules and restrictions relating to debt and credit in Israel.

Protection for the Poor

Portions of the legislative sections of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) regulated the practice of lending in a way that protected the poor and secured each person's right to earn a living and support a family. Many popular Hebrew proverbs dealt with that theme. The positive thrust of the biblical laws was to ensure help for the financially needy, without interest. No personal profit was to be made at the expense of the poor ([Ex 22:25](#); [Dt 23:19–20](#)); God was their

special advocate. Thus, by lending without interest, the Israelites could demonstrate their reverence for God ([Lv 25:35–37](#)).

That point was reemphasized 40 years later when Moses renewed the covenant with Israel just before their entrance into the Promised Land. God was the landlord, and his tenants were to respect his word. God promised the Israelites that if they would lend so as to alleviate human misery, they would be unusually blessed by the Lord ([Dt 15:6; 23:19–20; 28:12](#)). Interest could be charged to a foreigner not living under the Mosaic law, which was a condition parallel to commercial treaties prevalent in the ancient Near East.

In ancient Israel, financial ruin was frequently brought about by poor harvests. Often they were taken as an indication that the relationship between God and his people was not right ([Lv 26:14, 20](#)). The wealthy were expected to help, not to add more burdens to those who suffered from poor harvests.

Violation of the Law

The law was so often violated that eventually exorbitant interest became a social plague, making the situation of debtors hopeless. Many of the fighting men who rallied around David early in his military career were “outlaws” unable to repay their loans and interest ([1 Sm 22:2](#)). The prophet Ezekiel called people to task for their failure to observe God's commands about usury ([Ez 18:5–18; 22:12](#)). When Nehemiah returned from the exile to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he brought charges against the government officials whose interest rates had enslaved the people ([Neh 5:6–13](#)).

The Wisdom Literature, which included Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, added that those who acquired riches by usury would not profit in the long run, because God would give their profits to others who looked after the welfare of the poor (e.g., [Prov 28:8](#)). The prophet Amos gave a similar warning to corrupt merchants in Israel: “Because you trample upon the poor and take from him exactions of wheat, . . . you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine” ([Am 5:11](#), rsv). In spite of such warnings, the law was often ignored, and burdensome interest charges were laid on borrowers who were already poor.

Pledges and Surety

When it was necessary to borrow, the law provided alternatives to the unfair practice of usury. When

taking out a loan, a borrower would surrender some movable property as collateral to ensure repayment. That “pledge” represented a tangible sign of the debtor’s intention to repay the loan. Certain restrictions applied to such pledges. For example, a creditor could not take a widow’s clothes ([Dt 24:17](#)). Tools (such as millstones) or animals (such as oxen) necessary for daily life were forbidden as pledges (v [6](#)). Clothing absolutely essential to the borrower (e.g., to keep warm) could be temporarily offered as a pledge, but the temporary token had to be returned before nightfall ([Ex 22:26-27](#); [Dt 24:10-13](#)).

In drastic circumstances, where there was no collateral, a debtor could pledge a son, daughter, or slave. The value of the child’s or slave’s labor could then be credited against both interest and principal. An account in the Bible of a widow’s two sons about to go into slavery shows how cruel the custom could be ([2 Kgs 4:1-7](#)). Pledging labor or their children’s labor was the only way slaves could pay off a debt when they had to borrow.

A borrower could also have a wealthy friend assume responsibility as a cosigner on a loan and thus become the pledge, or surety. The book of Proverbs cautioned against standing surety for others, however, especially for strangers ([Prv 6:1-3](#); [11:15](#); [17:18](#); [22:26](#); [27:13](#)).

Sabbatical and Jubilee Years

Two legal provisions to curb the enslavement of people by long-standing debts were the sabbatical year and the jubilee year. The sabbatical year, or “year of release,” took place every seventh year. At that time debts were canceled and slates wiped clean ([Dt 15:1-12](#); cf. [Ex 21:2](#); [23:10-11](#); [Lv 25:2-7](#)). The law clearly forbade lenders to withhold loans to those in desperate need during a sixth year. Jewish tradition held strict injunctions against a lender trying to collect on a loan that should have been forgiven in the sabbatical year.

Every 50 years Israel had its Year of Jubilee. In that year land reverted to its original owner if it had not already been redeemed by some relative. That provision prevented the buildup of landed estates by the wealthy few while the many poor suffered in slavery ([Lv 25:13-17](#)). Although the Mosaic law could not guarantee economic utopia, it sought to curb the greediness in human nature. It also aimed at providing everyone with an equal opportunity and a fresh start every 50 years.

Debt in the New Testament

The NT shows how various cultures handled the matter of loans and debts. There were Jewish people who adhered strictly to the Mosaic law and refused to charge their fellow Jews high interest. Hellenistic and Roman legal practices, however, penetrated parts of Jewish society.

Jesus’ Parables

Jesus alluded to non-Jewish economic practices in his parable of a servant who jailed a fellow slave for not repaying a loan ([Mt 18:23-35](#)). The parable illustrates the ordinary Hellenistic and Roman custom of jailing or restraining such a person as surety. That practice forced a debtor to sell his property, to ask family and friends to cover the loss, or to sell himself into slavery. The parable of the talents ([25:14-28](#)) and the parable of the pounds ([Lk 19:12-24](#)), speaking allegorically about the kingdom of God, mention earning interest on money invested with bankers.

Economic and Theological Instruction

The apostle Paul instructed Christians to “owe nothing to anyone” ([Rom 13:8](#)), which means at the very least that Christians should make good on loans promptly. On the other hand, a Christian’s economic activity should be characterized by kindness toward those in need, generosity, and willingness to help ([Mt 5:42](#); [Lk 6:35](#)).

The NT also presents a number of lessons in doctrine based on a figurative use of “debts” and “debtors.” Jesus once referred to sinners ([Lk 13:2](#)) with a word literally meaning “debtors” (v [4](#)). In the Lord’s Prayer “debts” is paralleled with “sins” ([Mt 6:12](#); [Lk 11:4](#)).

Sin is seen as an enslavement ([In 8:34](#)), and all men and women as debtors to God. Redemption can be made only by God, who “gave his only Son” to set people free ([3:16-18](#)). The writer to the Hebrews showed that Jesus was made the surety of the new covenant ([Heb 7:22](#)).

The apostle Paul felt indebted to all people because of his own salvation, a debt he could pay by preaching the gospel ([Rom 1:14-15](#)). The NT teaches that all who receive the gospel are likewise in debt and therefore should devote themselves to serving others as a way of serving God (cf. [15:26-27](#)).

See also Banker, Banking; Money.

Decalogue

Greek term meaning “ten words,” referring to the Ten Commandments. *See* Commandments, The Ten.

Decapolis

The Decapolis was a group of ten independent cities (“deca” means ten in Greek). Greek people settled in the Decapolis after Alexander the Great conquered the area in the fourth century BC. Nine of these cities were located southeast of the Sea of Galilee. One city, Scythopolis, was located west of the Jordan River. Around AD 77, a Roman writer named Pliny wrote down the first known list of these ten cities: Canatha, Damascus, Dion, Gadara, Gerasa, Hippos, Pella, Philadelphia, Raphana, and Scythopolis.

In the second century BC, the Jewish people began wanting more independence from foreign rule. During this time, the Jewish king Alexander Jannaeus took control of some of these cities. The cities remained under Jewish control until 63 BC when a Roman military leader named Pompey captured them back. By the time Jesus lived, these ten cities had become wealthy from trade. The Romans joined these cities together as partners to help prevent any rebellion by the Jewish people.

The New Testament mentions the Decapolis region three times. The first is in [Matthew 4:25](#), where large crowds of people followed Jesus during his early ministry. Most of these people were Greeks and Canaanites. In [Mark 5:20](#), tells us about a man who had been possessed by evil spirits. After Jesus healed him, the man traveled throughout the Decapolis region telling people about Jesus. Lastly, [Mark 7:31](#) tells us that Jesus traveled through the Decapolis region while going from the cities of Tyre and Sidon to the Sea of Galilee.

Decrees of God

See Foreordination.

Dedan (Person)

1. Grandson of Cush in the list of Noah’s descendants. His father was Raamah, and his brother’s name was Sheba ([Gn 10:7](#); [1 Chr 1:9](#)).

2. Grandson of Abraham through Keturah ([Gn 25:3](#)). His father was Jokshan, his brother was Sheba, and his descendants were the Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim.

Dedan (Place)

Region located in the Arabian Peninsula. The Dedanites were listed among those who rejoiced at the downfall of Israel during the time of the Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah and Ezekiel foretold Dedan’s approaching destruction ([Jer 25:23](#); [49:8](#); [Ez 25:13](#); [38:13](#)). Apparently the Dedanites were merchants who traveled by caravan and traded saddlecloths and various garments associated with riding ([Is 21:13](#); [Ez 27:20](#)). Dedan is believed to have been located at or near an oasis called El-’ula in the central portion of the Arabian Peninsula. This oasis was part of the ancient trade routes, and undoubtedly played a role in the Dedanites’ mercantile way of life.

Dedication, Feast of

Designation by the apostle John for the Feast of Lights, or Hanukkah ([Jn 10:22](#)). The feast lasts eight days and begins on the 25th day of Kislev (November to December). *See* Feasts and Festivals of Israel.

Deer

A deer is a large animal with hooves. It eats grass and plants in a special way (chews the cud). It swallows its food and then brings it back up later to chew it again. Deer were considered ritually clean to eat according to Jewish law.

Only male deer have antlers. These antlers grow each year and are solid. This is different from antelope and gazelle antlers. Fully grown antlers lack skin or horn coverings. Essentially, they are dead bone that living deer carry for a time.

The end of the deer’s muzzle is hairless in all species. The stomach is divided into a series of chambers, some of which are used to store partly chewed food. The food is later spit up, rechewed, and swallowed. It then goes to a part of the stomach where true digestion takes place.

Types of Deer

Three species of deer lived in Palestine:

1. The red deer (*Cervus elaphus*)
2. The Persian fallow deer (*Dama mesopotamica*)
3. The roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*)

All are now extinct there. The last deer were hunted in Palestine in 1914. The Bible refers to the red deer as "hart" (male), "stag" (male), and "hind" (female). They stood about 1.2 meters (four feet) tall at the shoulder. It lived in herds or flocks, each group staying in a single area. Red deer searched for food during the morning and late afternoon ([Lamentations 1:6](#)). The sexes remained in different groups. The red deer was known for its leaping ([Isaiah 35:6](#)) and steadiness in the mountains ([Psalm 18:33](#); [Song of Solomon 2:8-9, 17](#); [8:14](#); [Habakkuk 3:19](#)).

The antlers of the Persian fallow deer ([1 Kings 4:23](#)) had large, flat, branched antlers (like an open palm with fingers extended). Its coat was yellow-brown. It traveled in small groups, feeding mainly on grass in the morning and evening.

The roe deer was a small, graceful animal, dark reddish brown in summer and yellowish gray in winter ([Deuteronomy 14:5](#); [1 Kings 4:23](#)). Its antlers were about 30.5 centimeters (one foot) long and had three points. The roe deer preferred lightly wooded valleys and lower mountain slopes. It grazed in open grasslands. It usually associated in family groups made up of the doe and her offspring. They were shy, yet very curious. The roe deer barked like a dog when disturbed, and they were excellent swimmers.

There is some doubt about whether [1 Kings 4:23](#) refers to the roe deer. It may refer to the fallow deer. But, that animal likely did not live in southern Palestine around the Sinai Desert due to its need for food and water. Fallow deer were found in northern Palestine.

Deer as Food in Jewish Law

The hart (the male red deer) was listed among the clean animals that Jewish law permitted as food ([Deuteronomy 12:15, 22](#); [14:5](#)). But deer were not listed among the animals they could sacrifice.

Mother Deer and Their Young

The hind (female red deer) usually gave birth to one calf. But, twins were born commonly ([Job 39:1](#); [Psalm 29:9](#); [Jeremiah 14:5](#)). The gestation period was about 40 weeks. When it was about to give birth, the hind looked for a safe place to hide. It preferred the dense undergrowth of the forest, where it could protect its tiny calf. During the first few days after birth, the mother never went far from her young. The fawn was able to stand on its own legs a few hours after birth.

[Jeremiah 14:4-5](#) describes the mother deer's care for her calf. It says only a severe drought drives her from it. [Job 39:1-4](#) describes the calving of the hinds. The hind showed grace and charm ([Genesis 49:21](#); [Proverbs 5:19](#)). Its dark, gentle eyes and graceful limbs described a woman's beauty ([Proverbs 5:18-19](#)).

Defile

To make ethically or ritually unclean. *See* Cleanness and Uncleanness, Regulations Concerning.

Deformity

A visible difference in a person's body shape or structure that is not typical. It can be present from birth or caused by injury or disease.

Deformities and the Old Testament Sacrificial System

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, both the animal to be sacrificed and the priest who performed the sacrifice could not have defects or blemishes ([Leviticus 1:3](#); [4:3](#); [21](#)). By being perfect, they are both examples in the Old Testament that point to Christ.

Eleven of the defects could exclude a man from becoming a priest ([Leviticus 21:17-20](#)):

- Seven defects in the muscles or skeleton
- Two defects in the eyes
- One defect with the skin
- One defect in the reproductive system

Nose Deformities

[Leviticus 21:18](#) mentions a condition that affects the nose, described as a "flat nose" in some translations or a "disfigurement" in others. This refers not to a common nose shape but a severe medical condition affecting the nose. Many genetic syndromes cause deformed noses, as do diseases like:

- Syphilis
- Tuberculosis
- Leprosy

These diseases can destroy the bone and cartilage support of the nose. With the support gone, the skin of the nose sinks inward. This condition causes a "saddle-shaped" deformity in the nose.

Withered Arms and Hands

Both the Old and the New Testament describe an instance where a man has a "withered" arm or hand. This is caused when the nerves supplying a limb are damaged, and the muscles decay. An injury, such as a sword striking an arm, can also cause this ([Zechariah 11:17](#)). In the New Testament, Jesus instantly healed a man with a paralyzed hand ([Matthew 12:10](#); [Mark 3:1](#); [Luke 6:6](#)).

See also Disease; Medicine and Medical Practice.

Degrees, Song of

Superscription of [Psalms 120–134](#) (kjv). *See* Song of Ascents, Song of Degrees.

Dehavites

Group of people among those colonized in Samaria by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal ([Ezr 4:9](#)). The Dehavites, whom some scholars associate with the Daoi (a Persian tribe originating near the Caspian Sea), wrote to Artaxerxes to protest the rebuilding

of Jerusalem by the returning Jewish exiles. Some interpreters suggest that the word translated "Dehavites" could mean "that is," so that the phrase would read "the men of Susa, that is, the Elamites" (rsv).

Dekar

The King James Version spelling of Deker in [1 Kings 4:9](#). Deker was one of King Solomon's officials.

See Ben-deker.

Delaiah

1. Son of Elioenai who traced his line of descent through Zerubbabel to David ([1 Chr 3:24](#), kjv "Dalaiah").

2. Priest in the time of David ([1 Chr 24:18](#)).

3. Head of a postexilic family that returned with Zerubbabel to Judea. The group was unable to prove true Israelite descent ([Ezr 2:60](#); [Neh 7:62](#)).

4. Father of a fifth-century BC man named Shemaiah. Shemaiah opposed Nehemiah ([Neh 6:10](#)).

5. Counselor in the reign of Jehoiakim (609–598 BC) who urged the king not to destroy Jeremiah's scroll, which Baruch had just read ([Jer 36:12, 25](#)).

Delilah

Delilah was a woman who became Samson's lover and betrayed him to his Philistine enemies ([Judges 16](#)). At this time (around 1070 BC), the Philistines controlled southern Israel. God chose Samson to begin freeing Israel from this control. Because Samson was so successful against them, the five Philistine rulers offered Delilah a large amount of money to help them capture him by finding out the secret of his great strength.

Delilah was from the valley of Sorek. This was in the southeast corner of the territory of Dan, only a few miles from the home of Samson in Zorah. It is clear from [Judges 14:1](#) that Delilah was a Philistine. But she accepted a large reward (5,500 pieces of silver which suggests she was motivated by money rather than loyalty to her people. The way she freely interacted with men suggests she may have been a prostitute.

Delilah tried three times to learn Samson's secret without success. On her fourth attempt, she finally tricked Samson into telling her the truth. His strength came from God. His long hair showed he was under a Nazirite vow (see [Numbers 6:1-8](#)). This meant he had set himself apart for special service to God ([Judges 13:5](#)). His hair was never to be cut. Delilah made Samson fall asleep, cut his hair, and handed him over to his enemies while he was still unaware of what was happening.

See also Samson.

Deliverance, Deliverer

Deliverance means to rescue or save someone. A deliverer is the person who does the rescuing. Scripture teaches that God's ultimate goal is to rescue people from the curse of sin, death, Satan, and hell.

Deliverance in the Old Testament

The Old Testament shows God delivering his chosen people from three things:

1. Slavery in Egypt
2. Being held captive in Babylonian
3. Being attacked by different groups living in Palestine

Christians see these rescues as pointing to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the greatest deliverer (rescuer) of all.

The noun “deliverer” occurs many times in the Old Testament. Three times the word refers to a human being:

1. Othniel delivered Israel from oppression to Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia ([Judges 3:8-10](#)).
2. Ehud delivered Israel from Eglon, king of Moab ([Judges 3:15, 30](#)).
3. [Judges 18:27-29](#) states that “there was no one to deliver” Laish from conquest by Dan’s tribe.

Other uses of “deliverer” refer to God himself as a personal deliverer of his people ([2 Samuel 22:2](#); [Psalms 18:2](#); [40:17](#); [70:5](#); [144:2](#)).

The basic Old Testament concept of deliverer is expressed in a Hebrew word for “next of kin.” A

close relative was responsible for aiding an individual in distress and redeeming him or her from slavery. God sent help when his people were in danger. He also acted as their deliverer in the exodus from Egypt ([Exodus 3:7-8](#)).

Deliverance in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus quoted a messianic passage ([Isaiah 61:1-2](#)) as describing his mission to proclaim release (or deliverance) to the captives ([Luke 4:18](#)). In [Acts 7:35](#), Moses is called a deliverer of Israel. In [Romans 11:26](#), the apostle Paul paraphrased [Isaiah 59:20](#), saying, “The Deliverer will come from Zion.” This refers to Jesus Christ.

See also Messiah; Redeemer, Redemption.

Deluge, the

See Flood, The.

Demas

One of the coworkers of the apostle Paul. Demas was with him once when Paul was imprisoned. There is little known about Demas apart from the brief information given in the New Testament. At first, he supported the ministry of Paul. He was mentioned in the greetings of Paul to the Colossians in [Colossians 4:14](#). He was also mentioned [Philemon 1:24](#). However, in [2 Timothy 4:10](#) Paul says Demas abandoned him because of Demas's love for the present world.

Demetrius

Name (“Son of Demeter”) of five persons in biblical times: three Syrian kings and two NT figures.

1. Successor to Antiochus V Eupator. Demetrius I was king (160–151 BC) when the Jewish uprising led by Judas Maccabeus was under way. He attempted several unsuccessful campaigns against the Jews ([1 Macc 7:1-10](#); [2 Macc 14:1-15, 26-28](#)). Toward the end of his reign Demetrius was challenged by Alexander Epiphanes and was killed in battle ([1 Macc 10:46-50](#)).

2. Son of Demetrius I. After his father’s defeat and death, Demetrius II sought refuge in Crete, then challenged Alexander Epiphanes by invading Syria

with an army of foreign mercenaries. Demetrius eventually concluded a treaty with the Jews and gained the Syrian throne in 145 BC ([1 Macc 11:32-37](#)). The Jews also helped Demetrius against another rival, Trypho, until he broke his word to them (vv [54-55](#)). In the subsequent contest between Demetrius and Trypho, the Jews, under Jonathan's brother Simon Maccabeus, achieved independence ([13:34-42](#)). Demetrius was captured by Arsaces VI (Mithridates I), king of Parthia, around 138 BC ([1 Macc 14:1-3](#)). He returned to the Syrian throne 10 years later and reigned briefly until his assassination (125 BC).

3. Grandson of Demetrius II. Demetrius III ruled Syria (95-88 BC) in the turbulent years of the Seleucid era. One ruling party in Israel, the Pharisees, unsuccessfully enlisted his aid in their contest with the priest-king Alexander Janneus.

4. Pagan silversmith in the city of Ephesus. He provoked a riot against Christian evangelists whose preaching had detrimental effects on his trade ([Acts 19:23-41](#)). The city of Ephesus was a center of the worship of Diana (Latin counterpart of the Greek goddess Artemis), the goddess of hunting. A huge temple, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, had been erected there for her worship. Among the commercial enterprises connected with the cult of Diana was the making of religious images out of various materials, including silver.

Demetrius, speaking for the silversmiths, said that both his business and the worship of Diana were threatened by the preaching of the apostle Paul and his companions. Gathering the other silversmiths together, he denounced Paul. The meeting caused a general uproar, and a mob dragged three of Paul's companions to the amphitheater. Finally the town clerk, who was responsible to the Roman authorities for maintaining civic order, was able to quiet the mob, persuading them to take any grievances they might have to the courts.

5. Christian believer whom the apostle John commended in his third NT letter ([3 Jn 1:12](#)). Demetrius may have been the carrier of that letter.

See also John, Letters of.

Demon

A demon is an angel who rebelled against God, and God drove it away from his presence. Demonism involves the actions of demons, while demonology

is the study of demons and their actions. Demonology aims to understand Satan's tactics to effectively exercise authority over them ([2 Corinthians 2:11](#); [Luke 10:19](#)).

What are Demons?

The English word "demon" comes from the Greek word "*daimon*," which means "a divinity or deity" (for instance, a false god or demon; see [1 Corinthians 10:20](#)). Any deity other than the one true God is considered an evil spirit or demon. The word "demon" does not appear in the King James Version, which incorrectly translates "*daimon*" as "devil." There is only one devil (Greek "*diabolos*"). The Bible uses various names, titles, and descriptions to refer to the devil. He is the leader of all other demons, and they follow him.

In the Bible, the word "spirit" often refers to a demon, along with a descriptive phrase. Examples include "evil spirits" ([Acts 19:12-13](#)), "unclean spirits" ([Matthew 10:1](#); [Mark 1:23, 26](#); [Acts 5:16](#)), "a spirit" ([Luke 13:11](#)), and "deaf and mute spirit" ([Mark 9:25](#)). Spirits can be identified by their role or function. For example:

- a spirit of murder
- a spirit of suicide
- a spirit of lust
- a spirit of depression
- a spirit of fear
- a spirit of lying

These spirits are linked to various sins or attitudes that go against God.

In the Hebrew Old Testament, there is no word for "demon." The term "spirit of distress" appears ([Judges 9:23](#); [1 Samuel 16:14-23](#); [18:10](#); [19:9](#)). There are also mentions of:

- "A lying spirit" ([1 Kings 22:22-23](#); [2 Chronicles 18:20-22](#))
- "A medium" (literally: familiar spirit) ([1 Chronicles 10:13](#); [2 Chronicles 33:6](#))
- "A spirit of confusion" ([Isaiah 19:14](#))
- "A spirit of deep sleep" ([Isaiah 29:10](#))
- "A spirit of prostitution" ([Hosea 4:12](#); [5:4](#))

A powerful demon in the Old Testament is called "the prince of the kingdom of Persia." This demon stopped the archangel Gabriel from delivering a message to Daniel. As a result, the archangel Michael helped Gabriel ([Daniel 10:13](#)).

The number of demons is unknown, but it seems to be very large, possibly beyond counting. [Revelation 12:4](#) suggests that Satan led one-third of the angels astray. This means the heavenly hosts outnumber Satan's forces two to one. [Ephesians 6:12](#) describes levels of authority or ranks of demons:

- "The rulers"
- "The authorities"
- "The powers of this world's darkness"
- "The spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"

Demons are created beings that are personal, immortal, and cannot reconcile with God. They are powerful compared to humans but weak compared to God. God has given us authority over them. In the name of Jesus, they must obey God's people, just as they must obey the Lord.

What Do Demons Do?

Angels were created to worship and praise God, serve him, and act as his messengers. The Bible says they are "spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" ([Hebrews 1:14](#)). Fallen angels have a similar role but serve a different master. They serve the devil because they are deceived and afraid. They want to work with humans, but their goal is to carry out Satan's plans and oppose God. They tempt, deceive, and mislead people to lead them to eternal punishment. In opposing God, they attack, oppress, hinder, and accuse God's people.

Satan is not everywhere at once, so he uses demons to carry out his plans. In the parable of the sower

([Matthew 13:3-9](#); [Mark 4:1-20](#); [Luke 8:4-15](#)), they take away the word before it can grow ([Mark 4:15](#)). Through persecution, Satan makes some people fall away before they truly commit ([Mark 4:17](#)). He also distracts with worldly concerns, riches, and material desires, preventing the word from producing much fruit ([Mark 4:19](#)).

Demons follow the same pattern Satan used when he tempted Eve:

1. They deny God's word and challenge its statements.
2. They deny the reality of death, often suggesting ideas like reincarnation.
3. They appeal to human vanity and pride by telling people they can become like God or be gods ([Genesis 3:1-5](#)).

These are also the basic methods and teachings behind most cults and false religions.

The Final Destiny of Demons

The Bible says that God cast the angels who sinned into gloomy pits to wait for judgment ([2 Peter 2:4](#)). Jesus spoke of the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. He said that humans who are cursed will also go there ([Matthew 25:41](#)). At the end of time, Satan and his demons will be thrown into the lake of fire ([Revelation 20:10](#)). This is the same place of eternal torment for all whose names are not written in the Book of Life ([Revelation 20:12-15](#)).

See also Demon-possession.

Demon-Possession

Demonic occupation of a human being. The term "possession" is misleading and is not the best translation for the Greek word *daimonizomai*, which literally means to be "demonized" and can often best be translated as "to have a demon."

Demons can enter the body of a person ([Lk 8:30; 22:3](#)) in order to control the individual's thoughts and actions. Sometimes a distinction is made between demonic oppression and demonic possession; this supposedly differentiates an attack from without and control from within. Although a non-Christian may be said to be "possessed" by a demon, the Christian cannot be possessed that way, for he belongs to Christ and his

human spirit has been sealed by the Holy Spirit ([Eph 1:13](#)). Demonic spirits somehow know and acknowledge this seal.

Demons can also enter the bodies of animals, as in the case of the swine in [Mark 5:13](#). Demons are associated with books of magic ([Acts 19:19](#)), idols ([1 Cor 10:19–21](#)), and fetishes. Demons often cause illness or physical disability; [Luke 13:11](#) tells of a woman who had “been crippled by an evil spirit” for 18 years but was delivered and healed by Jesus. Since evil spirits often attack the mind and the emotions, many symptoms of mental illness may be the result of their activity. The boy whom Jesus delivered just after the Transfiguration showed symptoms of epilepsy. Paranoia may be the work of a spirit of fear. Some individuals suffering from schizophrenia (split or multiple personality) may in reality be demonized by a number of spirits. It is possible for a person to have many demons. Jesus cast seven of them out of Mary Magdalene ([Lk 8:2](#)). The spirit in the Gerasene demoniac gave his name as Legion, “for we are many” ([Mk 5:9](#); [Lk 8:30](#)). In the time of Augustus a Roman legion consisted of 6,000 foot soldiers, usually accompanied by an equal number of auxiliary troops.

Demonization occurs in various ways. Some people are demonized by a hereditary curse, which may continue to the third or fourth generation ([Ex 20:5](#)). The curse against illegitimacy was particularly strong, for an illegitimate child could not enter the congregation of Israel until the tenth generation ([Dt 23:2](#)). Curses may also be placed upon someone by spells, incantations, or similar practices such as voodoo or other forms of witchcraft. [Galatians 3:13](#) speaks of redemption from the curse of the law through Christ, Jesus having “become a curse” for us. Usually believers are not affected by curses made against them, unless they have given grounds to the devil ([Eph 4:27](#)). Such grounds may be provided through drugs, illicit sex, the occult, or any other avenue forbidden in the Bible. Involvement with tarot cards, horoscopes, or any other form of fortune-telling may give demons opportunity to enter. Such contacts may seem harmless, but Satan utilizes the smallest foothold to gain advantage over people.

Manifestation

Often demons prefer to hide rather than to make their presence known. That way, they can exercise control without restriction. When they do manifest themselves, often when challenged, all sorts of strange and frightening things may occur. They

possess supernatural powers (cf. [Rv 16:14](#)), which they exhibit directly or through their victims. The Gerasene demoniac had superhuman physical strength, so that he couldn’t be bound with fetters or chains ([Mk 5:4–5](#)); he lived in tombs and screamed both day and night. He also injured himself with stones.

The spirit in the demonized boy in [Mark 9](#) made him dumb and deaf, threw him on the ground, and caused him to roll around and to foam at the mouth ([9:18–20](#)). The demon caused him to grind his teeth and become rigid; he had tried to kill the boy by throwing him into the fire and into the water on various occasions (vv [18–22](#)). Before leaving at the command of Jesus, the demon cried out (cf. [Mk 1:26](#)), shook the boy terribly, and left him lying like a corpse. Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up ([9:27](#)). Similar manifestations take place today.

Exorcism

Casting out demons, or exorcism, was a regular and frequent part of the ministry of Jesus, and he taught and commanded his followers to do the same. This command has never been cancelled, and the ministry of deliverance should be even more important today, when the forces of evil are so prevalent. The following principles come from the practice of Jesus, the Scriptures, and personal observation and involvement.

1. Jesus spoke to demons and commanded them to come out ([Mk 1:25](#); [9:25](#)). He cast them out “with a word” ([Mt 8:16](#)). Jesus gave his followers authority to use his name in casting them out and used this as a sign of the believer ([Mk 16:17](#)). His name is not a magical formula, and its use depends on the relationship between the Lord and the person using his name. The sons of Sceva found it out to their horror ([Acts 19:11–18](#)).
2. Jesus cast out demons by the Spirit of God ([Mt 12:28](#)). God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power to heal all who were oppressed by the devil ([Lk 4:18–19](#); [Acts 10:38](#)).
3. The Lord gave clear teaching about “the binding of the strong man” in deliverance ([Mt 12:29](#); [Mk 3:27](#)) and about binding and loosing ([Mt 18:18](#)).
4. Prayer is an important weapon in spiritual warfare. When the disciples asked ([Mk 9:28](#)) why they could not cast out a demon, Jesus replied that this kind comes out only with prayer.
5. [Revelation 12:11](#) testifies to the power of “the blood of the Lamb” in overcoming Satan. Demons

do not like to hear of the blood of Jesus and often become agitated at the mention of it.

6. God has equipped the believer with armor for defense in spiritual battle ([Eph 6:10-17](#)).

7. The Lord answered Satan with correctly applied texts from the Bible. We have been given the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God ([Eph 6:17](#); [Heb 4:12](#)), as a means of defense and for attack against the enemy.

8. We must come against the hosts of hell from our position in the heavenly places ([Eph 2:6](#)), not from our limited earthly station.

9. We must recognize that the ultimate victory has already been won by Jesus, who came to destroy the works of the devil ([1 Jn 3:8](#)) and to destroy him who has the power of death ([Heb 2:14-16](#)). When Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished," he meant that the redemptive work was done; when he arose from the dead, he demonstrated his power over death. We win only as we enter into his victory.

See also Demon.

Demophon

A Syrian officer and district governor in Palestine. He served under Antiochus V (about 164 BC). His fellow governors were Timothy, Apollonius, and Hieronymus. Even though two leaders, Lysias and Judas Maccabeus, had made peace agreements, Demophon and the other leaders kept causing problems for the Jewish people ([2 Maccabees 12:2](#)).

Denarius

A denarius was a silver coin used in the Roman Empire. Most workers earned one denarius for working a full day.

See Coins; Money.

Deputy

1. An official of high rank whose authority is normally given by a king ([1 Kings 22:47](#); [Jeremiah 51:28](#)).
See Governor.

2. The King James Version translation for "proconsul." A proconsul was an officer appointed over provinces by the Roman senate ([Acts 13:7-12](#); [18:12](#); [19:38](#)).
See also Proconsul.

Derbe

A city of the Roman province of Asia. It was located in the district of Lycaonia in the province of Galatia ([Acts 14:6](#)). Derbe was the last city visited by Paul during his first missionary journey (verse [20](#)). It was also the first city Paul visited while on his second journey ([16:1](#)). And it is likely one city he revisited on his third journey ([18:23](#)).

Gaius was from Derbe ([20:4](#)). He was one of the missionary companions of Paul on his third journey.

Descent into Hell

The phrase "descent into hell" comes from a controversial statement about Christ in the Apostles' Creed. The creed says that Christ "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose from the dead." This phrase, "he descended into hell," has led to much debate. Though it has been part of the creed since at least the fourth century, people still disagree about what it means and how it relates to Scripture.

The Apostles' Creed simply means that Christ's descent into hell was part of his mission to save humanity. Since the other events in the creed are listed in order, this descent would have happened between Christ's death and his resurrection. Most traditional Christian scholars agree on this point.

However, several important questions remain. Should we understand the phrase "he descended into hell" literally? Does it refer to a real place or a state of being? How did Christ descend? In what condition was he? And for what purpose did he descend?

The word "hell" adds to the confusion. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for "grave" also came to mean the "place of the dead." The Greek translation of the Old Testament and New Testament used the word *Hades* for this concept. In many English translations, both words are

translated as "hell," along with the Greek word *Gehenna*, which refers to a place of punishment for the wicked that Jesus mentioned ([Matthew 5:22, 29–30](#)). However, the earliest versions of the Apostles' Creed, written in Greek, use a different phrase that means "the lowest part." Later Latin versions translated this as *ad inferna* ("to the place below"), which eventually came to be understood as a place of torment, or "the inferno."

Literal Descent

The traditional interpretation, affirmed by Roman Catholics and Lutherans, takes the phrase literally. It teaches that Christ actually went to the place of the dead, *Hades*. Within this view, two main ideas have emerged about why Christ descended.

To Free the Old Testament Faithful

One idea is that believers who lived before Christ, some listed in [Hebrews 11](#), were in a part of Hades. They were neither suffering nor in bliss. They were waiting for salvation. After Christ's work on the cross, he visited Hades. He freed the souls there and led them to heaven. This was between his death and resurrection.

That interpretation claims support from [Ephesians 4:8–10](#). It says Christ "descended to the lower parts of the earth" and then "ascended" on high, leading "captives away." Here, "the lower, earthly regions" is understood as *Hades* and the "captives" as the Old Testament believers who Christ led into full fellowship with God.

To Preach the Gospel to the Rebellious Dead

A related passage is [1 Peter 3:18–20](#). It says that Christ "preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago" in Noah's time. This seems to conflict with the first view, as these spirits were disobedient, not believers. Some suggest a second idea. Christ descended into Hades. He wanted to save those lost in sin who never heard the gospel. According to this view, "hell" in the Apostles' Creed refers to the place where the doomed dead were. Christ's purpose in descending was to save some or all of these souls by preaching to them.

That interpretation also finds support from [Ephesians 4](#) and [1 Peter 3–4](#). "Captives" in [Ephesians 4](#) is seen as referring to those who had died in the "bondage" of sin. In [1 Peter 3](#), "the spirits in prison" are understood as those in *Hades* who would be condemned without hearing and responding to the gospel in the afterlife. Some also

refer to [1 Peter 4:6](#), which says that "the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead." Some scholars believe this verse refers to the gospel. It was preached to people who were dead by the time of writing. Many argue that preaching the gospel after death is unbiblical. It allows those who rejected salvation in life to seek it after death. This contradicts [Hebrews 3:7–15](#), which teaches that salvation must be accepted in this life. The Bible also emphasizes that judgment is based only on what was done on earth.

Figurative Descent

Many scholars, including John Calvin, interpret the passage figuratively. They find literal interpretations too challenging. They do not see the descent as a real event. It happened between Christ's death and resurrection. They view it as a way to describe the intensity of Christ's suffering. "He was crucified, died, and was buried" describes his physical suffering, and "he descended into hell" represents the depth of his spiritual suffering. Christ endured the agony of hell as the substitute who bore the guilt for all humanity. That is reflected in his cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" ([Matthew 27:46](#)). The worst part of hell is being separated from God ([Matthew 7:23; 25:41](#)). This was the agony Christ endured to make the atoning sacrifice and uphold the justice of the triune God.

The Heidelberg Catechism of 1562 supports a view aligning with biblical accounts of Christ's suffering. This Calvinist interpretation, however, faces scrutiny regarding its fidelity to the Apostles' Creed's original intent.

The Westminster Larger Catechism rephrases it as "continuing in the state of the dead and under the power of death until the third day." A major issue with this interpretation is that the creed is very brief and seems to avoid repetition.

Given these interpretive challenges, some Christians omit "he descended into hell" when reciting the creed. They cite its late inclusion in Christian thought and its absence from the Nicene Creed. Nevertheless, Christian councils have endorsed a version of the Apostles' Creed containing this controversial phrase.

Desert

A place, often sandy and incapable of sustaining vegetable life, like the Negev in southern Palestine. A desert might have areas where life is possible.

What Does "Desert" Mean in the Bible?

The most common Hebrew term for desert means "wilderness." It might be related to the verb meaning "to drive," as a shepherd drives sheep to the pasture. The Greek word commonly used in the New Testament and the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) implies a wild, open area where beasts live ([Deuteronomy 32:10](#); [Job 24:5](#)). The wilderness can also be a place for pastures ([Exodus 3:1](#); [Psalm 65:12](#); [Jeremiah 23:10](#); [Joel 2:22](#)).

The Bible often refers to areas of wilderness ([Genesis 16:7](#); [21:20](#); [1 Samuel 17:28](#); [Matthew 3:1](#); [Mark 1:13](#); [Luke 15:4](#)). "Wilderness" is usually a place where no people live ([Numbers 14:33](#); [Deuteronomy 32:10](#); [Job 38:26](#); [Proverbs 21:19](#); [Jeremiah 9:2](#)) but wildlife do:

- The vulture ([Psalm 102:6](#))
- Wild donkeys ([Job 24:5](#))
- Jackals ([Malachi 1:3](#))
- Ostriches ([Lamentations 4:3](#))

The term is also used figuratively ([Hosea 2:3](#); [Jeremiah 2:31](#)).

Another Hebrew term for desert, *arabah*, comes from the root that means "to be arid." It refers to a desolate, bare grassland ([Job 24:5](#); [Isaiah 33:9](#); [Jeremiah 51:43](#)). In its plural form, it describes the features of the desert plains of Moab ([Numbers 22:1](#); [26:3](#), [63](#); [Deuteronomy 34:1](#)) and Jericho ([Joshua 4:13](#); [5:10](#); [2 Kings 25:5](#)). "The Arabah" is the plain of the Jordan Valley and the land surrounding the Dead Sea. The Arabah contains both dense forests with sheltering wild beasts (including lions) and desert grasslands.

Two other Hebrew terms, meaning "waste" and "ruin," refer to areas that were once inhabited but were later destroyed ([Isaiah 1:7](#); [5:9](#); [6:11](#); [Jeremiah 42:18](#); [Ezekiel 35:7](#)). They refer to any place that has been destroyed ([Leviticus 26:31, 33](#); [Job 3:14](#); [Psalms 9:6](#); [109:10](#); [Isaiah 5:17](#); [44:26](#); [51:3](#); [52:9](#); [Jeremiah 7:34](#); [Ezekiel 5:14](#)). One of them is used to describe the wilderness of the exodus ([Isaiah 48:21](#)).

Another word meaning "waste" ([Psalm 78:40](#); [Isaiah 43:19–20](#)) is also the name for Jeshimon, an area of land west of the Dead Sea ([Numbers 21:20](#); [1 Samuel 23:24](#); [26:1](#)).

In the New Testament, the noun for "wilderness" and the adjective "desert" ([Matthew 3:1](#); [24:26](#); [Luke 5:16](#); [John 6:31](#); [Acts 8:26](#)) come from the same Greek root.

What Themes About the Wilderness Are in the Bible?

The Bible is full of desert or wilderness themes. It can be seen:

- In the area of human disobedience outside the Garden of Eden
- In Israel's wandering during the exodus
- In the struggle between faith in the desert and idolatrous city life.

The desert is viewed as a realm of demons and death ([Deuteronomy 32:17](#); [Isaiah 34:13–14](#)). The wilderness is similar to the chaos before the Creation ([Genesis 1:2](#); [Job 26:7](#)). Several passages deal with the renewal of life in a desert valley or with the transformation of a desert into a garden ([Ezekiel 37](#); [Isaiah 41:18–20](#)).

The desert is also a place where God is close to his people ([Deuteronomy 32:10–12](#)). He watches over them and tests their obedience ([Jeremiah 2:2](#); [Hosea 2:14–15](#)).

Finally, the desert is a place of refuge, cleansing, and purifying. In the gospels, the desert theme of the exodus repeats in the 40 days and nights Jesus was tempted in the wilderness ([Mark 1:13](#); compare [Psalm 91](#)). The desert fathers of the early church and the hermits of the Middle Ages reflect the prophet Elijah and John the Baptist ([1 Kings 19:4–8](#); [Matthew 3:1–6](#)).

See also Negeb, Negev; Palestine; Wilderness.

Desert of Sin

The Desert of Sin (also called the Wilderness of Sin) was a place where the Israelites traveled after leaving Egypt. *See* Sin, Wilderness of.

Desire

A longing or want for something. In the Bible, the concept of desire is expressed through many different words in both Hebrew and Greek. As a noun it translates 12 Hebrew words and 3 Greek words. As a verb it represents about 12 each of Hebrew and Greek verbs. Some of these words simply mean "ask" or "seek" in modern translations.

Desire itself is neither good nor bad. The moral significance lies in how people respond to their desires. One can either let desires control their actions or learn to control desires and use them for their God-intended purposes.

There have been differing views among Christians about how to approach desire. Some ascetics have argued that desiring food or enjoying eating is sinful. However, Jesus's own example in the Gospels shows that he enjoyed good meals, even to the point where his critics called him a glutton ([Luke 7:34](#)). His first miracle in John's Gospel was performed at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, where the feasting likely lasted for several days ([John 2:1-11](#)).

Sexual desire, like the desire for food, is not inherently evil. God created humans with both desires, and both need to be kept under control in obedience to God's law.

The key distinction between good and bad desire is whether it is self-centered or focused on God's will. The Bible teaches that the essence of sin is the determination to have one's own way. King David, despite his serious sins, was honored because he was a man after God's heart, wanting to do God's will ([Acts 13:22](#)). In contrast, King Saul was rejected for being stubborn and self-willed ([1 Samuel 15:23](#)).

Evil desire, therefore, is not necessarily about wanting something traditionally labeled as wicked. It is essentially the desire to have one's own way, which is a form of idolatry – putting oneself in place of God.

Desire is necessary for accomplishing anything in life. However, one's actions should always align with God's will as revealed in his Word. The Bible promises that if people delight in the Lord, God will give them the desires of their heart ([Psalm 37:4](#); compare [Psalm 145:16, 19](#); [Proverbs 10:24](#); [Matthew 6:33](#)). When God becomes one's greatest desire, all other desires become appropriate and

can reflect God's desires for his people's well-being.

Dessau

A village in Judea where Judas Maccabeus led the Jews in an attack against the forces of Nicanor ([2 Maccabees 14:16](#)). Nicanor was a Syrian officer under the command of Lysias.

Destiny

1. A pagan god (Meni) mentioned in connection with another pagan god (Gad). This god was probably a god of good luck or fortune ([Isaiah 65:11](#)).
2. The determined future of the Hebrews as God's chosen people ([Exodus 19:5-6](#)). In the New Testament, eternal destiny depends upon a person's relationship with Jesus ([Acts 17:30-31](#); [1 John 5:1-5](#)). See Elect, Election; Foreordination.

Deuel

Deuel was the father of Eliasaph. Eliasaph led the tribe of Gad during the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites ([Numbers 1:14](#); [7:42, 47](#); [10:20](#)). In [Numbers 2:14](#), most manuscripts spell his name Reuel. Some others spell it Deuel. This is due to a confusing similarity between the Hebrew letters for "d" and "r."

Deutero-Isaiah

Deutero-Isaiah (meaning "Second Isaiah") is a term that some scholars use for chapters 40–66 of the book of Isaiah. The word "deutero" comes from Greek and means "second." These scholars believe these chapters might have been written by a different author than chapters 1–39, though others disagree.

See Isaiah, Book of.

Deuteronomy, Book of

Fifth book of the OT, and last of the Pentateuch (the five books of the Law). In it Moses restated to the people of Israel various laws and precepts of the covenant that God had revealed to them at Mt Sinai. Thus, the book has become known in Greek and Latin tradition as Deuteronomy ("second law"). That name has led some to misinterpret the significance of its contents as secondary. The book makes an important contribution to God's unfolding revelation of his purpose for the nation of Israel. Moses' reminders of the wilderness wanderings and the Ten Commandments, plus his instructions for life in the Promised Land, are a vital part of the OT covenant literature.

Preview

- Date and Authorship
- Historical Setting
- Significance of Deuteronomy
- Deuteronomy and the Law
- Content

Date and Authorship

Two basic views (with variations) on the date and authorship of Deuteronomy are advocated by modern biblical scholars. Those who consider Moses the author date the book in the 14th or 13th century BC. Others believe that it was composed by an unknown author in the seventh century BC, when Josiah was king in the southern kingdom of Judah.

The Case for a Seventh-Century Date

As early as 1805, W. M. L. de Wette advocated that Deuteronomy was used by Josiah in his seventh-century reforms, and that it was written shortly before that. Biblical critic Julius Wellhausen adopted that view, which has been advocated by many scholars ever since S. R. Driver publicized it in his *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1891). According to that view, the book was written late but ascribed to Moses.

Many modern scholars, such as Gerhard von Rad and G. E. Wright, regard Moses as the founder of Israel's faith. They argue that whatever in Deuteronomy is from Moses was transmitted orally until about the seventh century BC. Denying that Moses actually wrote Deuteronomy, they attribute

its present form to numerous writers and editors over an extended period of centuries.

The Case for Mosaic Authorship

In recent decades, studies of Hittite suzerainty treaties from the second millennium BC have yielded interesting comparisons between those treaty forms and the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. In 1954 G. Mendenhall suggested that the form of the covenant at Mt Sinai was the same literary form used by Hittites in treaties with Syrian vassal states during the 14th and 13th centuries BC. In 1960 M. G. Kline applied that idea to the book of Deuteronomy, seeing it as a renewal of the Sinaitic covenant and outlining its structure as a literary unit reflecting the pattern of Hittite covenant forms.

The book of Deuteronomy does contain certain parallels to Hittite vassal treaties. As a renewal treaty it appeals to the covenant of God with Israel at Mt Sinai, recorded in the book of Exodus.

1. The "preamble" in ancient Hittite treaties usually identified the suzerain or ruler. In [Deuteronomy 1:1-5 \(Ex 20:1\)](#) Moses as the speaker represents God, the King of Israel. As his death approaches, Moses makes an appeal for the renewal of the covenant.

2. In the "historical prologue" the suzerain usually cited the benefits he had bestowed on his vassal. In [Deuteronomy 1:6-4:49 \(Ex 20:2\)](#) Moses declares what God has done for Israel since his revelation at Mt Sinai. Moses reminds the people of Israel of God's faithfulness even when they had been unfaithful.

3. The "stipulations" were usually stated by the suzerain in the treaty's third division. In [Deuteronomy 5-26](#) Moses outlines the stipulations for Israel in their covenant relationship to God. The basic requirement in [Deuteronomy 5-11 \(Ex 20:3-17\)](#) is exclusive, wholehearted love for God. In the following chapters, [Deuteronomy 12-26](#), the basic principle of exclusive love for God is applied to specific areas of cultic ceremonial consecration ([Dt 12:1-16:17](#)), judicial justice in government ([16:18-21:23](#)), the sanctity of God's order (chs [22-25](#)), and public acknowledgment of God as their Redeemer and King (ch [26](#)).

4. "Covenant ratification" usually contained a provision for treaty renewal and a formula for curses and blessings. In [Deuteronomy 27](#) provision is made for Joshua to conclude the renewal of the covenant after the Israelites occupy the land. In

addition, the divine threat and promise are expressed in blessings and curses as Israel swears its oath of allegiance on the plains of Moab.

5. "Succession arrangements" were usually the concluding part of suzerainty-vassal treaties. In chapters [31-34](#) Joshua is designated as Moses' successor. The written text is deposited in the sanctuary with the song of witness and a testamentary blessing by Moses. The book of Deuteronomy thus constitutes the documentary witness of God's covenant as it concludes with the death of Moses.

The fact that the literary structure of Deuteronomy parallels the legal forms characteristic of ancient Hittite treaties supports the traditional viewpoint that Moses is the author of Deuteronomy. When Moses is recognized as the mediator between God and Israel in the Sinaitic covenant, it is significant that the book of Deuteronomy represents Moses' renewal of the covenant in the literary form current in the culture of his day.

Historical Setting

Moses led the Israelites from Egypt through the wilderness to the plains of Moab east of the Dead Sea. [Exodus 1-19](#) gives an account of the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt, the birth and preparation of Moses, his contest with the pharaoh, the miraculous deliverance out of Egypt, and the journey to Mt Sinai (probably also known as Mt Horeb).

In that desert area God's great revelation came to Israel through Moses ([Ex 20-40](#); [Lv 1-27](#); [Nm 1-9](#)). At Mt Sinai, God identified himself as the one who had delivered the Israelites. There he established an agreement by which they would be exclusively devoted to him as his holy nation. There the tabernacle was built and the priesthood established. Instructions were given for making sacrifices and offerings, and for observing feasts and seasons, so that Israel's pattern of living would show that they were God's holy people. The tribes were also organized for encampment around the tabernacle and for the march to Canaan, the Promised Land.

[Numbers 10-21](#) is an account of the 38 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness. In 11 days they marched from Mt Horeb to Kadesh-barnea, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) south of Beersheba. From there 12 spies were sent into Canaan. Their report produced a crisis in the form of a revolt against God. Subsequently, Israel wandered in the

wilderness for 38 years, during which those who had been at least 20 years old when they left Egypt died. The new generation moved to the plains of Moab, located east of the Dead Sea and north of the Arnon River. [Numbers 20-36](#) tells of the conquest and occupation of the land east of the Jordan River.

The book of Deuteronomy presents Moses' address to the new generation of Israelites. In Exodus and Numbers God frequently speaks to Moses; in Deuteronomy, Moses is speaking at God's command to the Israelites ([Dt 1:1-4](#); [5:1](#); [29:1](#)). In contrast to the preceding books, Deuteronomy has a style of exhortation in which Moses admonishes the new generation about their responsibility in view of the preceding generation's failures. Whatever repetition occurs in Deuteronomy is carefully selected, with the specific purpose of warning the new generation so that they will not fail to conquer and occupy Canaan. Deuteronomy is not primarily retrospective; its outlook is optimistic about the future, offering hope for fulfilling the promises God made to the Israelites in Egypt.

Significance of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy (with Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah) is among the most frequently quoted books in the early Christian centuries. More than 80 OT quotations in the NT come from Deuteronomy.

Jesus focused attention on Deuteronomy when he summarized the essence of the entire OT Law and Prophets in the two great commandments of love for God and neighbor ([Mt 22:37](#); see [Dt 6:5](#); [10:19](#)). Jesus also quoted Deuteronomy ([6:13](#), [16](#); [8:3](#)) in his temptation experience ([Mt 4:4-10](#)). Deuteronomy unfolds the essence of what God revealed to Moses at Mt Sinai. In Deuteronomy, Moses shares with the Israelites the core of God's revelation without repeating details of sacrifices, observances, or rituals. He expounds the character of Israel's faith and nationhood. Moses repeatedly emphasizes his concern that they faithfully maintain a good relationship with God. An exclusive devotion to God expressed in everyday life is the key to a lifetime of blessing.

The primary need of love toward God and neighbor eventually became a basic requirement for the followers of Jesus Christ ([Lk 10:25-28](#)). The book of Deuteronomy is thus crucially important to the Christian concern to maintain a vital relationship with God.

Deuteronomy and the Law

To designate the book of Deuteronomy as a “second law” or a repetition of the law is misleading. Moses’ emphasis is not legalistic. Details of worship and ritual are not repeated or delineated to any great extent. Although the Ten Commandments are repeated, emphasis is placed on the first commandment, explicitly requiring exclusive devotion to God. Moses is primarily concerned with Israel’s relationship with God and their determination to maintain it in their own and their children’s lives.

The NT reveals that a legalistic interpretation of the Mosaic revelation was held by the Jews of the first century AD. Such legalism developed in Judaism especially during the intertestamental era. The Judaistic legalism of NT times has in modern times been ascribed wrongly to Moses. Moses did warn of the necessity of keeping all of God’s law ([Dt 28:1-58](#)), but in Deuteronomy his message as a whole makes it clear that he was not exclusively concerned about legalistic observance. Rather, the central theme of Deuteronomy is the unique relationship that had been established by a unique God with a unique people, the Israelites.

Content

Brief Historical Review ([1:1-4:43](#))

Moses is identified as the speaker, addressing the Israelites on the plains of Moab during the last year of his life. The Israelites were on the verge of entering the Promised Land of Canaan.

Moses began with a reference to Mt Sinai, scene of the greatest revelation in OT times. He focused attention on God’s explicit command for them to move up to Canaan and occupy the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their rebellion brought divine judgment, so the conquest of Canaan had been delayed 38 years while an entire disobedient generation died in the wilderness.

Instructed by God not to molest the Edomites or Moabites, Moses had led the Israelites to the Moab plains north of the Arnon River. The Israelites defeated Sihon, the Amorite king of Heshbon, and Og, king of Bashan. The tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh appropriated the territory east of the Jordan River as their land ([Nm 32](#)). On the basis of that conquest, Moses encouraged Joshua to believe that God would aid him and the Israelites in the conquest of the land of Canaan west of the Jordan River.

The Israelites should learn from the mistakes of the generation that died in the wilderness ([Dt 4:1-40](#)). They should consider the fact that the word of God had been spoken to them. The revelation that had come to them through Moses was unique, and the most important thing was for them to revere the God who had revealed himself. The uniqueness of Israel’s God among the nations that worship idols should never be forgotten.

Moses reminded the Israelites that they had entered into a contractual agreement with their unique God. That covenant was mentioned 26 more times by Moses. No nation had ever experienced anything like it. If Israel obeyed, they would enjoy God’s blessing and favor.

Exhortations and Applications ([4:44-26:19](#))

The circumstances in which Moses addressed the Israelites are reported in a short transitional passage ([Dt 4:44-49](#)). From the slopes of Mt Pisgah (or Nebo), with Israel encamped in the valley opposite Beth-peor, Moses made his appeal to the people before they crossed the Jordan River.

Moses’ exposition of the “great commandment” is centered in the agreement made between God and Israel. He repeated the Ten Commandments as the essence of God’s revelation at Sinai. As Moses explained what God expected of Israel, he elaborated the first commandment: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” ([5:6](#), rsv). Their relationship with God was of basic importance, since God’s wrath will be against those who worship other gods ([v 9](#)).

Love is the key word in the relationship between God and Israel. Moses boldly asserted, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength” ([Dt 6:4-5](#), nlt). All other commandments are significant because they bear on that relationship (as spelled out in chs [5-11](#)).

Exclusive love and devotion to God are essential. In a relationship of wholehearted love, no idols can be recognized or tolerated. Yet Moses wanted Israel to convey its consciousness of God to future generations by many external things: signs on their hands, frontlets (or “phylacteries”) on their foreheads, Scripture verses on their doorposts, and so on. By precept and example they should convey to their children that they love God ([Dt 6](#)).

The Israelites should never forget that God had chosen them to be his people ([Dt 7](#)). They were to execute God's judgment on the Canaanites, who had been spared judgment since Abraham's time ([Gn 15:16](#)). Although the Israelites themselves did not merit God's love, in love and mercy he had redeemed them out of Egypt.

Moses appealed to the people to remember what God had done for them ([Dt 8](#)). To God's sustaining provisions they should respond with thankfulness, recognizing that the power to achieve anything they had done had been God's gift.

The Israelites had repeatedly failed in their faith and commitment to God ([9:1-10:11](#)). Through Moses' intercession they had been spared. It was for no merit of their own that they would enter Canaan; that was God's gracious provision for them. Moses' appeal for a wholehearted commitment is summarized in [Deuteronomy 10:12-11:32](#). It is necessary to display reverence, respect, love, and obedience to God (see also [6:5, 13, 24](#)).

The God whom the Israelites must love sincerely and without reservation is the Lord of the cosmos. He is the righteous judge who rules supreme over all nature and history. God loved their forefathers, the patriarchs. He redeemed the Israelites from Egyptian enslavement and gave them his covenant. He manifested himself in helping the orphans, widows, and strangers. He multiplied Israel to be as numerous as the stars of the heavens.

Moses gave two basic instructions to apply in daily life to maintain their relationship with God as a reality: "circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart" ([Dt 10:16](#), rsv). He did not refer to physical circumcision, a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham ([Gn 17](#)). Circumcision, which was not observed during the years of wilderness wanderings, was reinstituted under Joshua after the Israelites crossed the Jordan River ([Jos 5:2-9](#)). Moses referred to "spiritual circumcision" (see [Lv 26:40-41](#); [Jer 4:4](#); [9:25](#); [Rom 2:29](#)). All things that might restrict, interfere with, or negate total devotion to God were to be cut away (circumcised) so that the Israelites would continue to love God with all their heart.

"Love the foreigner" ([Dt 10:19](#)) ranks second in importance to wholehearted love for God. Love for the stranger or neighbor is basic to all other human obligations (see [Lv 19:9-18](#)). Social obligations issue out of a person's relationship with God. Being recipients of God's love, the Israelites were to love

others. They were to remember God's love for them when they were slaves and strangers in Egypt. God loves the stranger, the widow, and the orphan; therefore, if anyone loves God, he or she is under obligation to love other people. God is concerned about justice and righteousness; a person who professes to love God must be concerned about just treatment for other people.

The Israelites were to be known for their concern for people whose social position exposed them to exploitation and oppression. The profound humanitarian spirit of the Mosaic law stands in unique contrast to the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi and the Assyrian and Hittite law codes of that day. In those codes human relationships reflected no vital consciousness of a love relationship with deity.

In the first century AD Jesus Christ came into conflict with Jewish religious leaders who had lost the essence of God's law in a maze of legalism. For Jesus, the greatest commandment was to love God; the second was to love one's neighbor. Those two commandments (which constitute the essence of the entire OT revelation) would, if kept perfectly, provide the basis for eternal life ([Mt 22:37-39](#); [Mk 12:29-31](#); [Lk 10:27-28](#)). Christians believe that the climax of God's revelation of love came in Jesus Christ. For them, responding to God's love means to accept Jesus Christ in wholehearted devotion and to love one's neighbor as Jesus exemplified in his life.

In [Deuteronomy 12:1-26:19](#), Moses gave instruction in practical living for a God-related people when they resided in the land God had promised to them. Having once survived on manna supplied directly by God, in Canaan they would enjoy the fruit and produce of the land. They would also encounter a culture permeated by Canaanite religion.

In worshiping God in their new setting, they were cautioned to maintain due sanctity ([Dt 12:1-14:21](#)). They were not to worship at pagan shrines. They should bring their offerings to divinely appointed places for fellowship and rejoicing together in the Lord's presence. Idolatry was not to be tolerated in any form. Any prophet who deviated from the law of Moses in advising the worship of other gods should be stoned. Exclusive devotion to God was to be daily practice.

Canaan's abundant blessings should be shared with neighbors ([14:22-15:23](#)). Tithes should be brought to the central sanctuary where Levites assisted the

priests in religious ministration. Joy in sharing life's blessings and opportunities was to characterize Israel's pattern of living.

Moses prescribed three annual pilgrimages ([16:1-17](#)). The people should remember their deliverance out of Egypt by observing the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread. Seven weeks later, when the barley harvest was completed, they should spend time rejoicing before the Lord in a one-day festival called the Feast of Weeks. When the vintage as well as the grain harvest was completed, they were to observe the Feast of Ingathering (or Booths), a time of thanksgiving and sharing with others. Every seven years the law was read at the Feast of Ingathering.

In human relations justice was to prevail among the Israelites ([16:18-21:23](#)). The Book of the Law kept at the main sanctuary was their divine authority, providing God's instructions for them. The king was to have a copy of this law and govern his life in accordance with it. Prophets and priests played an important role as religious leaders in the life of Israel. Judicial authority was vested in the priests. In contrast to the brutality of other nations, humanitarian principles were to prevail in Israel's warfare. Fathers were responsible for their own family households.

In domestic and social relationships, the law of love was to prevail ([22:1-26:19](#)). Many regulations governed family life. In matters of sustenance, wages, and business dealings, the Israelites were admonished to be compassionate and just. Promises and warnings raised their consciousness about using the resources of land and animals entrusted to them so that their stewardship would please God.

In [Deuteronomy 26](#), Moses instructed the Israelites in two liturgical confessions and a reaffirmation of the covenant. By acknowledging that God was the giver of all they had, and by confessing before God that they shared his gifts with others, they confirmed their covenant with God.

Alternatives: Blessings or Curses ([27:1-30:20](#))

Moses set before the Israelites the alternatives of blessings or curses. Under Joshua they were to renew the covenant publicly. At Mt Ebal stones were to be erected for inscribing the law and an altar constructed for offering sacrifice. The curses were to be read from Mt Ebal and the blessings from Mt Gerizim. Conditional self-curses were read

regarding offenses against God and other human beings ([Dt 27:15-26](#)). Thus they acknowledged their accountability to God. Though their sins might be hidden from people, it was God to whom they were primarily and ultimately accountable. Blessings as a way of life and curses as a way of death were clearly set before the Israelites (ch [28](#)). Setting them in the perspective of history, Moses appealed to the new generation to take advantage of their present opportunity (ch [29](#)). Warning that, should they fail to love God, they would ultimately be subjected to dispersion, Moses admonished them to choose the way of life and good rather than the way of death and evil (ch [30](#)).

Transition: from Moses to Joshua ([31:1-34:12](#))

When the life and ministry of Moses were nearing completion, and transfer of leadership was near ([Dt 31:1-34:12](#)), Joshua had already been designated by God as Israel's new leader. Moses assured the Israelites that God would be the same with Joshua in charge. The revelation given through Moses had been put in writing and now was committed to the priests, the custodians of the Book of the Law. Joshua, who had already distinguished himself in responsible leadership, was publicly confirmed at the door of the tabernacle ([31:1-29](#)).

The "Song of Moses" is the covenant's document of witness ([32:1-47](#)). In it Moses spoke with prophetic understanding as he recounted Israel's past experience. Reiterating the consequences of their attitude toward God, he assured the people of restoration if they failed again. He encouraged them to fix their hearts on what God had revealed to them and to impress it on their children. Keeping the covenant by maintaining a wholehearted love for God would be important for all future generations as well as for those then listening to Moses.

After some final, brief instructions ([32:48-52](#)), Moses pronounced his blessings on the Israelites, whom he had led for 40 years ([33:1-29](#)). In his final blessing, also called the "Testament of Moses," the greatness of God and his special relationship with Israel are delineated. Israel is unique among all the nations of the world.

The book of Deuteronomy appropriately ends with an account of the death of Moses, the greatest prophet in OT times ([34:1-12](#)).

See also Israel, History of; Moses.

Devil, the

The devil is one of the names used in the New Testament for Satan, who is an enemy of God. *See* Satan.

Devoted Things

Persons, animals, or objects that God did not allow the Israelites to keep or use for themselves. These items were set apart as belonging completely to God ([Leviticus 27:28-29](#); [Numbers 18:14](#)).

See Curse, Cursed.

Dew

Dew is the water that forms on surfaces during the night when warm air cools down. You can usually see dew as small drops of water on plants and other surfaces in the early morning.

In the ancient Near East, dew was very important. It provided much-needed water in hot, dry areas where rain was rare. Plants needed dew to grow, and farmers depended on it for good harvests ([Haggai 1:10](#)). The Bible often mentions dew and rain together as valuable gifts from God ([1 Kings 17:1](#)). Dew played an important role during the exodus (when God led the Israelites out of Egypt). It helped provide food for the people in the desert ([Exodus 16:13-21](#); [Numbers 11:9](#)).

The Bible uses "dew" as a picture of several different things:

- Dew is sometimes a symbol of blessing. For example, Isaac blessed Jacob by asking that "the dew of heaven" be given to him ([Genesis 27:28](#); compare [Deuteronomy 33:13](#); [Micah 5:7](#)).
- Dew was also a symbol of refreshment, renewal, or prosperity ([Job 29:19](#); [Hosea 14:5](#)).
- A king's favor was said to be like dew upon the grass ([Proverbs 19:12](#)).
- Dew could represent something that comes quietly. Because dew forms silently at night, it was used to describe quiet, secret actions ([2 Samuel 17:12](#)).
- Dew is also a symbol of something that disappears quickly. Since dew evaporates fast in the morning sun, it was used to describe things that don't last long ([Hosea 6:4](#)).

In one of David's psalms, he wrote that God would give new strength like the morning dew ([Psalm 110:3](#)).

Di-Zahab

Name, listed along with Paran, Tophel, Laban, and Hazeroth, meant to designate the locale of Moses' final address to Israel ([Dt 1:1](#)).

Diadem

A diadem is a type of crown that kings and queens wore around their heads like a band or ribbon. *See* Crown.

Dialogue of the Redeemer

This Christian Gnostic document is also called the Dialogue of the Savior. The document was found in the ancient Nag Hammadi Library at the modern city of Nag Hammadi (Upper Egypt) in 1946.

The Dialogue is a fictitious account of a conversation between Jesus and some of his disciples. In it, they discuss questions about the

universe, humanity, the end times, and salvation. The manuscript is in poor condition. Its author and origin are unknown. It was probably written in Egypt during the second or third century AD.

See also Apocrypha.

Diamond

Precious gem, usually colorless, consisting of crystalized carbon. In the Bible “diamond” seems to indicate the hardness, rather than the actual identification, of the stone. *See* Stones, Precious.

Diana

Roman name for the mythological Greek goddess Artemis, daughter of Jupiter and Latona and the twin sister of Apollo. She renounced all idea of marriage, supposedly because she was appalled at the birth pains her mother had suffered in bearing her, and remained the unattainable virgin goddess. Although goddess of the moon, Diana was more often portrayed as the huntress with two dogs beside her.

The Temple of Diana at Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The impressive building was supported on 100 large columns. The local legend was that her statue fell there from the sky ([Acts 19:35](#)). This may have been a reference to a meteorite. Pliny described a large stone over the doorway, which, according to tradition, had been put in place by Diana. Ceremonies and services of worship in her honor were conducted by eunuch priests.

Among the statues that have been excavated, some show Diana as a multibreasted female; others show a shrine with the goddess attended by lions. Models of the temple were sold as souvenirs by the silversmiths, who were reluctant to see any slackening of this lucrative trade when Paul began his preaching in Ephesus ([Acts 19:23-20:1](#)). The discontent and agitation of the silversmiths led to the riot of the crowd, culminating in the roar “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” ([19:28, 34](#), kjv). Inscriptions in the British Museum refer to the goddess as “Artemis the Great.” If the silversmiths are to be believed, she was worshiped throughout the known world. The form of worship is not known for certain, but the worship of the goddess Diana may have been associated with a fertility cult.

Diaspora of the Jews

The dispersion of Jewish people from Israel to other countries is known as the Diaspora. Diaspora is a Greek noun meaning “sowing” or “scattering.” In the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible), it often means “exile” ([Jeremiah 25:34](#); see also [Isaiah 11:12](#); [Ezekiel 20:23](#); [Zephaniah 3:10](#)). The word appears twice in the New Testament where it refers to Christian Jews living outside Palestine due to various dispersions in Israel’s history ([James 1:1](#); [1 Peter 1:1](#)). Diaspora can sometimes refer to the exiled people or the place of exile.

Major Diasporas

Starting in the late eighth century BC, Jewish history experienced several major dispersions (forced movements of people).

Diaspora of the Northern Kingdom

After Solomon died, his kingdom split into two. The northern kingdom of Israel fell deeper into idol worship and immorality ([2 Kings 17:14-18](#)). Jeroboam, the first king of divided Israel, started a pattern of abandoning faith. Epitaphs for later kings often noted that the ruler “did not turn away from the sins that Jeroboam” ([2 Kings 10:31](#); [13:11](#); [14:24](#); [15:9, 18, 24, 28](#)). Assyria conquered the northern kingdom in 722 BC and exiled over 27,000 Israelites, as predicted ([2 Kings 17:23](#)). They were settled in cities along the branches of the Euphrates River and in Media. Assyrians from cities around Babylon then colonized Israel ([2 Kings 17:6, 24](#)).

Diaspora of the Southern Kingdom

The southern kingdom of Judah faced exile in Babylonia to the east and Egypt to the south. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Judeans during several campaigns from 605 BC until Jerusalem fell in 586 BC. The first deportation to Babylon took treasures from Jerusalem’s temple and palace, along with “all the commanders and mighty men of valor, all the craftsmen and metalsmiths—ten thousand captives in all. Only the poorest people of the land remained.” ([2 Kings 24:12-14](#); see also [2 Chronicles 36:10](#); [Jeremiah 52:29-30](#)).

A year later, a second expedition focused on the rebellious Jewish vassal king Zedekiah and his sons

([2 Kings 25:1, 6-7](#); [Jeremiah 52:4-11](#)). (A vassal king is a ruler under the authority of another king). In the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Babylonia attacked Judah for the third time. They destroyed the temple, the king's palace, and broke down the city's walls. They took everyone captive except the very poorest people ([2 Kings 25:8-21](#); [Jeremiah 52:12-16](#)).

Shishak, the king of Egypt, exiled people from Judah as early as the tenth century BC. Judah lost people and temple gold at that time ([1 Kings 14:25-26](#); [2 Chronicles 12:9](#)). About 400 years later, Johanan, a man from Judah, tried to escape Nebuchadnezzar by fleeing to Egypt. Johanan forced Jeremiah and other Jews to go with him, and they settled in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis. However, the Babylonians followed them, took control of Egypt, and executed many Jews there ([Jeremiah 43:5-44:30](#)). Records of property ownership and altar artifacts suggest that the few surviving exiles established permanent colonies in Egypt ([Isaiah 19:18-19](#)).

Other Diasporas

The Egyptian king Ptolemy I, who ruled from 323 to 285 BC, captured many Jews and took them to Egypt around 300 BC. These exiles settled in Alexandria, which became known for Greek and Jewish scholarship. Elsewhere, Antiochus III of Syria, who ruled from 223 to 187 BC, moved large groups of Jews from Babylonia to Phrygia and Lydia. The Romans also relocated a significant number of Jews to Rome. The Roman general Pompey brought many Jews there as slaves in the first century BC.

The New Testament book of Acts shows how widely Jews were scattered. Luke lists visitors to Jerusalem: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, areas of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabians ([Acts 2:9-11](#)). These Jews of "the Diaspora" were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost.

Jewish communities existed in Macedonian cities that the apostle Paul visited during his missionary journeys: Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth ([Acts 17:1, 10](#); [18:2-4](#)). Around the middle of the first century AD, the Roman emperor Claudius ordered all Jews to leave Rome ([Acts 18:2](#)). Scholars estimate that the Jewish population in Palestine at the time of Jesus' birth was about four to six

million. The Jewish population outside Palestine was several times larger, with communities of over a million each thriving in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Alexandria. Today, even with a national homeland, more Jews live outside Israel than inside.

Despite their dispersion, Jews from different diasporas remained similar to Palestinian Jews through several practices:

1. They continued to observe the major national feasts of Passover, Harvest, and Tabernacles ([Exodus 23:12-17](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1-17](#)). They observed them even while living abroad.
2. Jewish communities in foreign lands collected the temple tax for the temple's upkeep ([Exodus 30:11-16](#)), even after the temple was destroyed.
3. All Jews everywhere acknowledged the authority of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish religious council).

Positive Aspects

In exile, the Jews stopped worshipping idols, which had distanced them from God. Their exile led them to create synagogues for prayer and education. Jews in Alexandria translated the Old Testament Scriptures into Greek, the international language at that time. This translation, called the Septuagint, was often used by New Testament writers.

From the Christian perspective, the scattered Jewish communities were important. They served as strategic bases for spreading Christianity, which soon reached the surrounding non-Jewish world. Thus, God used these dispersions to bring the gospel to the non-Jews ([Romans 1:11-15](#); [1 Corinthians 10:11-12](#)).

The arts, sciences, and humanities have greatly benefited from Jewish contributions in Western culture. Despite facing intense discrimination, Jews have offered remarkable cultural gifts. Although the church of Jesus Christ is considered a "new Israel" and a "chosen race" ([1 Peter 2:9](#)), history and Scripture suggest that God still has a special interest in the Jews.

See also Israel, History of; Postexilic Period.

Diblah

ASV form of Riblah, the name of the place from which King Nebuchadnezzar directed operations against Jerusalem in 588–586 BC ([Ez 6:14](#); cf. [Jer 52:9–27](#)). *See* Riblah.

Diblaim

Father of Gomer, Hosea's wife ([Hos 1:3](#)). The name Diblaim is thought by some to be an allusion to Gomer's harlotry, since the name means "raisin cakes" and raisin cakes were used in ancient fertility-cult rites.

Diblath

The King James Version translation of Riblah ([Ezekiel 6:14](#)). Compare [Jeremiah 52:9–27](#).

See Riblah.

Dibon

1. A city in the land of Moab, east of the Dead Sea and north of the Arnon River. Dibon was located along the King's Highway, a major road in ancient times.

Dibon was in Amorite territory when the Israelites came through the area during their journey out of Egypt ([Numbers 21:30](#)). They asked Sihon, the king of the Amorites, for permission to pass through the land. He refused, so the Israelites fought and defeated him. This gave them control of Dibon.

After the Israelites entered the promised land, they divided the land among the twelve tribes. Dibon was given to the tribe of Gad ([Numbers 32:3, 34](#)). They also called it Dibon-gad ([33:45-46](#)). Another verse says it belonged to the tribe of Reuben ([Joshua 13:17](#)).

During the time of the judges, King Eglon of Moab oppressed Israel. He likely took back Dibon. But Ehud, one of the judges, killed Eglon and led Israel to victory. Dibon was probably returned to Israel at that time ([Judges 3:12-30](#)). Later, during the time of King David, Israel ruled over Moab and Dibon again ([2 Samuel 8:2](#)).

In the time before the exile of Israel, Dibon was again controlled by Moab ([Isaiah 15:2](#); [Jeremiah 48:18, 22](#)). The prophet Isaiah condemned Dibon, also called Dimon, as one of the most sinful cities in Moab ([Isaiah 15:9](#)). The name "Dimon" may be a play on the Hebrew word for "blood." This could be a way of showing that Dibon would suffer a violent and terrible end.

In 1868, people found the famous Moabite Stone at Dibon. This stone was set up by Mesha, the king of Moab. It tells how he built "Qarhah" as his capital city. Qarhah may have been a new name for Dibon, or it may have been a new city nearby. Most likely, Qarhah was the upper part of Dibon. It was the high, strong part of the city.

It had a wall around it, a water reservoir, several cisterns (water storage pits), the king's palace, and a shrine (called a "high place" in [Isaiah 15:2](#)). He built this shrine for Chemosh, the main god of Moab. Between 1950 and 1956, archaeologists explored Dibon. Today, this site is called Dhiban. They found parts of the city from as early as 3000 BC. From about 2100 to 1300 BC, the area seems to have had only a nomadic population (people who move from place to place). Around 1300 BC, people began to settle there again.

The earliest excavations uncovered five different city walls. The oldest wall was from about 3000 BC. The strongest wall was between 2 to 3 meters (7½ and 11 feet) thick. It was built with large, carefully shaped stones and was likely built during the time of King Mesha.

2. A town in the Negev (the dry southern region) of the land of Judah. People from Babylon who had been exiled there returned and lived in Dibon during the time of Nehemiah ([Nehemiah 11:25](#)).

Dibon-Gad

Another name for Dibon, a Moabite city ([Numbers 33:45-46](#)).

See Dibon #1.

Dibri

Dibri was a man from the tribe of Dan. He was the father of a woman named Shelomith. Shelomith married a man from Egypt. Shelomith and the Egyptian man had a son together. This son committed a serious sin by speaking against God's name. As punishment, the son was stoned to death while the Israelites were in the wilderness ([Leviticus 24:10-11](#)).

Didache (Teaching)

A manual of church discipline, otherwise known as "The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles."

Where Did the Didache Come From?

Its origin and date are difficult to determine precisely. Scholars generally agree that the author wrote it in Syria or Palestine during the late first or early second century. The practices described in the manual were established much earlier. The Didache (which means "teaching") was compiled from various sources that detail the traditions of well-established church communities.

What Does the Didache Teach?

This handbook contains several texts intended to instruct new converts in the Christian faith.

The "Two Ways" of Life and Death

Chapters 1-6 present the "Two Ways" of life and death. They are based on [Deuteronomy 30:15](#). This section resembles many Jewish teachings. It may find its source in the apocalyptic writings of the Qumran community (where the Dead Sea Scrolls were compiled). The manual also contains several parallels with the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. These first chapters include a distinctly Christian collection of sayings that resemble Jesus's teachings about loving one's neighbor (as recorded by Matthew and Luke).

Instructions for Christian Practices

Chapters 7-10 contain instructions for baptism, fasting, prayer, and the Eucharist (the sharing of bread and wine, also known as Holy Communion). For example:

- Converts should be baptized "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."
- Converts should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, in contrast with the Jews who fasted on Mondays and Thursdays.
- The converts should recite the Lord's Prayer (with the doxology) daily.

The prayers in chapters 9 and 10 are based on Jewish table prayers. It is not clear whether they are meant for the Eucharist or for a common

church meal (sometimes called a “love feast”). The prayers contain no references to the words of Jesus at the Last Supper. They place the blessing of the cup before the blessing of the bread (compare [1 Corinthians 10:16](#)). The Didache does note that believers are not required to use these model prayers.

Instructions for Church Leadership

Chapters 11–15 give instructions for church leadership. These chapters discuss the marks of true apostles and prophets. They are referred to as “high priests.” These chapters also discuss the church’s responsibilities toward these leaders. The Didache ends with a prediction of the imminent return of Christ.

Why Is the Didache Important to Christian History?

The Jewishness of the Didache may reflect the influence of the Jerusalem church’s teachings. The description of church leadership seems to come from Paul. He details the roles of apostles, prophets, and teachers in 1 Corinthians. The Didache also stresses the function of the prophets.

The teachings of the Didache reflect those of a church in the developmental stages of its institutions and practices. The church still appears to be developing characteristics that clearly distinguish it from Judaism. The Didache was popular in the early church. Eusebius listed it with the orthodox writings that were eventually excluded from the New Testament canon.

Didrachma

A Greek silver coin worth two drachmas (or two grams of silver) and equivalent to the Jewish half-shekel. Every Jew was required to pay this amount as the annual temple tax ([Matthew 17:24](#)).

See Coins.

Didymus

Greek for “twin” and another name for the apostle Thomas in [John 11:16](#), [20:24](#), and [21:2](#), nlt mg. *See Thomas, The Apostle.*

Dietary Laws

Regulations of food preparation and consumption provided by God for his people in OT times. The dietary laws formed part of broader regulations on “cleanness” that were designed to maintain Israel’s status as a holy people.

Preview

- Holiness and Dietary Law
- Before Moses
- The Mosaic Law
- After Moses
- Symbolism
- Reactions from the Church

Holiness and Dietary Law

Biblical laws concerning diet and cleanness were based on the idea of holiness. The underlying meaning of the Hebrew word for “holiness” is difficult to ascertain but most probably was “to cut,” or “to be separate,” or “to set apart.” The Lord told Israel, “You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine” ([Lv 20:26](#), rsv). God is the supreme example of holiness; he is the one uniquely separate in his character and being ([Is 6:3](#)). But God wanted his covenant people to be holy, too. One of the ways that God made the Israelites different from the other peoples of the world was by giving them dietary laws: “I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy” ([Lv 11:44](#), niv). Keeping the dietary laws did not automatically make the people “holy” (i.e., separated to God); rather, it was one of the ways OT believers could show their gratitude to God for his deliverance.

Before Moses

From the Creation, God approved all varieties of fruit and vegetables as legitimate, clean food ([Gn 1:29](#)). After the fall of humanity, God distinguished between clean and unclean animals. At the time of Noah, God directed that additional specimens of clean animals be taken aboard the ark ([7:2](#); [8:20](#)). After the Flood, God prohibited the eating of blood because blood represented life ([9:4](#)). To commemorate the patriarch Jacob’s wrestling with the Angel of the Lord, Jacob’s descendants refrained from eating a certain hip muscle ([32:32](#)), though that was not a command from God.

The Mosaic Law

The primary revelation of the Lord's dietary standards for Israel was given through Moses. Dietary laws are found among the ceremonial regulations received at Mt Sinai ([Lv 11](#)). Moses repeated many of those laws 39 years later, shortly before the people entered the Promised Land ([Dt 14:3-21](#)). The dietary laws concerned only animal products, except for the prohibition of wine to certain people ([Lv 10:9](#); [Nm 6:3-4](#); cf. [Jgs 13:14](#); [Jer 35:6](#)).

Five categories of living things were regulated for food. To be edible an animal had to have cloven (divided) hooves and had to chew its cud. According to Leviticus, that requirement ruled out camels, horses, rabbits, and pigs ([Lv 11:2-8](#)). Sea life had to have fins and scales ([vv 9-12](#)). Birds were edible if they were not predatory ([vv 13-19](#)); Moses went on to list 20 species specifically prohibited because they were birds of prey or scavengers. Winged insects were forbidden ([vv 22-23](#)) except for certain types of locusts and grasshoppers (food commonly eaten by desert nomads). Finally, "the animals that move about on the ground," including reptiles and rodents ([vv 29-31](#), niv), were ruled out.

Further prohibitions were made about food that otherwise would have been considered clean. For example, nothing found already dead ([Dt 14:21](#)) or that had been torn by beasts ([Lv 17:15](#)) was to be eaten. Food could become defiled by contact with some other thing that was unclean, like a dead mouse that happened to fall into a food container ([11:32-34](#)). A young goat was not to be boiled in its mother's milk ([Ex 23:19](#); [34:26](#); [Dt 14:21](#)). When clean animals were slaughtered, their blood was to be drained out ([Lv 17:14](#)). All pieces of fat ([3:16](#); [7:23](#)), especially a sheep's fat tail ([Ex 29:22](#); [Lv 3:9](#)), were restricted for use in sacrifices to the Lord. Through Moses the Lord reiterated the prohibition against eating blood ([Lv 17:10](#); [19:26](#); [Dt 12:16](#); [15:23](#)).

Several reasons, stated in or inferred from Scripture, account for the dietary laws and apply to the Bible's cleanness regulations in general. Some seem to be natural reasons; others may be symbolic or relational.

Hygiene

Some dietary laws, such as those against eating vermin or decomposing flesh, circumvented obvious health hazards and were given for the

people's protection. But hygiene alone cannot account for all the regulations; in fact, some foods that might have been acceptable from a hygienic viewpoint, such as rabbit or clams, were excluded.

Aversion

Worms and snakes are generally considered loathsome, whatever their actual food value. Such animals were not *kosher* (proper).

Relationship to Pagan Practice

Boiling a young goat in its mother's milk has now been documented as a pagan rite among Moses' contemporaries, the Canaanites. God's people were not to imitate the practices of the peoples around them ([Dt 18:9](#)).

After Moses

The dietary laws given at Mt Sinai continued to be recognized throughout Israel's history. Before the birth of Samson, the child's mother was warned, "Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean" ([Jgs 13:4](#), niv). During the Philistine wars of the next century (c. 1041 BC), King Saul's soldiers sinned by disregarding requirements about the proper draining of blood from animals ([1 Sm 14:32-34](#)).

Later, when the Israelites were exiled in heathen lands, they were faced with situations in which the selection of food and its preparation could render it unclean ([Ez 4:12-14](#)). Daniel's refusal to be defiled by pagan delicacies at Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian court (605 BC) illustrated his loyalty to God ([Dn 1:8](#)).

From the prophet Isaiah's day (740 BC) onward, the most abhorrent food to the Israelites was the meat of swine ([Is 65:4](#); [66:3, 17](#)). In the Maccabean period the "abomination of desolation," which the Jewish hero Judas Maccabeus and his followers resisted to the death, included sacrifices of pigs on the temple altar in Jerusalem by the pagan ruler Antiochus Epiphanes ([1 Macc 1:54, 62-63](#); [2 Macc 6:5](#); [7:1](#)).

Symbolism

Certain food products were ruled out because of something they symbolized. God said not to eat blood: "Be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh" ([Dt 12:23](#), rsv). Blood had a ritual function. It was used to make atonement on God's

altar and therefore was not to be eaten ([Lv 17:11-12](#)). The NT writers recognized the sacrificial blood of the OT as a “type” or foreshadowing of the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross as a sacrifice for sin ([Heb 10:1, 4, 12](#); [1 Pt 1:18-19](#)). A symbolic regard for maternal life may explain why one who came upon a bird’s nest was allowed to take the eggs or the young but had to leave the mother bird unharmed ([Dt 22:6-7](#)). The need to preserve a fragile desert ecosystem may also have been a factor.

Reactions from the Church

At first the early church, with its Jewish background, found it difficult to break away from Hebrew dietary traditions. The apostle Peter was given a vision, repeated three times, about no longer calling either non-Jewish food or the non-Jews who ate it “unclean” ([Acts 10:9-16](#); [11:1-10](#)). Later, a council at Jerusalem officially decided not to retain Moses’ ceremonialism in the church, except that gentile Christians should abstain “from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood” ([Acts 15:20](#), niv) in order not to offend Jewish Christians. That was an application of the NT teaching of consideration for those with sensitive consciences. “Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. . . . But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin” ([Rom 14:20, 23](#), niv).

Jewish dietary laws also have relevance to Christians because of certain OT promises. God promised, first to Abraham and, by reiteration or allusion, throughout the OT, that the Gentiles would be included in his covenant. By preserving the health of the Hebrew people, God was ensuring their continuation as a nation. According to the NT, the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles was achieved by Christ, a Jew. The nation through which Christ came was protected in order that God’s promise could be fulfilled. Thus, the dietary laws need not be seen as burdensome restrictions of the law; they were part of God’s way of working out his redemptive plan.

See also Cleanness and Uncleanness, Regulations Concerning; Leviticus, Book of.

Diklah

Son of Joktan in the list of nations descended from Noah’s sons ([Gn 10:27](#); [1 Chr 1:21](#)); perhaps the name refers to an Arabian tribe or territory, living in or near a palm-bearing area, as the name suggests (Diklah is a variant of the Hebrew word dikla, which means date tree or palm tree).

Dilean

Obscure Judean village near Lachish. It is mentioned only once in the OT ([Jos 15:38](#)).

Dill

Dill (*Anethum graveolens*) is a weedy annual plant that looks similar to parsley and fennel. It grows 30.5 to 50.8 centimeters (12 to 20 inches) tall and has yellow flowers. People used dill as a general seasoning, especially for pickles. It also had some medical uses. This plant is grown in many places for its seeds. The seeds have a strong, pleasant smell and help with digestion.

The King James Version translates the Greek word *anēthon* in [Matthew 23:23](#) as “anise” instead of “dill.” This is considered incorrect by most scholars.

Dimnah

Alternate name for Rimmon, a Levitical city in Zebulun’s territory, in [Joshua 21:35](#). *See* Rimmon (Place) #2.

Dimon

KJV translation of a Moabite city in [Isaiah 15:9](#), alternately named Dibon in the large Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll. The site of Dimon is identified with Khirbet Dimneh, nearly three miles (5 kilometers) northwest of Rabbah. *See* Dibon #1.

Dimonah

Town mentioned in [Joshua 15:22](#) as being located in the Judean Negev, close to Edomite territory. It was one of 29 towns in the general area of

Beersheba; some scholars have identified it with the Dibon mentioned in [Nehemiah 11:25](#).

Dinah

Daughter born to Jacob and Leah ([Gn 30:21](#)), whose name means “judgment.” Living with her family at Shechem, a Canaanite city ([33:18](#)), Dinah went in to visit some neighboring pagan women ([34:1](#)). Shechem, the Hivite prince of the area, saw her and, while Dinah’s brothers were away in the fields tending their herds, he raped her. Shechem then requested Dinah from Jacob as a wife.

Jacob’s sons, enraged at the dishonor done to their sister, plotted revenge. They agreed to the marriage on the terms that all the Hivite males be circumcised. Hamor, Shechem’s father, consented. While the Canaanite men were still incapacitated from their surgery, Dinah’s brothers Levi and Simeon led a massacre in the city and killed every male. Dinah was retrieved and the city plundered. The brothers excused their action as a just retribution for one of the Canaanites having treated their sister as a harlot ([Gn 34:27-31](#)). For their use of weapons of violence ([49:5](#)), Simeon and Levi were later cursed by Jacob.

Dinaites

Postexilic group involved in a protest to Artaxerxes about the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple ([Ezr 4:9](#), kjv). The name is evidently an Aramaic title for “judge” (rsv); such judges are mentioned in fifth-century BC Aramaic administrative papyri.

Dinhabah

Capital city of Edom before the time of Israel’s monarchy, whose king Bela is mentioned in the Bible ([Gn 36:32](#); [1 Chr 1:43](#)). Its site is unknown.

Diocletian

Diocletian was a Roman emperor who ruled from AD 284 to 305. He was born around AD 245 and died in AD 313.

Early Life and Rise to Power

Diocletian was born to a poor family in Dalmatia (modern-day Croatia). His birth name was Diocles. He joined the army as a young man and rose through the ranks. He became the commander of the emperor’s personal guard.

In AD 284, after the emperor Numerian died, Diocles’s soldiers made him the new emperor. They also killed Numerian’s brother Carinus, who wanted to be emperor. This allowed Diocles to take full control. He then changed his name to Diocletian.

Government Reforms

Diocletian was known for being a strong leader and organizer. In AD 293, he created a new system of rule called the tetrarchy (a system with four rulers). This system helped manage the large empire by dividing power.

He also made changes to the government, army, and economy. These changes helped the empire work better. But they also weakened Rome as the center of power. The Roman Senate lost much of its authority. The four rulers in the tetrarchy made the big decisions instead.

Persecution of Christians

In AD 303, Diocletian began a time of persecution against Christians. Officials destroyed church buildings and burned copies of the New Testament. Of the four rulers, Galerius led the strongest attacks. Some scholars believe Galerius was the one who pushed for the persecution, not Diocletian himself.

Later Life

In AD 305, Diocletian stepped down from power. He moved to a large villa in Split, Dalmatia. He stayed away from politics and from the harsh actions of later rulers.

See also Caesars, the.

Dion

One of the cities of the Decapolis, built after the death of Alexander the Great by some of his soldiers. The city (not mentioned in the Bible) was culturally Greek, attracting many Greek immigrants; it was also a mercantile center of exchange. Dion was one of only two Decapolis cities

having a Macedonian name (the other being Pella). It was located in Palestine east of the Jordan, possibly near the Yarmuk River and the town of Gadara. *See* Decapolis.

Dionysius

An important and well-respected citizen of Athens who became a believer after hearing Paul preach. Dionysius was a member of the Areopagus (an Areopagite), which was the supreme court of Athens ([Acts 17:34](#)). Dionysius was one of the few people in Athens who believed Paul's message about Jesus.

Dioscorinthus

Problematic word occurring once in [2 Maccabees 11:21](#). "Dioscorinthus" formed part of the date in a letter written by Lysias, a Syrian official, to the Jewish people during the Maccabean revolts around 164 BC. Most scholars believe the word indicates the name of a month.

Part of the name may have referred to the Macedonian month Dios, but the significance of the rest is unknown. The early Jewish historian Josephus identified Dioscorinthus with the Jewish period "Marcheshvan" (November-December), but that gives no help in determining the precise meaning. Dioscorinthus has also been connected with Dioscurus, the third month of the Cretan calendar, but again the significance of that connection is unclear. Equally doubtful is the suggestion that Dioscorinthus was a short month inserted into the Jewish calendar to balance the lunar and solar years.

Dioscuri

The twin sons of Zeus known as Castor and Pollux. In Greek mythology they were the patron deities (protective gods) of navigation and were represented in the constellation Gemini. The Dioscuri (the "Twin Brothers") were the figurehead of the Alexandrian ship on which Paul sailed to Rome ([Acts 28:11](#)).

Diotrephes

A church member whom John reprimanded for his contentious behavior ([3 Jn 1:9-10](#)). He spoke against John; had resisted John's authority by refusing to receive an earlier letter; and refused to show Christian hospitality, urging others to do likewise. He may have been an official in the church who abused his position, since he liked to put himself first.

Diphath

Alternate spelling of Riphath, Gomer's son, in [1 Chronicles 1:6](#). *See* Riphath.

Discerning of Spirits

See Spiritual Gifts.

Disciple

A disciple is someone who follows another person and learns from their teachings.

Disciples in the Gospels and Early Church

The word "disciple" appears most often in the Gospels and the book of Acts in the Bible. The word also appears a few times in the Old Testament ([Isaiah 8:16](#), [Isaiah 50:4](#); [54:13](#)). In Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, this word can mean both "learned" and "taught." Wherever there are teachers and students, there is discipleship. Discipleship is the process of learning from and following a teacher.

In the Gospels, Jesus's followers are called "disciples." Some of these were a special group called "the Twelve," but Jesus had many other followers too. These people accepted Jesus's teachings and followed him faithfully. At this time, other religious teachers also had disciples. The Pharisees (a group of Jewish religious leaders) had followers ([Mark 2:18](#); [Luke 5:33](#)). John the Baptist also had his own disciples ([Matthew 9:14](#)). Different leaders asked their followers to do different things. John's way was more strict than Jesus's, but both involved teaching about behavior and life and a special way of praying ([Luke 11:1](#)).

Jesus's disciples had a special experience. They learned from Jesus in person. They could see his

face, hear his voice, and listen to his words directly ([Mark 10:21](#)). They also saw God's plan for salvation happening with their own eyes, with Jesus at its center. They followed a teacher whose actions matched his teachings.

The first disciples learned slowly from Jesus for multiple reasons:

- They had wrong ideas that needed to be corrected ([Matthew 16:21](#)).
- They could not fully understand Jesus's words and actions until after he died and came back to life ([Matthew 28:9](#)).

The disciples continued to learn even after Jesus went back to heaven when the Holy Spirit taught them things they could not understand while Jesus remained on earth ([John 16:12](#)).

The Role of Disciples in Spreading the Good News

Jesus had different groups of followers, including the Twelve ([Matthew 26:20](#)). He also chose 72 other people to be his special messengers ([Luke 10:1](#); some manuscripts say there were 70 instead of 72). These disciples learned from Jesus and then taught other people about Jesus's message ([Luke 10:1-11](#)). They healed sick people through God's power ([Matthew 10:1](#)). They told others how Jesus could save them from their sins.

The Twelve had a very important role. They became the main teachers of the new Christian church after Jesus returned to heaven. Jesus gave them special power and responsibility in the church ([Matthew 16:19](#); [28:16-20](#)). However, Jesus taught them that they should use this power by helping and serving others, not by controlling them ([Luke 22:24-30](#)). When Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and died, the other disciples chose Matthias to take his place ([Acts 1:26](#)).

These twelve men became known as apostles (special messengers). Later, God chose one more apostle: Saul of Tarsus, who was also called Paul. On his way to a city called Damascus, Paul saw Jesus who had risen from death. Jesus gave Paul a special task ([Galatians 1:12, 16](#)). God chose Paul to be the apostle to the gentiles and teach non-Jewish people about the good news of Jesus ([Acts 9:15](#)).

Before he went to heaven, Jesus told the first disciples to "make disciples of all nations" ([Matthew 28:19](#)). So in the book of Acts, "disciple"

is also used to describe believers who accept Jesus. These later disciples are called by Jesus's Spirit through the message of the first disciples.

The early Christians were called "the disciples" ([Acts 6:1-2, 7](#); [9:36](#); [11:26](#)). This was a good name for them because they followed Jesus's teachings and lived the way Jesus had shown them to live. These Christians lived together as a community and followed Jesus's teachings in their daily lives. The book of 1 John teaches that people show they love God by doing what Jesus taught them to do ([1 John 2:3-6](#); [3:10-11](#)).

Discipline

Learning that molds character and enforces correct behavior—from a Latin word meaning "instruction" or "training." To discipline a person or a group means to put them in a state of good order so that they function in the way intended. Discipline, in spite of a popular misconception, is not inherently stern or harsh. Bible translators chose "disciple" as an appropriate term for one who learns by following.

Preview

- Biblical Teaching
- Self-Discipline
- Parental Discipline
- Church Discipline

Biblical Teaching

Although used only once in the kjv ([Jb 36:10](#)), the word "discipline," in various noun and verb forms, occurs frequently in modern versions of the Bible. The Hebrew and Greek words commonly rendered "discipline" are sometimes translated as "reproof," "warning," "restraint," "correction," or (especially in kjv) "chastisement." More positive synonyms include "upbringing," "training," "instruction," and "education."

OT usage of "discipline" is noticeably more negative than in the NT, principally because of the legal aspect of God's approach to Israel under the old (Mosaic) covenant. The "new covenant" approach to the church leads to a more positive language of discipline in the NT. Yet both covenants had the same goal: righteousness. Considered in that light, even the OT emphasis on punishment proceeds from a positive motive toward a

constructive goal. Where the OT emphasized retaliation, it was to teach offenders the nature of their offense by showing them an effect like the one they had caused. Vindication of a wronged person's rights also vindicated God's righteousness. Vindication was an important way of upholding God's justice. Retribution was also important. Covenant breaking brought on the covenant curse ([Dt 27:26](#)) in the form of punitive discipline. Retribution reestablished the authority of God's law and taught respect for his standards of righteousness.

Complementary to punitive discipline, positive discipline can be thought of as reinforcing discipline. God always disciplines; he does so punitively when necessary, but reinforcingly when possible.

Discipline is frequently spoken of as being exercised by God over Israel ([Lv 26:23](#); [Dt 4:36](#); [8:5](#); [Jer 31:18](#)), over the nations ([Ps 94:10](#)), or over individuals ([Jb 5:17](#); [Ps 94:10, 12](#); [Heb 12:5-11](#); [Rv 3:19](#)). In Israel parental responsibility to discipline children was taken seriously ([Dt 21:18](#)). Fathers were solemnly charged to discipline their sons ([Prv 13:24](#); [19:18](#); [22:15](#); [23:13](#); [29:17](#); cf. [Eph 6:4](#); [Heb 12:7-10](#)). In the church, disciplining was a pastoral responsibility ([2 Tm 2:25](#)).

It is understandable that people fear discipline from God ([Ps 6:1](#)), but it is his wrath that should be feared. His wrath is directed only against those who have proved themselves by their actions to be God's enemies ([Dt 11:2-3](#)). God's discipline is different from his wrath and should not be despised ([Prv 3:11](#)) or taken for granted ([Heb 12:5](#)). Only a fool or wicked person hates it ([Ps 50:17](#); [Prv 5:12](#); [Jer 31:18](#)). God disciplines his people as a loving father disciplines a beloved son ([Dt 8:5](#); [Prv 3:11-12](#); [Heb 12:5-7](#)). According to Scripture, a wise person should love discipline ([Prv 12:1](#); [13:24](#); [2 Tm 1:7](#); [Heb 12:5, 9](#)).

The fruit of discipline is knowledge ([Prv 12:1](#)) and parents' delight ([29:17](#)). One who is disciplined can be spoken of as "blessed" ([Jb 5:17](#); [Ps 94:12](#)). Where the purpose of discipline is left unspecified, the discipline is nevertheless understood as good and righteous ([Dt 4:36](#); [Jb 36:10](#); [Prv 13:24](#); [Rv 3:19](#)). Specifically, discipline is called "the way of life" ([Prv 6:23](#)). It saves one from destruction ([19:18](#)) and allows one to escape both folly ([22:15](#)) and God's condemnation of the world ([1 Cor 11:32](#)). It eventually leads to sharing God's holiness ([Heb 12:7](#)), and yields "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (v [11](#), rsv). In contrast, the

consequences of a lack of discipline are stipulated to be abandonment by God ([Lv 26:23-24](#)), death ([Prv 5:23](#)), and destruction ([19:18](#)).

The book of Proverbs speaks of discipline as necessary to avoid sexual immorality ([5:12-23](#); [6:23-24](#)). Loose or wicked women probably symbolize many kinds of deceptive and enticing situations. To be able to act maturely and responsibly in such situations requires that young people respond to wise and loving parental discipline so that they learn to live disciplined lives. They will then do by "bent of nature" what is right because their nature has been shaped to what it right. Evil can then be shunned, even when it is encountered unexpectedly.

The book of Hebrews also urges its readers to respond to discipline rather than to react against it. In Hebrews two harmful reactions are stipulated and the helpful response is identified. On the one hand, no individual should regard lightly the discipline of the Lord ([Heb 12:5](#)). Discipline should be regarded neither as worthless nor as being of little value. On the other hand, one should not lose courage when he is punished by the Lord. That is, preoccupation with the negative aspect of the disciplinary procedure must not obscure its goal or demoralize persons being disciplined. There is a purpose for what happens, which should be sought and realized: "No discipline is enjoyable while it happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way" ([Heb 12:11](#), nlt). The exhortation is not to reject discipline or be dejected by it, but to accept it and be instructed by it.

Self-Discipline

Jesus' ethics of righteousness both fulfill and surpass the stringent code of the old covenant ([Mt 5:17-48](#)). Yet Christians are not therefore inherently more legalistic than were the Pharisees. Set free from "the law of sin and death," Christians have "the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ" ([Rom 8:1-8](#)) to provide a built-in dynamic to fulfill the will of God. Beyond slavish obedience to the letter of the law, believers are enabled by the indwelling Spirit of God to exercise self-discipline. Spiritual transformation is accompanied by renewal of the mind ([Rom 12:2](#)), which brings fresh understanding of oneself, one's motivations, and one's attitudes.

Parental Discipline

The family constitutes the basic unit of the human community. Within that cell of intimate relationships, parents are entrusted with the responsibility of guiding and correcting their children ([Dt 6:7](#); [Prv 22:6](#)). The biblical view is essentially pessimistic about the perfectibility of human nature. Therefore, parents are urged not to leave children at the mercy of their own natural tendencies. Undisciplined children are potential victims of the powerful conditioning exerted by a predominantly pagan culture. To exercise their responsibilities properly, parents must model values, practices, and attitudes to their children, besides teaching them through instruction and correction.

The parents' educational task is best accomplished through positive means such as advice, exhortation, counseling, family devotions, and Christian training in church and Sunday school. But it also may require negative measures, such as prohibitions and disciplinary action. When verbal admonitions are not heeded by small children, punishment becomes an effective form of persuasion ([Prv 13:24](#)). Physical discipline, however, should be administered on the basis of clearly stated and understood principles. Christian parents must avoid punishing out of anger or personal animosity, and must never cause injury to a child. Physical discipline should be viewed as a last resort intended to obtain maximum educational results with minimum outrage to children ([Eph 6:4](#)).

Human fallenness ([Gn 3](#)) means that self-centeredness infects even children (cf. [Ps 51:5](#)). Somehow children must learn respect for themselves and for others. Left on their own and then battered by a fallen society, they can become rebellious social misfits leaving a trail of heartache in their own lives and in the lives of other people. Love for one's children does not preclude the use of negative disciplinary measures. As distasteful as they may seem to both parents and children, genuine love may require them. A family environment regulated by consistent and loving firmness will enhance the chances for children to mature as responsible and considerate individuals.

Church Discipline

The church is basically a large family of which each believer is a member. The nature of the church—as a community intended to reflect in the faith, worship, and lives of its members the true

character of God—distinguishes it from all other groups.

At the same time, the church is called to be an open community of concern, reaching out in compassion to desperately needy human beings. Christian lifestyles clearly differ from pagan lifestyles. That difference often creates a barrier isolating the “lost” from the very people who could extend to them God's deliverance from loneliness, addictions, disorientation, broken relationships, and so on. The church has a responsibility not to place unscriptural obstacles in the way of its outreach to unbelievers, yet the tension between openness and purity is difficult to resolve. Without a careful balance, a church can easily become unduly restrictive or overly permissive. In either extreme its witness is impaired.

The solution to the dilemma lies in formulating church discipline that is authentically biblical. The Scriptures provide the church with ample guidance for the formulation of standards of conduct (e.g., [Ex 20:1-17](#); [1 Cor 5:11](#); [6:9-11](#); [Eph 4:25-32](#); [5:1-21](#); [Col 3:5-11](#)). As those standards are spelled out, however, it is necessary to differentiate between biblical absolutes and cultural norms. For instance, though drunkenness is expressly forbidden in the NT, there is no scriptural prohibition on the drinking of wine. Some churches allow drinking but decry drunkenness, others recommend abstinence to their members, and still others make abstinence from alcoholic beverages a condition of membership. The NT, recognizing that conflict sometimes occurs between Christian liberty and Christian responsibility, gives guidelines for resolving such conflicts ([1 Cor 8](#)).

For the sake of scriptural consistency and in order to be credible, church discipline should oppose sins of attitude with the same severity as for “gross sins.” The NT condemns immorality, murder, and drunkenness—but along with them envy, jealousy, anger, selfishness, complaining, and criticism. Each of the vices is an impediment to entering the kingdom of God ([Gal 5:19-21](#)). Unbelievers are often made to feel unwelcome in the church because of secondary matters such as smoking or drinking. Yet gossiping, complaining, and selfishness among church members are seldom exposed and properly disciplined. A more consistent position would promote the purity of the church and would also enhance its ministry as a supportive, accepting center of Christian love.

In addition to affirming the necessity for discipline within the church, the NT delineates a procedure

for carrying out disciplinary action ([Mt 18:15–18](#); [1 Cor 5:3–13](#); [Gal 6:1](#)). Offenders are first to be approached and admonished privately. If they refuse to repent or mend their ways, the case is to be presented before the leadership of the church and then, if necessary, before the whole congregation. Should offenders persist in their error, they are to be ostracized, not out of vindictiveness but with the hope of bringing them to repentance and restoration ([2 Thes 3:14–15](#)).

The Bible's emphasis on the necessity for self-discipline, parental discipline, and church discipline seems underscored by the moral decline evident in many areas of modern society. God's love, as depicted in the Bible and exemplified in Jesus Christ, is intended to teach all people how to live. Those who spurn God's "positive reinforcement" encounter the negative aspects of his discipline. Christians who discipline themselves, their children, and each other in a loving way honor Christ and model his way of life, thus helping others to understand God's purposes.

Discourse of Theodosius

The Discourse of Theodosius is a Coptic text that tells the story of the Virgin Mary's assumption (when she was taken up to heaven). It comes from the Coptic Bohairic version of the *Assumption of the Virgin*, which is one of the main sources for this story in Egyptian Christianity.

See also Apocrypha.

Disease

Term used in Scripture synonymously with sickness, infirmity, illness, plague, and pestilence. However, plague and pestilence are generally used when there are large numbers of victims, as in epidemics. "Pestilence" literally means "destruction" and usually describes an epidemic with a high mortality rate. "Affliction" and "torment" are other terms that may include disease, but are broader and are not used synonymously with disease.

During the time the Bible was written, people did not have a detailed concept of anatomy or of how the specific organs of the body functioned. Disease was thought of as abnormal, something that limits

one's ability to function with strength and vitality. The Hebrew word translated "sickness" as a noun means "to be weak" in its cognate verb form. The sick man by the pool of Bethesda is described as being "impotent" ([Jn 5:7](#), kjv), unable to get around by himself.

Sources of Disease

According to the Bible, disease has four sources: (1) God, (2) Satan, (3) sins of ancestors, and (4) breaking of physical, mental/emotional, or moral laws of nature.

God

All early peoples attributed events and phenomena to the supernatural, either to various gods or to evil spirits. The Hebrews were different by being strong monotheists, attributing all phenomena to the one true God who had revealed himself to them ([Is 45:21](#)). God was responsible for everything, including disease and evil (v [7](#)). This same God could also give material blessings, health, and heal all diseases ([Ps 103:3](#)). To the Hebrews, God could give health or sickness, and in either case, he had his purpose or reason.

One purpose of disease was punishment for wrongdoing ([2 Sm 24:1, 12–16](#); [1 Cor 10:8](#)). In the Hebrew mind, even when the immediate cause of the disease and death was obvious—as in many poisonous snakes biting people in the camp—the response was not to kill all the snakes but to pray to God for forgiveness ([Nm 21:4–9](#)). Leprosy, which literally means "a smiting," was a devastating disease sent by God to punish individuals who sinned ([Nm 12](#); [2 Kgs 5:27](#)).

God also sent disease to demonstrate his power or to protect his people. The 10 plagues in Egypt illustrate the former; the elimination of Sennacherib's army, the latter ([2 Kgs 19:34–36](#)).

Satan

Satan and other evil spirits could also be responsible for disease. In the biblical scheme of things, Satan's ability to bring disease is in the permissive will of God. The restriction on Satan's capacity for harm is clearly spelled out in the case of Job ([Jb 1:12](#)). The message of the NT is also clear that, despite cases of demonpossession and of people acting under Satan's influence, Satan's time is finite and his ultimate total defeat and destruction are certain.

Sins of Ancestors

Sickness could also come about because of the sins of one's ancestors ([Ex 20:5](#); [Lv 26:29](#); [1 Kgs 17:18](#); [Jb 21:19](#); [Lam 5:7](#)). The most striking example of this is the death of David's son as a result of his sin with Bathsheba ([2 Sm 12:15](#)). This concept of the origin of disease continued into NT times and was familiar to the disciples of Jesus ([Jn 9:2](#)).

Violation of Natural Laws

This idea sets the Hebrews apart from the other peoples of their day. With the understanding that disease can follow the violation of fixed physical, mental/emotional, and moral laws comes the idea of personal accountability in obeying these laws and avoiding disease. A person is responsible for his and the community's health and is not merely a passive victim of supernatural forces.

Based on this concept, Moses set up elaborate codes of behavior to maintain personal health and the health of the community. The Mosaic law covers the areas of diet, personal hygiene, Sabbath observance, sanitary regulations in the camp, cleanliness, and sexual relations. In following these natural laws established by God, the Hebrews could expect freedom from disease ([Ex 15:26](#)) and long life ([Prv 3:1-2](#)). These health laws of Moses make a lot of sense from a public health point of view even today and are far more rational than the approach of any other ancient people.

Another major consequence of understanding that disease can follow the breaking of the laws of nature is the shift away from the priest and toward physicians when looking for cures. As long as diseases were of supernatural origin, there was no basis for attempting to learn about disease processes in the search for cures. The Hebrews were familiar with physicians in Egypt ([Gn 50:2](#)), where they seem to have functioned as embalmers. Physicians were practicing in Israel throughout its history, but only gradually developed the capacity to be of much help ([2 Chr 16:12](#); [Jer 8:22](#); [Mk 5:26](#); [Col 4:14](#)). While validating the use of physicians for sick people ([Mt 9:12](#)) and of drugs for medicinal purposes ([Prv 31:6](#); [1 Tm 5:23](#)), the Scriptures emphasize the role of the Christian community and its elders in ministering to the sick ([Jas 5:14](#)).

Jesus Christ and Disease

Christ's approach to people with disease was distinctly different than that of the OT. He was nonjudgmental, interacting with them as people of

worth, not as social outcasts. He was full of genuine compassion for them as suffering people—touching them, comforting them, healing them, and speaking normally and naturally with them.

Jesus evidently thought of disease as a hindrance that prevented people from being the whole persons they were created to be. When confronted by a woman with a severe back deformity of 18 years duration, he healed her, saying she had been "bound by Satan" ([Lk 13:16](#)). His healing of incurable diseases was one of the proofs he offered that he was the Messiah ([Lk 7:19-23](#)). His ministry was directed toward releasing men and women to live life more abundantly ([Jn 10:10](#)). He did not fully subscribe to the punitive concept of disease ([9:3](#)). When a leper mentioned the possibility that it might not be God's will for him to be well, Jesus healed him instantly ([Mk 1:40](#); [Lk 5:12-13](#)).

Jesus was always concerned with the person's total health or wholeness, rather than merely the symptoms of disease. He frequently dealt with spiritual issues first, even though the sick person was brought to him for a physical problem. His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well focused on the basic conflicts in her disturbed personality ([Jn 4:5-30](#)). And the Sermon on the Mount, which basically deals with right attitudes and motives for human behavior, would greatly reduce personal and social suffering if it were followed. To Jesus, health is more than the mere absence of physical and mental disease; it is whole persons being all that they were meant to be.

See also Medicine and Medical Practice; Pestilence; Plague.

Disease of Bowels

The word **bowels** appears 37 times in the King James Version of the Bible. But only one passage connects it to a disease ([2 Chronicles 21:15-19](#)).

King Jehoram was an evil king. God punished him with a long and painful disease in his bowels (his intestines). The disease could not be cured. After two years, his intestines came out of his body, and he died in great pain (verse [19](#)).

This may have been a disease like colon cancer or an inflammatory bowel disease (a disease that causes swelling and pain inside the intestines).

The only deadly disease of the intestines in the New Testament also happened to a king. In [Acts 12:21-](#)

[23](#), King Herod became sick and died. The historian Josephus says Herod was 54 years old and had strong pain in his stomach for five days before he died.

He may have had a blockage in his intestines. This could have been caused by roundworms (a kind of parasite). During the sickness, roundworms may have come out of his body. Or people may have seen maggots (fly larvae) on his dying skin. This may explain why Luke wrote that Herod “eaten by worms and died.”

See also Disease; Medicine and Medical Practice.

Dish

A vessel, usually made of baked clay or metal, used in everyday life and in religious ceremony. Dishes were used to serve or preserve food ([Judges 5:25](#); [Matthew 26:23](#); [Mark 14:20](#)). They had to be wiped and left to dry ([2 Kings 21:13](#)). Later the Pharisees (a Jewish religious group active in the New Testament period) added a ritual cleansing as well ([Matthew 23:25–26](#); [Luke 11:39](#)). Dishes were used in connection with the meal offering ([Numbers 7:13](#)). Dishes were also used with the table of showbread for worship in the Old Testament tabernacle and temple ([Exodus 25:29; 37:16](#); [Numbers 4:7](#)).

Dishan

Chieftain in the land of Seir, a mountainous area southwest of the Dead Sea. Dishan's father was Seir the Horite ([Gn 36:21](#); [1 Chr 1:38](#)). The Horites were driven out of their territory by the Edomites ([Dt 2:12](#)). Later OT references often use Seir and Edom synonymously.

Dishon

1. Seir's fifth son and a Horite leader in Edom ([Gn 36:21](#); [1 Chr 1:38](#)), whose people were eventually displaced by the Edomites.

2. Grandson of Seir and son of Anah, a Horite leader. This Dishon was also the brother of Oholibamah, Esau's wife ([Gn 36:25](#); [1 Chr 1:41](#)).

Dispersion of the Jews

See Diaspora of the Jews.

Dives

The traditional name of the rich man in Jesus's parable about the beggar Lazarus ([Luke 16:19–31](#)). It came from the Latin term *dives*, translating a Greek word for “rich” or “wealthy.” Though the parable did not name the rich man, the church accepted this name by the third century. A second-century Egyptian scribe gave him the name “*Neves*,” meaning “nothing.”

See Lazarus #1.

Divination

The practice of seeking to know hidden information or predict future events through supernatural means. Divination includes methods such as reading omens, interpreting dreams, or consulting spirits.

See Magic.

Divine Presence

See God, Being and Attributes of; Presence of God, The.

Diviners' Oak

Place apparently near Shechem ([Jgs 9:37](#)); mistakenly called “the plain of Meonenim” in the kjv. The Diviners' Oak may have been associated with those who practiced divination, hence the name.

Division of the Land

Assignment of portions of the Promised Land to the 12 tribes of Israel following the Conquest. *See* Conquest and Allotment of the Land.

Divorce

The Bible's rules about divorce are connected to how marriage was understood at different times as God revealed his plan. These rules changed as God showed more of his plan to his people.

In the story of creation in Genesis, God created marriage as a union where two people become "one flesh" ([Genesis 2:24](#)). This happened in a world without sin. In such a perfect world, it was impossible to think about ending a marriage. Later, during his time teaching on earth, Jesus supported this original plan for marriage. He taught that when two people become "one flesh," they are no longer separate but joined together in a bond that cannot be broken ([Matthew 19:6](#)).

The Old Testament's View on Divorce

When sin entered the world, it deeply damaged the relationship between men and women. Before sin, they depended on God first. After sin, they each became controlled by what they were made from. The man became bound to working the ground he was made from ([Genesis 2:7; 3:19](#)). The woman became controlled by the man she was made from ([2:22; 3:16](#)). Before the fall (when humans first sinned), men and women were equal. They both shared God's image ([Genesis 1:27](#)). They were both partners in the mandate God gave humanity to take care of creation (verse [28](#)). After the fall, men ruled over women ([Genesis 3:16](#)).

After sin came, men gained power over women that they did not have before. This damaged the "one flesh" relationship. Men who ruled could now have multiple wives. This led to some men having more than one wife at a time (a practice called "polygamy," [Genesis 4:19; 16:3; 29:30](#)). It also led to serial monogamy, where men would divorce one wife to marry another ([Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#)).

Divorce became common because men ruled over women. Neither men ruling over women nor divorce was part of God's original plan for marriage. God allowed divorce in the law of Moses because people were living in a broken, sinful world ([Matthew 19:8](#)). Only men had the right to divorce. Women could not divorce their husbands. This meant women were victims when their husbands chose to divorce them.

The divorce rules in Deuteronomy were meant to give some protection to women. A husband had to give a reason for divorcing his wife by pointing out something wrong about her. He had to give her a

written divorce document that showed she had been married to him ([Deuteronomy 24:1](#)). Also, if a divorced woman married someone else, her first husband could not marry her again. This was because his act of divorcing her was seen as defiling her ([Deuteronomy 24:4](#)).

God allowed divorce in the law of Moses because people's hearts were stubborn and unwilling to follow his plan. But the Old Testament clearly states that God hates divorce ([Malachi 2:16](#)). Divorce was only allowed because sin had made men rule over women. God's original design for the marriage of man and woman was still the perfect standard—two people becoming "one flesh."

Jesus's Teaching on Divorce

Jesus came to restore God's original plan for creation. This meant the old rules about divorce no longer applied to Christians. Jesus pointed his followers back to God's first design for marriage. He said the divorce rules in Moses's law were only given because people were stubborn, adding "it was not this way from the beginning" ([Matthew 19:8](#)). Jesus rejected what sin had done and supported God's original plan.

In [Matthew 5:31-32](#), Jesus rejected the old law that let men divorce their wives. He saw divorce as harming women. When men divorce their wives to marry others, they shame these women and treat them like objects. Anyone who marries a divorced woman takes part in this wrong treatment. Both the man who divorces and the man who marries the divorced woman are guilty of adultery.

Jesus took away men's power to divorce their wives whenever they wanted. He brought back God's original plan for marriage as a lifelong "one flesh" union. His disciples understood what this meant. But they were so used to men having special rights that they said being single was better than committing to one marriage for life ([Matthew 19:10](#)).

Jesus confirmed that the "one flesh" union was still God's plan for Christians. The New Testament strengthens this by comparing marriage to the relationship between Christ and the church ([Ephesians 5:25](#)).

Even though the New Testament strongly supports lifelong marriage, it allows divorce in two cases to protect an innocent spouse: when their partner commits adultery or abandons them. Jesus said a person could divorce an unfaithful spouse ([Matthew 5:32; 19:9](#)). The wronged spouse can

choose to stay married if they want. But Scripture makes clear they are not required to stay married to or take back an unfaithful spouse.

The New Testament allows divorce for a second reason: when a spouse abandons the marriage. [1 Corinthians 7:15](#) talks about an unbelieving spouse leaving. The Bible says that a believer who abandons their family should be treated like an unbeliever ([1 Timothy 5:8](#)). Any behavior that amounts to abandoning the marriage breaks the marriage commitment and falls under the rule in [1 Corinthians 7:15](#).

In cases of adultery or abandonment, the wronged spouse can seek a divorce. After the divorce, they are considered single again. If the couple cannot restore their marriage through forgiveness and coming back together, the wronged spouse is free from the marriage. Scripture says someone who is free can marry again, but only to another Christian ([1 Corinthians 7:39](#)).

If a single person struggles with being alone, they should marry ([1 Corinthians 7:9](#)). This applies to people who became single through a proper biblical divorce. However, Jesus taught that believers should not divorce just to marry someone else ([Mark 10:11–12](#); [Luke 16:18](#)). Using divorce this way is adultery.

Marriage often fails for many reasons. Churches should handle each divorce and remarriage case individually. God can forgive sins and heal broken lives. The Bible's rules about divorce do not apply to marriages that ended before someone became a Christian. When someone becomes a Christian, God forgives their past sins and makes them new in Christ.

See also Adultery; Civil Law and Justice; Marriage, Marriage Customs; Sex, Sexuality.

Doctor of the Law

The translation in the King James Version for “teacher of the law” in [Luke 5:17](#), and [Acts 5:34](#).

See Pharisees; Teacher.

Doctrina Addaei

The Doctrina Addaei is an expanded Syriac version of the Letters of Christ and Abgarus, written

around AD 400. It tells the story of the meeting between Abgar, the king of Edessa, and Jesus Christ.

King Abgar was suffering from an unknown illness. He sent a messenger to Jesus with a written request for healing and an offer of safety in his kingdom. Jesus sent back an oral reply, promising to send one of his followers to Abgar after ascending to heaven. The messenger of the king brought back with him a self-portrait of Jesus, which became a treasured object in Edessa.

Later, Addai (sometimes called Thaddeus) visited the kingdom. He healed Abgar and established Christianity there.

See Letters of Christ and Abgarus; *see also* Apocrypha.

Dodai

A descendant of Ahohi. Dodai was a commander of one of the 12 divisions of Israelite soldiers during the reign of King David. There were 24,000 men in each division ([1 Chronicles 27:4](#)). Dodai might also refer to Dodo, the father of Eleazar in [2 Samuel 23:9](#) and [1 Chronicles 11:12](#).

See Dodo #2.

Dodanim

Descendants of Noah's son Japheth ([Gn 10:4](#)). The name is emended to Rodanim in [1 Chronicles 1:7](#). *See* Rodanim.

Dodavah, Dodavahu

Inhabitant of Mareshah and father of Eliezer the prophet. Eliezer spoke against King Jehoshaphat of Judah because of his alliance with King Ahaziah of Israel ([2 Chr 20:37](#), kjv “Dodavah”).

Dodo

1. The grandfather of Tola. Tola was a minor judge who judged Israel from his native city, Shamir ([Judges 10:1](#)).

2. The father of Eleazar. Eleazar was "one of the three mighty men" of David ([2 Samuel 23:9](#); [1 Chronicles 11:12](#)). Dodo may be identifiable with Dodai the Ahohite in [1 Chronicles 27:4](#). See Dodai.
3. The father of Elhanan. Elhanan was one of the mighty men of David known as "the Thirty" ([2 Samuel 23:24](#); [1 Chronicles 11:26](#)). Dodo lived at Bethlehem.

Doe

A doe is a female deer ([Proverbs 5:19](#)).

See Deer.

Doeg

Doeg was an official who worked for King Saul. Saul commanded him to kill the innocent priests at Nob ([1 Samuel 21:22](#)). Doeg was an Edomite, which means he was either a foreigner who converted to the Israelite religion or a prominent leader from Edom who was captured during Saul's military campaign against the Edomites ([14:47](#)).

Saul put Doeg in charge of his flocks of animals ([21:7](#)). King David also later had a foreigner in charge of his cattle ([1 Chronicles 27:30](#)).

The Bible does not clearly explain why Doeg was at the sanctuary at Nob ([1 Samuel 21:7](#)). He might have been there for a religious purpose. If he was going through a purification process, this may have forced him to stay here (like a Nazirite vow described in [Numbers 6:13](#)). Another possibility is that he was hiding there as a spy for King Saul.

What we do know is that while at Nob, Doeg saw the priests welcome David and give him food and a weapon—the sword of Goliath ([1 Samuel 21:9](#)). A short time later, Doeg had opportunity to report this to Saul ([22:9–10](#); [Psalm 52 title](#)). He hoped to demonstrate his loyalty with this report.

Doeg's character is revealed when he brutally killed the priests and all the people living in the city of Nob ([1 Samuel 22:18–19](#)). This cruel action suggests he was not truly an Israelite, even if he lived among them.

Dog

Dogs were one of the first animals that humans kept as pets. Scientists believe modern dogs (*Canis familiaris*) came from the Indian wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*). Dogs in biblical times probably looked similar to today's German shepherd dogs. They had pointed ears, a pointed nose, and a long tail.

Negative Views of Dogs in the Bible

In biblical times, people did not like dogs ([Proverbs 26:11](#); [2 Peter 2:22](#)). While many people today consider dogs to be close friends, the writers of the Bible saw them differently. Dogs would search for food in the streets and among garbage ([Exodus 22:31](#); [1 Kings 22:38](#); [Matthew 15:26](#); [Luke 16:21](#)). They would even eat dead human bodies ([2 Kings 9:35–36](#)). In general, dogs served the same function as vultures and other birds of prey. The Bible mentions dogs 41 times, and most of these mentions are negative. People thought dogs were dirty animals that acted with fear.

Dogs used in hunting occur in paintings in Egyptian tombs, and there is a reference to dogs herding sheep in [Job 30:1](#). One good quality of dogs highly esteemed by the Israelites was watchfulness ([Isaiah 56:10](#)). In general, however, in biblical times "dog" was a term of contempt ([1 Samuel 17:43](#); [2 Samuel 16:9](#)). It was used to describe:

- Submissive people ([2 Samuel 9:8](#); [2 Kings 8:13](#))
- Evil people ([Isaiah 56:10–11](#); [Matthew 7:6](#); [Philippians 3:2](#); [Revelation 22:15](#))

Dogs, like pigs, were voracious and omnivorous (eating any kind of food). A gentile woman asked Jesus to heal her daughter. He replied using a metaphor about throwing household food scraps to dogs ([Matthew 15:22–28](#); [Mark 7:25–30](#)). In Jesus's time, "dog" was a Jewish insult for Gentiles. They were considered unclean, like dogs. Jesus used a diminutive form of the word, which softened it. Seeing her faith, Jesus granted the woman's request, giving a non-Jew some of "the children's bread."

Doleful Creature

Designation for animal of uncertain identity in [Isaiah 13:21](#) (kjv), better rendered "howling creature" (nlt). The context implies such beasts are unclean; hence, suggested creatures include the

horned owl, hyena, jackal, and leopard. *See* Animals; Birds.

Domestic Fowl, Poultry

Poultry are birds raised by people for food or other uses, such as chickens, ducks, and turkeys. The most common is the domesticated chicken (*Gallus gallus domesticus*), probably descended from the red jungle fowl of India.

People seem to have known domestic fowl in Old Testament times ([Proverbs 30:31](#)). A seal from about 600 BC shows a fighting cock. It belonged to a man named Jaazaniah, who is mentioned in (see [2 Kings 25:23](#)). [Nehemiah 5:18](#) may refer to poultry on his table, but this could also mean wild birds rather than domestic fowl.

Poultry were a symbol of fertility. Jewish custom included carrying a rooster and hen in front of a bride and groom at weddings. Jesus spoke of the care of a hen for her chicks ([Matthew 23:37](#); [Luke 13:34](#)).

Roosters usually crow one or two hours before dawn. The third watch of the night, from midnight to 3:00 in the morning, was called “cockcrow.” According to the Talmud (Jewish writings that explain and comment on the law of Moses), chickens were not allowed in Jerusalem in New Testament times. This was to prevent insects and larvae from chicken droppings from making sacrificial meat unclean. For this reason, the rooster that Peter heard ([Matthew 26:34, 74](#); [Luke 22:34, 60–61](#)) probably belonged to Romans or to Jews who did not follow this rule.

See also Birds.

Domitian

Domitian was the emperor of the Roman Empire from AD 81 to AD 96.

He treated both Jews and Christians harshly. Some early Christian writers said that Domitian sent the apostle John into exile on the island of Patmos. While John was there, he received the vision that became the book of Revelation ([Revelation 1:9](#)).

Rise to Power and Early Rule

During Titus’s rule, his brother Domitian was unhappy about being second in power. He wanted

control and tried to take over the army. When Titus died suddenly, Domitian was secretly happy and tried to damage his older brother’s reputation.

Even so, Domitian was a strong ruler. He helped rebuild the city of Rome. Many buildings had been destroyed by fire. Domitian rebuilt several important places, including:

- The Capitol
- A temple to Jupiter called the Flavian Temple
- A public meeting place called a forum
- A stadium
- A concert hall
- An artificial lake for sea battles

Domitian started the Capitoline Festival and supported art, science, and public libraries. Like rulers before him, Domitian claimed he was a god and made people call him “Lord God.” The Senate never officially declared him a god.

Abuse of Power

The Senate did not like how Domitian used his power. He punished senators who disagreed with him. To stay in power, he kept the army on his side by giving them more money. He collected more taxes to cover the cost, often by using pressure or threats. The Jewish people were especially affected by these taxes. Near the end of his rule, Domitian also brought back religious persecution.

Early Christian writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Eusebius said that Domitian persecuted Christians. He was one of the worst persecutors of the early church, second only to Nero.

Death and Legacy

Domitian even put members of his own family to death. His wife, Domitia, feared for her life because some people believed she was a Christian. With the help of friends and former servants, she planned to kill Domitian.

After ruling the empire for 15 years, Domitian was killed. Most people did not mourn him. Only the well-paid army may have been sad. Many people remembered his rule as a time of fear and cruelty.

See also Caesars, The.

Donkey

A donkey is an animal that people use for carrying heavy loads and for riding. The donkeys mentioned in the Bible (*Equus asinus*) were different from the smaller, less cooperative donkeys we see in Europe today. In biblical times, donkeys were beautiful, friendly animals that stood tall and proud. They usually had reddish-brown fur.

Types of Donkeys

There were three types of wild donkeys in Africa. The donkeys from northwest Africa no longer exist. The donkeys from northeast Africa are almost gone. The donkeys from Somalia still exist today, but they were not often tamed to live with humans.

The Nubian donkey, which came from northeast Africa near the Nile River, was one of the first types of donkeys that people tamed. People began riding these donkeys as soon as they were tamed. The Bible first mentions donkeys when listing the animals that Abraham received in Egypt ([Genesis 12:16](#)).

How Were Donkeys Used?

People used donkeys mainly for carrying loads. They guided the donkeys but did not put bits in their mouths like they did with horses. During the time of ancient Egypt (around 2040 BC), people started riding donkeys more often. However, only Jewish people and Nubians regularly rode donkeys for travel.

Donkeys also helped with farming. People used them to separate grain from plants and to pull plows. In Arab countries today, farmers sometimes tie a donkey and a cow or camel together to pull a plow. However, in ancient Israel, God's law said people could not tie a donkey and an ox together to plow fields ([Deuteronomy 22:10](#)).

Before King Solomon's time (around 960 BC), people in Palestine did not use horses. After that, warriors rode horses while ordinary travelers rode donkeys.

The Jewish people valued donkeys highly. Owning a donkey was necessary for basic survival ([Job 24:3](#)). People often measured someone's wealth by counting how many donkeys they owned ([Genesis 12:16](#); [24:35](#)). Donkeys were also considered good gifts to give to others ([Genesis 32:13-15](#)). It was allowed to rest on the Sabbath ([Deuteronomy 5:14](#)).

Women in biblical times often rode donkeys ([Joshua 15:18](#); [1 Samuel 25:23](#); [2 Kings 4:24](#)). A special driver often helped guide the animal, running alongside it. If a married couple owned only one donkey, the husband usually walked alongside while the wife rode ([Exodus 4:20](#)).

The people of Israel returning from Babylon had ten times as many donkeys as horses and camels ([Ezra 2:66-67](#); [Nehemiah 7:68-69](#)). The 500 she-donkey's Job owned before the disaster was a sign of his wealth ([Job 1:3](#)). After he recovered he had 1,000 donkeys ([Job 42:12](#)). Joseph's brothers used donkeys to transport the grain they bought in Egypt ([Genesis 42:26](#); [43:24](#)). Abigail moved food on donkeys to David and his troops during their conflict with Saul ([1 Samuel 25:18](#)). David assigned one of his 12 royal estate managers to care for his donkeys ([1 Chronicles 27:30](#)).

The Wild Donkey (Onager)

The onager, or Syrian wild donkey (*Equus hemionus hemihippus*), is a mix of the true horse and the true donkey. Its ears are longer than those of a horse but shorter than those of a donkey. The front hooves are narrow. There are chestnuts on the front legs only. They are callous-like spots on the inside of the knees. The tail is short-haired for a long distance from its root, so it looks tufted.

The Sumerians (ancient Mesopotamians) trained the onager. It was later replaced by the horse. It was used to draw chariots in Ur. A number of onagers were buried with their vehicles in a royal grave that dates from about 2500 BC. Later the wild onager was a favorite hunter's prize for Babylonian and Assyrian kings.

The onager was common in the grasslands near Israel. The Bible describes them as animals that loved freedom and lived in the desert ([Job 24:5](#); [39:5-8](#); [Psalm 104:11](#); [Isaiah 32:14](#); [Jeremiah 2:24](#); [Hosea 8:9](#)). Ishmael was described as a "wild donkey of a man" ([Genesis 16:12](#)). This means he could not be tamed. Drought likely caused the onager's decline in biblical times ([Jeremiah 14:6](#)). The modern onager (*Equus hemionus onager*) is larger than the extinct Syrian wild donkey.

See also Travel.

Doorkeeper

A person who guards and controls access to a building by watching its entrance. In the Bible,

doorkeepers (or gatekeepers) had the important job of protecting holy places like the temple in Jerusalem. They controlled who could enter and made sure the building stayed secure.

See Gatekeepers.

Dophkah

A name of an area near the wilderness of Sin. Dophkah is where the Israelites camped on their way to Mount Sinai ([Numbers 33:12–13](#)). Dophkah may be the same place as Serabit el-Khadem. Serabit el-Khadem was an Egyptian turquoise mining center.

See Wilderness Wanderings.

Dor

Fortified Palestinian city (modern el-Burj) situated along the Mediterranean coast, south of Mt Carmel and eight miles (12.9 kilometers) north of Caesarea. It is mentioned occasionally in connection with events in the period of the judges and the united monarchy ([Jos 17:11](#); [Jgs 1:27](#); [1 Chr 7:29](#)). Dor is probably the same city as Naphath-dor ([Jos 12:23](#); [1 Kgs 4:11](#)) and Naphoth-dor ([Jos 11:2](#)). During the days of the Conquest, the king of Dor joined Jabin's confederacy against Joshua ([Jos 11:2](#)), but was defeated ([12:23](#)). The city was assigned to Manasseh's tribe, but the tribe failed to dispossess its inhabitants ([Jgs 1:27](#)).

Dorcas

Dorcas was a Christian woman who lived in Joppa of Judea. People knew her for her acts of charity ([Acts 9:36–41](#)). [Acts 9:36](#) calls Dorcas a disciple. This is the only time in the New Testament where the writer uses the feminine form of the word "disciple" in the original Greek text. We do not know if she was Jewish or Greek, since both Jews and Greeks commonly used her Greek name "Dorcas." Her Aramaic name was "Tabitha," which meant "gazelle."

When Dorcas died, the apostle Peter was staying in a nearby town called Lydda. People had heard about how Peter healed others there, so they sent two men to bring Peter to Joppa. When Peter arrived, others had already prepared Dorcas's body for burial and placed it in an upper room.

Peter asked all the mourners to leave the room. Then he knelt down to pray and raised Dorcas back to life. This miracle of bringing someone back to life became the first one an apostle had performed.

Dositheus

1. A Jew representing himself as a priest and Levite. He delivered a letter from Mordecai concerning the Feast of Purim (possibly containing the book of Esther) to Ptolemy and Cleopatra in the fourth year of their reign ([Add Est 11:1](#)).

2. One of Judas Maccabeus's captains. With Sosipater he captured and destroyed a stronghold of 10,000 soldiers left behind by Timothy, one of Antiochus IV Epiphanes' governors ([2 Macc 12:19](#)).

3. One of Bacenor's men. This Dositheus was a horseman with great strength. His attempt to capture Gorgias (one of Ptolemy's generals) was unsuccessful ([2 Macc 12:35](#)).

4. Drimylus's son and an apostate. A general of the Seleucids, he prevented the assassination of Ptolemy (ruler of the Seleucid Empire) by Theodotus ([3 Macc 1:3](#)).

Dothan

Ancient city located about 60 miles (97 kilometers) north of Jerusalem, 13 miles (21 kilometers) north of the city of Samaria, and about 5 miles (8 kilometers) southeast of Megiddo. The two cities of En-gannim (modern Jenin) and Ibleam guarded a narrow pass on the road leading to Dothan and on to the coastal plain.

The mound of Tell Dotha, site of Dothan, rises 200 feet (61 meters) above the surrounding plain to a height of 1,200 feet (365.6 meters) above sea level. The top of the mound comprises some 10 acres (4 hectares). From there one can look out upon fertile land boasting good crops. Flocks pasture here as they did in biblical times, drawn to the area in part by the adequate water supplied by its springs.

Dothan was the place where Joseph's brothers sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelites ([Gn 37](#)). A millennium later the city was surrounded by Syrian forces in an attempt to capture Elisha, who lived there and who was thought to be betraying the Syrian plans to the Israelite king ([2 Kgs 6:8–14](#)). Dothan was mentioned also in the lists of places conquered by Pharaoh Thutmose III and, in the

intertestamental period, in connection with the military campaigns of Holofernes.

Dove

A dove is a small pigeon. In the Bible, doves often symbolize peace, the Holy Spirit, or purity. They were sometimes offered as sacrifices ([Leviticus 5:7](#)).

See Pigeon.

Dove's Dung

Source of food eaten when Samaria was besieged by Ben-hadad, king of Syria ([2 Kgs 6:25](#)). Taken literally as pigeon excrement, the reference would indicate how desperate conditions were in the famished city.

Some scholars suggest that dove's dung refers to the small, edible bulb of the star of Bethlehem plant, also known as bird's milk or bird's dung. The bulb could be boiled or roasted to make flour for bread. The "kab" in verse [25](#) is a unit of measure approximating 1.3 quarts (1.2 liters).

Dowry

Gift of property or goods from the bride's family to the bride or groom prior to marriage. *See* Marriage, Marriage Customs.

Drachma

Greek coin made of silver, roughly equivalent to the Roman denarius. *See* Coins.

Dragon

The term "dragon" in the Bible refers to many large and frightening land or sea creatures. But, it does not mean the fire-breathing, winged reptiles of European myths.

The translators of the King James Version chose this term to translate two Hebrew words. These words are often translated more accurately in modern versions. One word refers to desert animals. Most scholars agree it means "jackals," as

in the New International Version ([Psalm 44:19](#); [Isaiah 13:22](#); [Jeremiah 9:11](#); [Malachi 1:3](#)). *See* Jackal.

The other Hebrew word translated as "dragon" is harder to define. It was often used to refer to serpents ([Exodus 7:9-12](#); [Deuteronomy 32:33](#); [Psalm 91:13](#)). It is also translated as "sea monster" in the Revised Standard Version ([Genesis 1:21](#); [Job 7:12](#); [Psalm 148:7](#)). We do not know what the sea monsters were.

Some passages in the Revised Standard Version are translated as "dragon." In two of them ([Psalm 74:13](#); [Isaiah 27:1](#)), the context indicates a sea monster. In three others "dragon" seems to refer to a crocodile ([Isaiah 51:9](#); [Ezekiel 29:3](#); [32:2](#)). This would be a symbolic reference to the Egyptian pharaoh at the time of the exodus. In [Jeremiah 51:34](#) "monster" may also refer to a devouring creature like the crocodile. *See* Crocodile.

Babylonian myths depicted monsters and dragons battling the god Marduk, symbolizing evil. Similarly, the term "dragon" in Scripture, especially in prophetic books, carries this meaning. In Revelation, it specifically represents Satan, God's greatest enemy ([Revelation 12:3-17](#); [13:2](#), [4](#), [11](#); [16:13](#); [20:2](#)).

Dragon's Well

See Jackal's Well.

Dram

KJV for daric, a Persian gold coin, in [1 Chronicles 29:7](#), [Ezra 2:69](#), [8:27](#), and [Nehemiah 7:70-72](#). *See* Coins.

Dreams

Thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep. Dreams have always fascinated people; the events experienced in dreams are too vivid and real to be ignored.

Ancient Understanding

From the earliest times people viewed dreams as a mystery, provoking speculation about another actual sphere of existence in which the person lived and acted while the body slept. Dreams, especially

those of emperors and kings, were held to be messages from the gods.

Ancient recorded dreams focused on three main areas: religion, politics, and personal destiny. Religious dreams called for piety and devotion to the gods. Political dreams supposedly forecast the outcome of battles and the future destiny of nations. Personal dreams guided family decisions and presaged serious crises.

Sometimes the god took the initiative and forewarned the person about something unexpected. Sometimes the ruler or general would go to a pagan temple or holy place and sleep there, hoping to bring on a dream that would help him cope with some serious problem. In some dreams the message was clear; more often it had to be discovered by individuals who specialized in dream interpretation. Records were kept concerning specific dreams and the subsequent events.

Old Testament Use

Dreams played an important part in the lives of God's people. Of the nearly 120 references to dreams in the OT, 52 come in Genesis during the early patriarchal period and 29 in the book of Daniel. In reality, however, only 14 specific dreams are recorded in the OT. Most of them are in Genesis and reflect God's direct revelation to the patriarchs. Even Daniel tells about only two of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams—the large, manlike image and the gigantic tree chopped down—and his own dream about the four beasts and the Ancient of Days.

The OT understanding of dreams had several significant features. Like the rest of the ancient world, people of God believed that God communicated in dreams. Yet there is in the OT accounts a reserve that is lacking in the perverse and obscene scenes often described in pagan dream records. Another distinction is that God is the initiator; he gives the revelatory dreams when, where, and to whom he pleases—a truth painfully learned by Saul ([1 Sm 28:6, 15](#)). More significantly, the secular approach to interpretation was specifically rejected. Understanding of dream symbols came not by research in dream books or by natural human ability. When Joseph interpreted the dreams of his two Egyptian fellow prisoners and later of the pharaoh himself, he insisted on giving full credit to God ([Gn 40:8; 41:7, 25, 28, 39](#)). Similarly, Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that the God in heaven who reveals secrets would make

known the king's dream and its meaning, in which task professional dream interpreters had failed ([Dn 2:27–28](#)).

Unlike their neighbors, the OT saints knew that a dream was a “vision of the night” ([Jb 33:15](#)), and figuratively represented the spiritual realm ([Jb 20:8; Pss 73:20; 126:1; Is 29:7–8](#)).

God used dreams in OT days to protect his servants ([Gn 20](#)), to reveal himself to people in a special way ([28:12](#)), to provide guidance in specific circumstances ([31:10–13](#)), and to forewarn about personal future events ([37:5–20](#)). Dreams were also used to predict the history of nations (chs [40–41](#)) and to foretell the four great successive world empires that would be replaced by God's eternal kingdom ([Dn 4:19–27](#)).

During the approximately 1,000 years between Joseph and Daniel, only two dreams are recorded. One assured Gideon that God would defeat the Midianites ([Jgs 7:13–15](#)); the other concerns how Solomon became so wise after his humble, unselfish request for “an understanding heart” ([1 Kgs 3:9, 15](#)) thoroughly pleased God.

In the final OT dreams, God gave Nebuchadnezzar an overview of future world history ([Dn 2:31–45](#)) and a prediction of the king's temporary insanity ([4:19–27](#)). Daniel's dream of the four beasts was similar to the king's first dreams, but with added details concerning future international relations ([7:13–14](#)).

Dreams were seen as one means by which God would speak to prophets ([Nm 12:6](#)). But how could the people of God distinguish a true prophet from an imposter? God gave two tests: the ability to predict the immediate future ([Dt 18:22](#)) and the consistency of the message with previously revealed truth ([13:1–4](#)). False prophets were put to death (v [5](#)). False prophecy was a serious problem in the days of Jeremiah ([Jer 23:25–32](#)) and Zechariah ([Zec 10:2](#)). Despite repeated warnings by Jeremiah ([Jer 23:32; 27:9–10; 29:8–9](#)), the people preferred to listen to the false prophets with their empty messages of hope. Dreams were also a part of Israel's prophetic hope ([Il 2:28](#)).

New Testament Use

The few specific dreams in the NT all come from Matthew, five of these in the first two chapters. They emphasize the divine care and protection of the baby Jesus. First, there was God's provision that Jesus would grow up in a home with a father and mother and thus avoid the cruelty and shame of

being unjustly called an illegitimate child ([Mt 1:19–23](#)). Then the wise men were instructed in a dream not to tell Herod where Jesus was living ([2:12](#)). Jesus was further protected from jealous King Herod by the dream that told Joseph to flee to Egypt with Mary and the child (v [13](#)). On Herod's death, Joseph was divinely advised in a dream to return home from Egypt (v [20](#)). Finally, God warned Joseph to avoid Judea, where Herod's evil son Archelaus reigned, and to settle in Galilee instead (v [22](#)).

The only other specific dream mentioned in the NT prompted Pilate's wife to warn her husband, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man" ([Mt 27:19](#), niv).

See also Prophecy; Visions.

Drink Offering

See Offerings and Sacrifices.

Dromedary

Swift-footed camel of the Arabian species. *See* Animals (Camel).

Dropsy

An old medical term for an excess of watery fluid in any tissue or space of the body.

Dropsy, mentioned in [Luke 14:2](#), is a symptom of serious disorders, like heart, kidney, or liver disease. Jesus healed a man "who had dropsy," but his illness is not described. The word "dropsy" is now outdated. It has been replaced with more specific medical terms:

- Dropsy in the stomach is now called *ascites*
- Dropsy in or below the skin is called *edema*
- Dropsy in the lungs is now called *hydrothorax*

Dropsy is not mentioned directly in the Old Testament. A reference to swollen feet ([Deuteronomy 8:4](#)) could refer to *pedal edema* or simply to blisters.

See also Medicine and Medical Practice.

Drusilla

Drusilla was the third and youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa, who was king of Judea. She was Jewish and was born around AD 38. She had two sisters named Bernice and Mariamne. She became engaged to Epiphanes, who was prince of Commogene. But she canceled the engagement because he refused to convert to Judaism.

Drusilla's brother, Agrippa II, then arranged for her to marry Azizus, the king of Emesa. Azizus agreed to be circumcised (a Jewish religious requirement). Soon after her marriage, Felix, governor of Judea, fell in love with Drusilla. This happened when Drusilla was only 16 years old. Felix was a gentile (non-Jewish). Around AD 54, Felix convinced Drusilla to break Jewish law by leaving her husband to marry him.

While Paul was being held in custody at Caesarea, Drusilla and Felix listened to him explain the gospel message ([Acts 24:24](#)). Their son, also named Agrippa, died when the Italian volcano called Vesuvius erupted in AD 79.

Dulcimer

Dulcimer is the King James Version translation of "pipe" in [Daniel 3:5](#), [10](#), [15](#). *See* Musical Instruments (Psantrin); Music.

Dumah (Person)

Ishmael's son, who founded an Arab tribe ([Gn 25:14](#); [1 Chr 1:30](#)).

Dumah (Place)

1. Region of the 12 tribes of Ishmael ([Gn 25:14](#); [1 Chr 1:30](#)) where there were a number of oases; identified with el-Jof, modern Dumat el-Jendel. This place was located about three-fourths of the way from Damascus to Medina.

2. Town in the highlands allotted to Judah's tribe for an inheritance ([Jos 15:52](#)). Its site is probably identifiable with ed-Domeh, 10 miles (16.1 kilometers) southwest of Hebron.

3. Hebrew term referring to the land of silence or death; that is, the place of graves ([Pss 94:17; 115:17](#)).

4. Perhaps a designation for Edom or Idumea in [Isaiah 21:11](#).

Dumbness

An older term for the inability to speak. This condition prevents a person from using their voice to communicate.

See Muteness.

Dung Gate

One of the 11 gates in the Jerusalem wall in Nehemiah's time ([Neh 2:13; 3:14](#)). It was located near the southwest corner of the city and led to the valley of Hinnom, where rubbish and refuse were dumped. This particular gate had been reconstructed by Malkijah, son of Recab ([Neh 3:14](#)), and was situated between the Fountain Gate and the Valley Gate. When the restored walls of Jerusalem were completed, the ceremony of dedication took place near this gate. Josephus knew it as the Essene Gate.

See also Jerusalem.

Dura, Plain of

The location in the province of Babylon where Nebuchadnezzar set up the great image of gold, which all his subjects were ordered to worship ([Daniel 3:1](#)). This exact location is uncertain. It may be situated to the southeast of Babylon or located within the great outer wall of the city itself. The image was likely in a prominent place and an open area used for public gatherings. Since *dur* means "rampart," the phrase should probably be translated as "the plain of the rampart," implying that it would have been near the city wall somewhere.

Dye, Dyeing, Dyer

A dye is a colored substance used to change the color of textiles, leather, and other materials. Dyeing is the process of applying these colors to

materials. A dyer is a person who works with dyes to color fabrics and other materials. The practice of dyeing materials existed in the Near East even before the time of Abraham. The Bible mentions four colors of dyes: purple, blue (actually a shade of violet), crimson, and scarlet.

Purple and Blue Dyes

The purple and blue dyes came from small murex shellfish found along the Phoenician coast. The dye was a special liquid produced by these shellfish. When exposed to air, this liquid changed color from whitish-yellow to red, violet, or purple, depending on how people treated it. Because this dye was expensive to make, only rich people could afford purple clothing. Purple therefore became a symbol of royalty and wealth. The dye was commonly known as "Tyrian purple" because the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon were the main suppliers ([Ezekiel 27:16](#)).

Crimson and Scarlet Dyes

Crimson and scarlet were bright red colors obtained from the kermes insect (a small grub that feeds on a type of oak tree growing in southern Europe and Asia Minor). Some Syrian dyers still use kermes today, even though artificial European dyes are available. The "tanned rams' skins" mentioned in [Exodus 25:5](#) are still made in Syria. The tanned skin is rubbed with dye made by boiling the kermes in water. When dry, the skin is oiled, polished, and used for Bedouin slippers and other beautiful leather items.

The "purple goods" sold by Lydia of Thyatira were actually a dull red color, now sometimes called "Turkey red" ([Acts 16:14](#)). This color came from the root of the madder plant. It was used both for export to Europe and for local use in dyeing cotton and wool for rugs and clothing. Growing madder was a major industry in Cyprus and Syria. A father would plant a new madder field for each son born, which would eventually become that son's inheritance. Thyatira had a special group of workers called a dyers' guild.

See also Cloth and Cloth Manufacturing.

Dysentery

Dysentery is a sickness that causes diarrhea (loose, watery bowel movements). It is caused by harmful bacteria, protozoa (tiny one-celled animals called

amoeba), or worms that get into food or water. When a person has dysentery, they have painful intestinal cramps and damage to the intestines. Blood and pus appear in their stool (bowel movement).

On the island of Malta, the apostle Paul miraculously healed a person who had dysentery (the Greek word is *dysenteria*, [Acts 28:8](#)). As this verse shows, severe fever comes with acute dysentery. Even today, outbreaks of this disease still affect Malta.

A disease described in the Old Testament was likely amoebic dysentery. In this type, pieces of intestinal tissue can break off day after day ([2 Chronicles 21:14-19](#)). There is also a less severe form of dysentery that happens when the body can mostly fight against the harmful organism.

See also Medicine and Medical Practice.

Dysmas

The name Dysmas refers to the thief who expressed sorrow for his sins while dying on a cross next to Jesus ([Luke 23:39-43](#)). While the Bible does not give this thief's name, later religious stories not included in the Bible called him Dysmas. These stories, such as the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy and the Acts of Pilate, tell imaginative stories about earlier meetings between Jesus and Dysmas. Early Christian teachers often praised the repentance of this "good thief." The Roman Catholic Church later officially recognized him as a saint.